

# BLACK SOX SCANDAL



Vol. 11, No. 1, June 2019

Research Committee Newsletter

## Leading off ...

### What's in this issue

- ◆ SABR Eight Myths Out project launches online . . . . . **PAGE 1**
- ◆ Black Sox events at the SABR 49 convention . . . . **PAGE 2**
- ◆ Register now for 2019 SABR Black Sox symposium . . . **PAGE 3**
- ◆ *Collyer's Eye* digitized, now available online . . . . **PAGE 4**
- ◆ New evidence of White Sox throwing games in 1920 . . **PAGE 5**
- ◆ Alfred Austrian, White Sox corporate counsel . . . . . **PAGE 7**
- ◆ Check out a complete 1919 World Series program . . . . **PAGE 13**
- ◆ Shoeless Joe Jackson Museum on the move again . . . . . **PAGE 14**
- ◆ Swede Risberg in Jamestown, North Dakota . . . . . **PAGE 15**
- ◆ Betting odds analysis of the 1919 World Series . . . . . **PAGE 20**

### Chairman's Corner

By Jacob Pomrenke  
[buckweaver@gmail.com](mailto:buckweaver@gmail.com)

The publication of our [Eight Myths Out](#) project this spring has shined a glaring spotlight on Eliot Asinof's best-selling book.

For decades, *Eight Men Out* has been called the "definitive" story of the Black Sox Scandal, but modern scholarship has illuminated its many flaws, discrepancies, and factual errors.

Even the central thesis of the book — the idea that the underpaid White Sox players threw the 1919 World Series because of resentment at Charles Comiskey — has been challenged. This raises some important questions: Where did it all go wrong ... and why?

*Eight Men Out* was not

► Continued on page 6

## EIGHT MYTHS OUT

100 years since the 1919 World Series, new research has revealed new truths about "baseball's darkest hour" — the Black Sox Scandal.

On the centennial anniversary, SABR's Black Sox Scandal Committee sheds light on the biggest myths about the fixing of the 1919 World Series.

One hundred years after the fixing of the 1919 World Series, SABR's Black Sox Scandal Research Committee is shedding new light on baseball's darkest hour. SABR's Eight Myths Out project, which launched this spring at [SABR.org/eight-myths-out](http://SABR.org/eight-myths-out), is intended to correct many common errors and misconceptions about the fixing of the 1919 World Series.

## Eight Myths Out project launches on SABR website

By Jacob Pomrenke  
[buckweaver@gmail.com](mailto:buckweaver@gmail.com)

One hundred years after the fixing of the notorious 1919 World Series, we're continuing to shed new light on baseball's darkest hour.

SABR's Eight Myths Out project, which launched this spring at [SABR.org/eight-myths-out](http://SABR.org/eight-myths-out), is a collaborative project produced by members of this committee, and it is intended to correct many common errors and misconceptions about the fixing of the 1919 World Series.

The Black Sox Scandal is a cold case, not a closed case; new evidence has been discovered in recent years that has enhanced our collective knowledge

of the scandal. Since the publication of Eliot Asinof's *Eight Men Out* in 1963 and the John Sayles film by the same name in 1988, the dramatic story of underpaid and undereducated Chicago White Sox ballplayers, disgruntled by their low pay and poor treatment by management, who fell prey to the wiles of double-crossing gamblers has been thoroughly debunked. Much of the popular narrative about the Black Sox Scandal falls apart under closer scrutiny.

The Eight Myths Out project uses groundbreaking research and resources to provide a more complete understanding of what happened a century ago. In addition, we've compiled an extensive

► Continued on page 6

## SABR 49 COMMITTEE EVENTS

Our annual Black Sox Scandal Committee meeting at the SABR 49 convention in San Diego is scheduled for **3:10-4:10 p.m., Thursday, June 27, 2019** in the Seaport A/B Ballroom at the Manchester Grand Hyatt, 1 Market Place in San Diego.

The meeting will feature a panel discussion on the 100th anniversary of the 1919 World Series, with **Rick Huhn**, author of *Eddie Collins: A Baseball Biography*; **Bill Felber**, author of *Under Pallor, Under Shadow: The 1920 American League Pennant Race That Rattled and Rebuilt Baseball*; **Bruce Allardice**, Professor of History at South Suburban College near Chicago; and committee chair **Jacob Pomrenke**.

In addition, committee member **Steve Klein** will be giving two presentations: "The Afterlife of Hugh Fullerton: What Happened After the Black Sox Scandal" from 3:55-4:25 p.m. Saturday, June 29; and "How Hugh Fullerton Created an Ethical Impulse in Sports Writing" from 5:30-6:30 p.m. Saturday. Committee member **Steve Steinberg** will be presenting on "World War One & Free Agency: The Fateful 1918 Battle for Jack Quinn between the New York Yankees and the Chicago White Sox" from 4:15-4:40 p.m. on Thursday, June 27.

You must register for the convention in order to attend, but all are welcome. Visit [SABR.org/convention](http://SABR.org/convention). Day rates (\$179) are also available for purchase on-site.

A very limited number of *Scandal on the South Side* paperback editions will be available for purchase for \$20 (cash or check only) afterward. See Jacob Pomrenke for details.

## Download your free copy of *Scandal on the South Side*

*Scandal on the South Side: The 1919 Chicago White Sox*, edited by Jacob Pomrenke, with associate editors Rick Huhn, Bill Nowlin, and Len Levin, is **now available from the SABR Digital Library**.

*Scandal on the South Side* is the first comprehensive book focused on the star-studded, dissension-riddled team that won the 1919 American League pennant and then threw the World Series — with full-life biographies of every player and official involved with that fateful team.

This book isn't a rewriting of *Eight Men Out*, but it is the complete story of everyone associated with the 1919 Chicago White Sox.

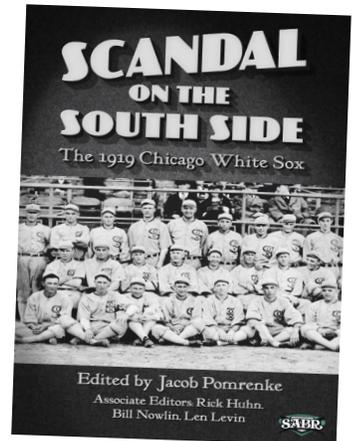
### Order the book:

The book can be ordered online at [SABR.org/ebooks](http://SABR.org/ebooks).

All SABR members can download the e-book edition for free in PDF, EPUB, or Kindle formats. SABR members also get a 50% discount to purchase the paperback edition. The retail price is \$19.95 for the paperback or \$9.99 for the e-book.

**Read the bios online:** All biographies from the book can also be read online at the SABR BioProject.

Visit [SABR.org/category/completed-book-projects/1919-chicago-white-sox](http://SABR.org/category/completed-book-projects/1919-chicago-white-sox) to find them all.



**Free download available at [SABR.org/ebooks](http://SABR.org/ebooks)**

## Black Sox Scandal Research Committee

### Committee chairman:

Jacob Pomrenke, [buckweaver@gmail.com](mailto:buckweaver@gmail.com)

### E-mail list manager:

Rod Nelson, [rodericnelson@gmail.com](mailto:rodericnelson@gmail.com)

**Newsletter editors:** Mark Dugo, Rick Huhn, Steve Klein, Bill Lamb

**Post questions, discussion at our**

**Yahoo group:** <http://bit.ly/1919SoxYahoo>

# BLACK SOX CENTENNIAL SYMPOSIUM

## Register now to join us on September 27-29, 2019, in Chicago

Registration is now open for the SABR Black Sox Scandal Centennial Symposium on September 27-29, 2019, in Chicago. The SABR Black Sox Scandal Research Committee will host this once-in-a-century event to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the 1919 World Series.

Visit [SABR.org/2019-black-sox-symposium](http://SABR.org/2019-black-sox-symposium) to register for the SABR Black Sox Scandal Centennial Symposium online in advance.



The event — which is open to all baseball fans — will be highlighted by a research symposium from 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. Saturday, September 28 at the Chicago History Museum.

The museum is home to an extensive collection of Black Sox artifacts and documents, and we'll gather in the beautiful Morse Genius Chicago Room event space to discuss the continued relevance of the 1919 World Series and its aftermath.

A book signing with SABR authors, including our own *Scandal on the South Side: The 1919 Chicago White Sox*, will follow. More details on panels

and presentations will be announced soon.

Our special All-Inclusive Package (\$45 for SABR members, \$60 for non-members) includes admission to the Black Sox Scandal symposium at the Chicago History Museum; a ticket to the Chicago White Sox game on Friday, September 27; and [a guided walking tour](#) of downtown Chicago baseball history sites.

Registration for the symposium only is \$20 for SABR members, \$25 for non-members. Extra tickets to the White Sox game are \$20 each and the walking tour (scheduled for 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. on either Friday, September 27 or Sunday, September 29) is \$10. *Please note:* The tours are limited to the first 50 people who sign up. Following the symposium, from 8:00-10:00 p.m. on Saturday evening, we

### SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

#### Friday, September 27

- ♦ **10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.:** Chicago baseball history walking tour #1  
*Meet at Chicago Public Library's Harold Washington Branch, 400 S. State St.*
- ♦ **7:00-10:00 p.m.:** White Sox vs. Tigers baseball game, Guaranteed Rate Field, 333 W. 35th St.  
*Meet at 5:30 p.m. at "home plate" of Old Comiskey Park in parking lot north of the ballpark*

#### Saturday, September 28

- ♦ **9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.:** SABR Black Sox Scandal Centennial Symposium at Chicago History Museum, 1601 N. Clark Street
- ♦ **1:00-5:00 p.m.:** Book signings/museum visit afterward
- ♦ **8:00-10:00 p.m.:** Evening reception (cash bar), Nisei Lounge, 3439 N. Sheffield Ave.

#### Sunday, September 29

- ♦ **10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.:** Chicago baseball history walking tour #2  
*Meet at Chicago Public Library's Harold Washington Branch, 400 S. State St.*

will also gather for a reception at the historic [Nisei Lounge](#) near Wrigley Field. The reception is included in your symposium registration. For questions or more information, please contact Jacob Pomrenke at [buckweaver@gmail.com](mailto:buckweaver@gmail.com).



# Collyer's Eye digitized, now available online

By Bruce Allardice  
[bsa1861@att.net](mailto:bsa1861@att.net)

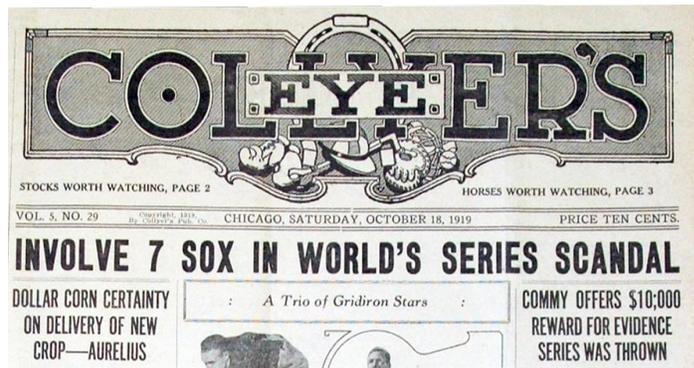
The first printed accusations that the 1919 Chicago White Sox had thrown the World Series were leveled only weeks after the Series by *Collyer's Eye*, a Chicago-based weekly publication that specialized in the world of horse race betting.

Until recently, baseball scholars were forced to use the only copy of *Collyer's Eye* still existing, microfilm reels housed at the University of Illinois. No longer.

The Illinois Digital Newspaper Collections project has now digitized and placed *Collyer's Eye* online for free viewing at [idnc.library.illinois.edu](http://idnc.library.illinois.edu) for the years of 1918 to 1922. The online collection can also be found at a subscription-only newspaper website, [NewspaperArchive.com](http://NewspaperArchive.com). Both sites have an easy-to-use search feature.

Recent Black Sox scholarship gives *Collyer's Eye* credit for being the first to report publicly on the Black Sox Scandal. In a remarkable series of articles starting October 18, one week after the Series ended, and extending through the end of 1919, *Collyer's Eye* named the names that the rest of the publishing world did not dare to.

*Collyer's Eye* named seven of the Eight Men Out — all but Buck Weaver — and pointed a finger at Abe Attell as one of the gamblers involved in the fix. It gave details of the ballplayers' activities during and after the Series and offered to furnish its findings to baseball authorities. *Collyer's Eye* published all of this months before any of the more reputable publications, and almost one year before Eddie Cicotte and Shoeless Joe Jackson admitted their involvement to the grand jury.



As we now know, *Collyer's Eye* received most of its “inside” information from famed reporter Hugh Fullerton of the *Chicago Herald-Examiner*, who used *Collyer's* to level charges that his own newspaper refused to.

*Collyer's Eye* contains a lot more baseball gossip, over and above its coverage of the Black Sox Scandal. *Collyer's Eye* was overtly sensationalist and not over-scrupulous in sourcing its stories — thus being free to report items that reputable newspapers didn't. For example, in the May 4, 1918 issue, it passed along a rumor that the Chicago White Sox had offered to purchase Babe Ruth from the Red Sox for \$100,000, an offer Red Sox owner Harry Frazee reportedly declined.

The publication is especially valuable in tracking how the betting markets set the odds for the pennant races. Publisher Bert Collyer knew the world of gambling, especially racetrack gambling, and many of the same bookies who fixed horse races also fixed baseball games. It is hoped that more years in the 1920s and 1930s will be added to the online collection now available.

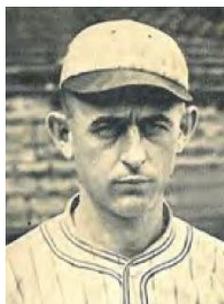
## Dickey Kerr's 1920 contract to be donated to museum

SABR Black Sox Scandal committee member Bruce Allardice recently received three valuable artifacts of Chicago baseball history.

The prize item is [the original 1920 Player Contract](#) of Dickey Kerr, the White Sox pitcher who won two games for the Sox in the tainted 1919 World Series. Kerr went on to win 40 games the next two seasons.

The contract is dated as received by the American League on May 3, 1920. It bears the signatures of Kerr and White Sox President Charles Comiskey, along with that of AL President Ban Johnson.

Kerr's contract wouldn't make modern players jealous — he signed for \$4,500 that season, with an option by the White Sox to renew the contract for 1921 at the same rate. As it turned out, Comiskey offered Kerr a \$500 pay



Dickey Kerr

cut the next year, prompting Kerr to quit major-league baseball. It took three more years before he returned to the White Sox, but he had lost his effectiveness by then.

Allardice also received two unused “game passes” from the Chicago White Sox and the Federal League Chicago Whales, both from the 1910s. All three artifacts are in pristine condition.

The items were given to Allardice by a relative of Bill Veeck, who owned the White Sox in the 1950s and beyond. Allardice plans to donate the items to the Chicago Historical Society.

Allardice is a professor of history at South Suburban College. He has authored or co-authored seven books, and numerous articles, on baseball history and the American Civil War.

# New evidence White Sox threw more games in 1920

By Bruce Allardice  
[bsa1861@att.net](mailto:bsa1861@att.net)

Now that *Collyer's Eye* is available online, it may be easier for historians to discover more gems of reporting about the Black Sox Scandal that have been overlooked until now.

For example, this item from *Collyer's Eye* on September 11, 1920, just two weeks before the scandal story broke, makes it clear that the "Clean Sox" knew their less honest teammates were throwing games in 1920, as well:

**Ouster of 'Wrecking Crew' demanded of White Sox**  
*Old guard plans drive to clean out team*  
 By Joe LeBlanc

*Internal dissension, which earlier in the season threatened to shatter the pennant chances of the White Sox, has again broken forth. Bitter recriminations fill the air both on the field and in the club house. The "old guard" who have at all times given their best and who came through the last world's series "clean as a hound's tooth," have arranged to make demands on Comiskey looking to the ousting of the "wrecking crew."*

*"We went into New York and Boston looking like pennant winners," said one of the players, "and came out of the series looking like amateurs. We have a good ball club, but it's a house divided. Just why players should toss off four or five thousand dollars of world's series money is quite beyond me."*

*"Take Risberg, for instance. Over in Boston he struck out three times without taking his bat off his shoulder. Did you notice that Cicotte failed to win a game at Boston, also in New York? Then as a crowning piece of Merkleism, did you see Felsch get nipped off of second base? All of this may be 'the breaks of the game,' but then there is another name and like murder it 'will out' sooner or later."*

*Over at skull practice Wednesday morning it was said that several of the White Sox players were "interested" in the grand jury probe into the alleged scandal surrounding the Cubs-Philadelphia games. The consensus of opinion seemed to be that Sherry Magee will have plenty of company and that said company would not be confined to members of the Cubs' playing staff.*

"Joe LeBlanc" appears to have been yet another pseudonym for *Collyer's Eye* publisher Bert Collyer.

The references to the New York and Boston series were for the games of August 26-28 and September 1-3, 1920, respectively. After winning the opener against the Yankees 16-5, the Sox had a 3½-game lead over Cleveland. The Sox proceeded to lose the next five games.



In 2016, Bruce Allardice uncovered evidence of the Chicago White Sox fixing games — "at a minimum three, and perhaps as many as a dozen" — in the 1920 season. He wrote of Swede Risberg (above) and the others, "At one time or another every "Clean Sox" regular accused their "Black Sox" teammates of throwing games in 1920. (Photo: SABR.org)

For more on the Sox throwing games in 1920, see Bruce Allardice's article, "['Playing Rotten, It Ain't That Hard to Do': How the Black Sox Threw the 1920 Pennant.](#)" in the Spring 2016 *SABR Baseball Research Journal*.

Risberg's three strikeouts in Boston also refers to the August 26-28 series against the Red Sox. Cicotte's losses were in the August 27 game against the Yankees (by a 6-5 score) and on August 31 against the Red Sox (7-3).

*Chicago Tribune* writer I.E. Sanborn used the Fred Merkle reference about Happy Felsch in his column on the White Sox's September 7 game against Detroit. With the bases filled, no one out, and the Sox down 5-0, "Felsch strolled so far off second that [Detroit catcher Oscar] Stanage picked him off the bag by a yard, there being nothing close about the verdict. ... There was no possible play to call for his taking a lead off the bag." See I.E. Sanborn, "Asleep on Feet, Sox Dropped by Tigers, 5 to 0," *Chicago Tribune*, September 8, 1920.

Who was the Sox player quoted anonymously in this story? Star second baseman and team captain Eddie Collins is the most likely candidate. Collins went public with his accusations the following month, telling sportswriter Otto Floto he was through with baseball unless Charles Comiskey fired the crooked players. See the *Denver Post* on October 15, 1920, and also *Collyer's Eye* on October 30, 1920.

## ► CHAIRMAN

Continued from page 1

always considered to be a definitive work of history. The *Chicago Tribune's* [original review](#) of Asinof's book, by William Leonard in 1963, pointed out some of its "imaginative minutiae," especially the "disconcerting" way he narrated secret conversations between gamblers or relayed the inner feelings of people who were long dead. Leonard preferred to call it "rather, the most [thorough] investigation of the Black Sox on record."

Over the years, those flaws were forgotten in the wake of the book's resounding success. Bob Broeg of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* was the first prominent writer to call *Eight Men Out* the "most definitive" account of the scandal, following Eddie Cicotte's death in 1969. But it was not until Red Smith of the *New York Times* called Asinof's book "the definitive work on the scandal" in a [widely read 1975 column](#) after Swede Risberg's death that the book began to take on a reputation as great history.

It's crucial to remember that Asinof himself never set out to write an air-tight, scholarly work of history, although he was happy to reap the benefits of the book's legacy. He was originally hired in 1960 to write a screenplay for a Dupont television special and his research eventually led to a book deal. But his goal was to write a dramatic narrative that hooked in readers, a compelling account that sold many copies. In this regard, he was immensely successful. His book has been in print for more than a half-century and *Eight Men Out's* cultural relevance makes it the foundation upon which all future Black Sox scholarship has been based.

But that doesn't make its errors any less problematic, and it's instructive to explore why those errors came to exist. Many questions about Asinof's narrative could be cleared up if he had included specific source citations, but he can be

excused for their exclusion. Most baseball or history books from that era failed to include a bibliography (*Baseball: The Early Years*, written in 1960 by Dr. Harold and Dorothy Seymour, is a notable exception.) When pressed for more details years later by author Gene Carney, Asinof testily replied, "No! My sources were an amalgamation of hundreds of conversations, impossible to document!"

Asinof's book came out in the same era when "New Journalism" rose to fame, the narrative nonfiction style pioneered by the likes of Truman Capote, Tom Wolfe, and Norman Mailer. These writers sought to tell stories using "all the techniques of fictional art" but with reporting that was "immaculately factual." The problem is that Capote's *In Cold Blood*, Asinof's *Eight Men Out*, and so many other stories utilizing that popular style in the 1960s [suffer from the same credibility problems](#): they play fast and loose with the facts, and it's impossible to tell which details are accurate and which are ... well, completely fictional.

*Esquire's* Gay Talese once described the purpose of the narrative nonfiction style as "seeking a larger truth than is possible through the mere compilation of verifiable facts." There is merit to this idea and [great works of fiction](#) can teach us as much about the world we live in as nonfiction can. But even with this generous description, Asinof's book comes up short. His "larger truth" in *Eight Men Out* focuses on the victimhood of the underpaid players, who he felt had no choice but to throw the World Series because of their miserly team owner.

The verifiable facts, as we documented in [Eight Myths Out](#), tell a much more complex story. But that's not the one Asinof chose to tell. One hundred years after the 1919 World Series, the cracks in the foundation of the traditional Black Sox story that we all grew up with are getting harder to ignore.

For more information about SABR's Black Sox Scandal Research Committee, e-mail [buckweaver@gmail.com](mailto:buckweaver@gmail.com).

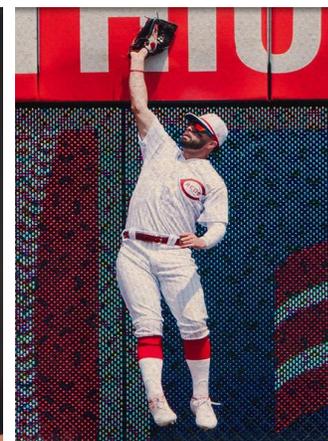
## ► MYTHS

Continued from page 1

list of historical inaccuracies, large and small, which appear in *Eight Men Out*, with [links to articles, artifacts, and other resources](#) that are now available online. This includes accurate player and team salary information from the 1919 season, legal documents and transcripts from the Black Sox grand jury proceedings and criminal trial, hundreds of interviews with players from the Chicago White Sox and Cincinnati Reds, and newsreel film footage from the 1919 World Series games.



Cincinnati Reds manager David Bell, left, shows off 1919 World Series "throwback" uniforms that his team wore on June 2, 2019, against the Washington Nationals, part of the Reds' season-long commemoration of 150 years of professional baseball in Cincinnati. At right, left fielder Jesse Winker makes a leaping catch at the wall to rob Anthony Rendon in the sixth inning. (Photos: Cincinnati Reds)



# Alfred S. Austrian, White Sox corporate counsel

By Bill Lamb

[wflamb12@yahoo.com](mailto:wflamb12@yahoo.com)

To certain chroniclers of the Black Sox Scandal, the actor most deserving of censure is not 1919 World Series fix organizers Chick Gandil or Eddie Cicotte, gamblers Abe Attell or Bill Burns, or even New York City underworld kingpin Arnold Rothstein, the reputed fix financier. Rather, the villain-in-chief is Chicago White Sox owner Charles A. Comiskey.

To novelist Eliot Asinof and filmmaker John Sayles, Comiskey is a skinflint boss whose miserly treatment of his players drove them to wrongdoing. Modern Black Sox scholar Gene Carney appreciates that tales of Comiskey's cheapness are fictional — the Sox actually had one of the highest player payrolls in baseball — but condemns Comiskey for failure to act upon evidence of player perfidy quietly collected by his private detectives, and trying to keep a pennant-winning team intact instead.

In these accounts of the Black Sox affair, Comiskey is aided and abetted by Alfred S. Austrian, legal counsel for the White Sox corporation. Via the powers of artistic invention which pervade his 1963 book *Eight Men Out*<sup>1</sup>, Asinof presents vivid scenes of Austrian's scheming. But his portrayal of the attorney tends toward the schizophrenic.

First, Asinof depicts Austrian as a Black Sox nemesis, inducing confessions of fix complicity out of cowed, uncounseled ballplayers, and then immediately handing these wretches over to the government for criminal prosecution. Later, Austrian is operating behind the scenes to thwart the prosecution that he has just set in motion, teaming with Arnold Rothstein to orchestrate the disappearance of crucial documentary evidence and secretly arranging for the accused Sox players to be represented by the cream of the Chicago criminal defense bar.

Not to be outdone in the fantasy department, Sayles embellishes his 1988 film *Eight Men Out* with make-believe of its own.<sup>2</sup> In this version, the erudite and patrician Austrian is presented as a glib shyster, smooth-talking the innocent Buck Weaver out of retaining his own lawyer, and devising a strategy of silence that the Black Sox will deploy at trial.

While Carney knew better than to accept the fabricated events of the Asinof book and Sayles movie at face value, his 2006 examination of then-available scandal evidence also places Austrian in the dock.<sup>3</sup> But Carney's judgment



**Alfred S. Austrian was a high-profile Chicago attorney whose clients included the *Chicago Tribune*, William Wrigley, Albert D. Lasker, the Cook County Democratic Committee — and the Chicago White Sox and Cubs.** (Photo: *Chicago Tribune*)

of Austrian strikes this writer as speculative, largely premised on guesswork about Comiskey-Austrian interaction.<sup>4</sup> It's likely colored by Carney's peculiar notion that the fix cover-up was an offense graver than the corruption of the Series itself (which is sort of like thinking concealment of a murder victim's body is a crime worse than the killing.)

The purpose of this essay is to extricate Alfred Austrian from the nonsense concocted by Eliot Asinof and John Sayles, and the postulates of Gene Carney, and to present a portrait of Austrian grounded in the historical record.

Austrian was one of Chicago's most distinguished attorneys, with a roster of high-profile clients that kept his name in newsprint for almost 40 years. But to the extent that his services to Charles Comiskey in the Black Sox case can be reliably established — and the two men were mostly closed-mouthed about their dealings — events do not always show Austrian in favorable light. In the end, however, Austrian's conduct always seems driven by the overarching first duty of every attorney: safeguarding the interests of his client.

Alfred Solomon Austrian was born in Chicago on June 15, 1870, the second of five children born to Solomon Austrian (1836-89), a recent Jewish immigrant from Bavaria and an attorney, and his Mississippi-born

wife, the former Julia Rebecca Mann (1848-1933).<sup>5</sup>

Shortly after Alfred's birth, the Austrian family relocated to Cleveland, Ohio, where Rebecca's kin operated a large wool mill and ran a thriving clothing wholesale business. In short order, Solomon rose to name partner in Mann, Austrian & Company, allowing him to raise his children in comfort.

After graduating from high school, Alfred matriculated to Harvard University. There, Austrian played third base for his class team.<sup>6</sup> If this is so, Austrian soon lost interest in the game — for during the many years that he served as legal counsel for the White Sox (and later, the Cubs, too), Austrian rarely, if ever, attended a ballgame.<sup>7</sup> Aside from family, Austrian's interests were scholarly: savoring classical literary verse and collecting original book manuscripts and rare first editions.<sup>8</sup>

Shortly before his death in late 1889, Solomon Austrian returned the family to Chicago. That is where Alfred began his working life upon receiving his A.B. degree from

► Continued on page 8

## ► AUSTRIAN

Continued from page 7

Harvard in June 1891. Although a lifelong scholar, Alfred Austrian did not attend law school. Rather, he prepared for entry into the legal profession by clerking and reading law at the offices of the eminent Chicago law firm of Kraus, Mayer, and Stein.

Austrian was admitted to the Illinois bar in 1893 and quickly became a courthouse luminary. His gifts included formidable presence (he was a shade under six feet tall, lean, and impeccably tailored), a first-class intellect, and a quick, often acerbic, tongue. In time, Austrian also became a master of legal precedent and statutory construction, and a skillful out-of-court negotiator. All the while, Austrian benefited from the guidance and friendship of senior firm partner Levy Mayer, a powerhouse attorney with prominent clients and a close connection to Chicago's Democratic Party.

In May 1895, young attorney Austrian was in the news as counsel for a consortium of whiskey distilleries, exchanging public insults with the ousted president of the concern.<sup>9</sup> Less than two months later, he was identified as one of three incorporators of a reconstituted "Whisky Trust," a venture designed to corner the country's manufacture and distribution of bourbon and rye.<sup>10</sup> Other Austrian clients included Chicago saloonkeepers, jewelers, theater owners, and politicians. Nor did he neglect social life. He was active in various civic and fraternal organizations, and in October 1901, Austrian took a bride, marrying 22-year-old Mamie Rothschild in a society wedding at Chicago's Hotel Metropole. The birth of their daughter, Margaret, in 1904 would complete Austrian's small, exceptionally tight-knit family.

While Alfred Austrian was making a name for himself in Chicago legal circles, Charles Comiskey was scouting out a new home for his Western League baseball club, the St. Paul Saints. In 1900, Comiskey's relocation of the club to Chicago spearheaded the efforts of league president Ban Johnson to upgrade the Western League from a regional circuit to a national one, with its major-league aspirations reflected in Johnson's renaming of the circuit the American League for the 1900 season.

The circumstances that brought club owner Comiskey and attorney Austrian together have not been discovered, but politics may have figured in. While not politically active himself, Comiskey was the son of a Democrat politician, one-time alderman Honest John Comiskey, while Austrian regularly represented Chicago Democrats. The Comiskey-Austrian relationship may date from the 1900 incorporation of the American League Base Ball Club of Chicago, or shortly thereafter.<sup>11</sup> But this is just a guess.

Whatever the case, Austrian was in place as White Sox corporation counsel no later than July 1903, when he appeared in court to obtain a court order restraining star short-stop George Davis from jumping the club to play for the New York Giants.<sup>12</sup> Once the Davis kerfuffle was resolved,

however, Austrian's name disappeared from the sports pages for almost 15 years.

But that is not to say Alfred Austrian became invisible. To the contrary, his fortunes continued to rise with well-paying clients and newsworthy cases burnishing a growing reputation as one of Chicago's ablest lawyers. In fact, only months after Austrian got George Davis safely back inside the White Sox fold, he took up perhaps the highest profile assignment of his long career: co-defense counsel in the Iroquois Theatre fire case.

On the afternoon of December 30, 1903, Chicago's newly opened Iroquois Theatre was packed well beyond its 1,602 seating capacity for a matinee performance of the musical *Mr. Bluebeard*. During the second act, a spark from an arc light set a muslin curtain ablaze. Within minutes, the theatre became a raging inferno in which some 600 perished, many of them children.<sup>13</sup>

Public outrage led to charges of criminal neglect and involuntary manslaughter being leveled against theater manager Will Davis. Levy Mayer, assisted by Austrian, was retained to defend Davis. Whether a reflection of devotion to his mentor Mayer, professional ambition, or cold-bloodedness, Austrian was not deterred from defending Davis by the toll the tragedy had taken within his own clan. Among the fire's victims was his cousin Joseph Austrian, a 17-year-old Yale undergraduate home for the holidays.

After legal maneuvers kept the proceedings at bay for three years, Mayer and Austrian persuaded the trial judge to dismiss the charges against Davis on highly technical grounds, an outcome deplored by the public but one that only increased Austrian's professional stock.

While the proceedings in the Iroquois Theatre case plodded on, Austrian was elevated to full partnership in the firm, now called Mayer, Meyer, Austrian, and Platt. During the ensuing decade, Austrian's stable of prominent clients expanded to include the *Chicago Tribune*, chewing-gum magnate William Wrigley, the Chicago sanitary committee, a Kentucky racetrack, the Cook County Democratic Committee, and advertising pioneer Albert D. Lasker. It was the connection to Lasker that returned Austrian's name to newspaper sports pages.

In January 1917, cash-strapped Chicago Cubs owner Charles Weeghman offered the wealthy Lasker a significant stake in franchise stock. Among Lasker's purchase conditions was the Cubs' retaining of Austrian as franchise corporate counsel.<sup>14</sup> Lasker also maneuvered William Wrigley onto the Cubs' board of directors. The following year, the two bought Weeghman out and assumed joint stewardship of the club.

Meanwhile, another Austrian client, Chicago White Sox owner Charles Comiskey, had grown estranged from one-time friend Ban Johnson, and joined the new owners of the New York Yankees and Boston Red Sox in public remonstrance against Johnson's leadership of the

► Continued on page 9

## ► AUSTRIAN

Continued from page 8

American League.

Tensions came to a boil in mid-September 1919 when an insurrection-minded AL board of directors authorized a probe of Johnson's expenditures. The inquiry was to be conducted by White Sox counsel Alfred Austrian.<sup>15</sup> While the board awaited Austrian's report, the infamous 1919 World Series — which Austrian did not attend — was played by Comiskey's White Sox and the Cincinnati Reds, and won in eight games by the National League champions.

Reports that members of Comiskey's team had agreed to dump the Series in return for a gamblers' payoff reached the White Sox by the end of Game One, if not before. Yet he did nothing visible in the immediate aftermath of the Sox defeat. Instead, Comiskey directed manager Kid Gleason and front office functionary Norris "Tip" O'Neill to make a discreet inquiry into fix rumors emanating from St. Louis.<sup>16</sup>

Comiskey was disturbed by the scuttlebutt that Gleason/Norris brought back, but publicly dismissed insinuations about the integrity of White Sox play, offering a \$10,000 reward for credible information about Series wrongdoing by his players.

East St. Louis theater owner-gambler Harry Redmon and St. Louis pool hall operator-bookmaker Joe Pesch took up the reward offer, journeying together to Chicago in late December. During a face-to-face meeting with Comiskey conducted in Austrian's law office, the two men related what they knew about Series corruption, including a Sherman Hotel meeting in Chicago organized by St. Louis gamblers Carl Zork and Ben Franklin to revive the fix after the corrupted players went off-script and won Game Three.

Word of the Austrian office parley promptly leaked to the press, but White Sox club secretary Harry Grabiner downplayed the encounter, declaring that Redmon and Pesch "could give no direct evidence or any new information concerning the alleged [Series] scandal."<sup>17</sup> Happily for Sox brass, the Grabiner statement was accepted at face value by the sports press and public, taking the pressure to act off — at least for the time being.

The extent to which Comiskey's post-Series conduct was influenced by club counsel Austrian is unknowable, but Comiskey biographer Tim Hornbaker asserts that the Old Roman, ailing and distraught, left management of the

simmering scandal mostly in the hands of Austrian and Grabiner.<sup>18</sup>

Increased Austrian involvement in club affairs is undeniable, embodied in his designation as a Chicago White Sox vice-president (while retaining his position as corporation counsel) in club reports filed in early 1920. It was Austrian, for example, who quietly retained the J.R. Hunter Detective Agency to shadow suspected Sox players and prowl around for evidence of fix payoff spoils. But the reports submitted to Austrian by detectives were pretty much a dud.<sup>19</sup>

Holding the view that unsubstantiated allegations of player corruption did not justify retributive action by the club — or so Comiskey testified during post-scandal civil litigation in 1924 — Austrian recommended that new contracts, with handsome salary increases, be extended to suspected fix participants Joe Jackson, Lefty Williams, Happy Felsch, and Swede Risberg during the offseason.

However self-serving and duplicitous the Comiskey-Austrian maneuvers appear today, as a strategy they worked, at least temporarily. World Series corruption rumors died out, and the throngs attending Comiskey Park to watch the Sox battle the Cleveland Indians and New York Yankees for the 1920 AL pennant shattered club attendance records.

The scandal dam cracked in September when a Cook County (Chicago) grand jury was called to investigate allegations that a recent game between the Cubs and Philadelphia Phillies had been fixed by gamblers. Itching for revenge against insurrectionist Charles Comiskey, AL President Johnson prevailed upon Judge Charles McDonald, who presided over the grand jury and was a longtime Johnson acquaintance, to widen the panel's probe to include inquiry into the integrity of the 1919 World Series.

Unseemly revelations about baseball corruption presented to the grand jury quickly found their way into newsprint, but concrete evidence of 1919 World Series corruption was thin. That abruptly changed, however, when fix insider Billy Maharg went public with claims that Eddie Cicotte, Joe Jackson, and Lefty Williams had dumped Games One, Two, and Eight in return for a gamblers' payoff.<sup>20</sup>

Austrian immediately realized that club boss Comiskey had to be placed on the right side of now-cascading allegations of Series corruption, and he acted with dispatch. Summoned to Austrian's office on the morning of September 28, a stressed-out and seemingly remorseful Cicotte quickly



**Some Black Sox scholars have criticized Alfred Austrian's involvement in the procurement of confessions from the 1919 World Series fixers, but his professional obligation was to safeguard the best interests of Charles Comiskey and the White Sox.** (Photo: *Chicago Tribune*)

► Continued on page 10

## ► AUSTRIAN

Continued from page 9

broke down under questioning by Austrian, admitting his complicity in the Series fix and naming seven teammates as co-conspirators.

Austrian thereupon marched Cicotte over to the Cook County Courthouse and delivered him to lead grand jury prosecutor Hartley Replogle. Decades later, *Eight Men Out* author Eliot Asinof maintained that Austrian was the one who induced Cicotte to sign a pre-testimony waiver of immunity from prosecution, but this claim is belied by the record. The waiver was presented to Cicotte within the grand jury room by Replogle, and signed by Cicotte before the grand jurors.<sup>21</sup>

Not as easily refuted is Asinof's charge that Austrian's conduct toward the Sox players was adversarial and betrayed a conflict of interest. Strictly speaking, the conflict charge is unfounded, as nothing in the canons of professional ethics conferred upon Austrian any duty to individual White Sox players. His professional obligation was to safeguard the best interests of his client: Charles Comiskey and his corporate alter ego, the White Sox corporation.<sup>22</sup> That said, some modern Black Sox commentators (but not this writer) deem Austrian's procurement of the player confessions to be morally indefensible, if not ethically so.

As scandal events rapidly unfolded in late September 1920, nothing suggests that Austrian devoted attention to parsing modern-day ethical questions about conflicts of interest. Rather, he continued to focus on protecting Comiskey and the ballclub.

To that end, Joe Jackson and Lefty Williams were summoned to Austrian's office, admitted Series fix complicity under questioning by Austrian,<sup>23</sup> and were then delivered to prosecutors to repeat their admissions of fix guilt to the grand jurors. On September 29, the eight White Sox players reportedly indicted by the grand jury were immediately placed on suspension pending the disposition of any charges officially preferred against them.

A day later, Austrian rescued those charges from being undone by lame-duck Cook County State's Attorney Maclay Hoyne, who publicly questioned the validity of grand jury investigation of what he deemed to be non-indictable offenses.<sup>24</sup> A widely published Austrian tutorial on the applicability of conspiracy law and other Illinois felony statutes embarrassed Hoyne,<sup>25</sup> and he quickly backed off. Hoyne would not interfere further with the grand jury's work.

In the short term, Austrian's strategy of preemptive action served Comiskey well, with press commentary portraying the club boss as selflessly sacrificing his own interests in the effort to purge the game of corruption. And while his press notices were still good, Comiskey struck back at Ban Johnson. He threw his support behind Albert Lasker's plan to reconstitute the National Commission, the three-member governing body of Organized Baseball largely perceived as

under Johnson's thumb, filling its posts with new members unconnected to the game's establishment.<sup>26</sup>

Although he had no great personal interest in baseball, business formation and corporate restructuring were right in Alfred Austrian's professional wheelhouse, and he was widely assumed to be the draftsman of the Lasker Plan. Comiskey and his allies then doubled down, threatening to transfer the White Sox, Yankees, and Red Sox to the National League if the Lasker Plan was not adopted. Their secession warning was buttressed by an Austrian legal opinion that player contracts were the exclusive property of the players' respective clubs, not the American League. The teams, not the AL, controlled where the players played.<sup>27</sup> For the time being, however, further hostilities were deferred pending the outcome of the Black Sox criminal trial.

Despite his pivotal role in procuring the confession evidence, Austrian was only a minor witness at the July 1921 Black Sox trial. He did not testify about the out-of-court admissions of fix complicity made in his office by Cicotte, Jackson, and Williams. Nor was he called as a witness during the mid-trial hearing on the admissibility of the players' grand jury testimony. Austrian only appeared in court briefly as a prosecution rebuttal witness, denying that he had ever called gambler-informant Harry Redmon a blackmailer or otherwise denigrated Redmon.<sup>28</sup>

But Austrian was hardly idle. At the time the Black Sox were being tried and ultimately acquitted, Austrian was in court battling attorneys for Peggy Hopkins Joyce, a photogenic gold digger and actress wanna-be whose serial acquisition and discard of millionaire husbands made a tabloid sensation. In the end, Austrian was able to procure the divorce decree sought by lumber baron W. Stanley Joyce, while Peggy obtained an alimony settlement sufficient to tide her over until another wealthy husband could be snared.<sup>29</sup>

In the aftermath of the Black Sox criminal trial, Austrian coordinated the White Sox's defense against the civil suits instituted by Joe Jackson and several other banished Sox players. Of critical importance in the Jackson case, the only one of these suits that ever went to trial, Austrian obtained the transcript of Jackson's grand jury testimony from disappointed Cook County prosecutors who were only too happy to oblige. Devastating use of that transcript during Jackson's cross-examination led to a vacating of the monetary judgment awarded him by a Milwaukee jury, and a perjury citation being slapped on Jackson by the trial judge.<sup>30</sup>

Called as a defense witness late in the civil trial, Austrian recounted the statements given in his office by Cicotte, Jackson, and Williams; outlined his dealing with Arnold Rothstein and attorney Hyman Turchin prior to Rothstein's grand jury appearance; and explained the basis for the 1920 salary increases offered to the suspected fixers. According to Austrian, he and club owner Comiskey lacked concrete proof of fix complicity that would only emerge later, and they declined to punish the players based solely on suspicion

► Continued on page 11

## ► AUSTRIAN

Continued from page 10

and then-unsubstantiated allegations.<sup>31</sup>

Although White Sox vice-president Austrian and/or club secretary Harry Grabiner sometimes attended club owners' meetings<sup>32</sup> in place of an ailing Comiskey, the Black Sox-connected litigation was the last of Austrian's baseball-related court appearances. But he did institute a \$50,000 libel suit on behalf of client William Wrigley after a weekly magazine called *Tolerance* accused the Cubs boss of being a member of the Ku Klux Klan.<sup>33</sup>

Austrian also represented meat packing giant Armour & Company in high-stakes proceedings conducted before the US Department of Agriculture. There were also the constant legal difficulties of Chicago politicians to keep Austrian busy. In his precious spare time, Austrian puttered around posh Lake Shore Country Club. In 1929, an Associated Press wire story regaled readers with the improbable tale that Austrian, for years a high-handicap hacker who rarely broke 100, had whittled his score down into the 70s by taking a year's worth of expensive lessons from the Lake Shore golf pro. Austrian had reportedly paid \$10,000 for his lessons in order "to win a \$5 bet" with cronies.<sup>34</sup>

Sadly, Austrian would have little time to enjoy his new-found golfing prowess. In September 1930, he underwent surgery of an undisclosed nature and was prescribed extended rest afterward.<sup>35</sup> He never fully recovered and spent most of his final months confined to bed. Alfred Solomon Austrian died in his Chicago home from a gastrointestinal malady (probably stomach cancer) on January 26, 1932. He was 61.

During funeral services at Rosehill Cemetery attended by Chicago Mayor Anton Cermak and a host of other dignitaries, Rabbi Solomon Freehof eulogized Austrian as "a joyous warrior, a leader in civic affairs, and an intellectual force in the community."<sup>36</sup>

Although hardly beyond criticism, Alfred Austrian led a life of distinction. But what lingers in today's consciousness are the unflattering decades-after-the-fact portrayals of *Eight Men Out* novelist Eliot Asinof and filmmaker John Sayles. To this, add *The Fix*, a Black Sox-themed opera that premiered at the Minnesota Opera in 2019, which casts Shoeless Joe Jackson as tragic hero and Austrian (not club owner Comiskey) as the villainous heavy of the piece.<sup>37</sup> Cruel, indeed, is the fate that supplants an estimable real life story with the caricatures of modern pop culture.

### Notes

1. The work's full title is *Eight Men Out: The Black Sox and the 1919 World Series*. The book was published in New York by Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, and originally released in hardcover in 1963.

2. The movie version *Eight Men Out* was released by



**Alfred Austrian, right, walks with his client J. Ogden Armour, a prominent meatpacking executive, during the funeral of Sen. Joseph Medill McCormick in 1925.** (Photo: Chicago History Museum, Chicago Daily News Collection, SDN-0078393)

Orion Pictures in 1988.

3. Gene Carney, *Burying the Black Sox: How Baseball's Cover-Up of the Fix of the 1919 World Series Almost Succeeded* (Dulles, Virginia: Potomac Books, 2006).

4. Much of the Comiskey-Austrian relationship was shrouded by the attorney-client privilege.

5. Alfred's siblings were Bertha (born 1868), twins Delia and Celia (1874), and Harvey (1879).

6. *Boston Globe*, May 10, 1890, and April 29, 1891.

7. According to author Harvey Frommer, "Alfred Austrian never read the sports pages, cared very little for baseball, and looked at the [White Sox and Cubs] teams he represented merely as corporate clients." Frommer, *Shoeless Joe Jackson and Ragtime Baseball* (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Co., 1992), 137. As of 1924, it was reported that Austrian had attended exactly one major-league baseball game in his entire life. See the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, February 8, 1924.

8. As noted in the Austrian obituaries published in the *Chicago Tribune* and *New York Times*, January 27, 1932. His library of several thousand volumes included first editions of Milton, Yeats, and Conrad. See "Library of Rare Volumes Left by A.S. Austrian," *Chicago Tribune*, September 2, 1932.

9. "Greenhut Squelched Again," *Chicago Inter-Ocean*; "Some Hot Word," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*; and "Filed a New Suit," *Omaha World Herald*, all published May 9, 1895.

10. "Whisky Trust Takes New Name," *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, and "Rectified Budge: The Old Whisky Trust Is Re-Incorporated," *Grand Forks (North Dakota) Herald*,

► Continued on page 12

## ► AUSTRIAN

Continued from page 11

July 2, 1895.

11. The club was incorporated under the laws of the State of Wisconsin on March 5, 1900, per Tim Hornbaker, *Turning the Black Sox White: The Misunderstood Legacy of Charles A. Comiskey* (New York: Sports Publishing, 2014), 132, n8.

12. "Davis Is Enjoined; Is He in Hiding?" *Chicago Tribune*, July 4, 1903.

13. To this day, the Iroquois Theatre tragedy remains the deadliest single-building fire in American history.

14. Jeffrey Cruickshank and Arthur W. Schultz, *The Man Who Sold America: The Amazing (but True!) Story of Albert D. Lasker and the Creation of the Advertising Century* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2010), 159.

15. "Directors to Probe Rule of Ban Johnson," Bridgeport (Connecticut) Evening Farmer, and "Will Investigate Ban's Activities," *Washington Times*, September 17, 1919.

16. At his own expense, Chicago filmmaker and ardent White Sox fan Clyde Elliott accompanied Gleason and O'Neill on the St. Louis trip.

17. "Gamblers Unable To Prove Charges Made After Games for World Title," *Salt Lake City Telegram*, December 30, 1919. See also "Comiskey Calls Bribery Bluff," *Chattanooga News*, and "\$10,000 Bribe Offer of Comiskey Stands," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, December 30, 1919.

18. Hornbaker, 288-289.

19. For more detail, see Gene Carney, "[Comiskey's Detectives](#)," *SABR Baseball Research Journal*, Vol. 38, No. 2, Fall 2009.

20. The Maharg revelations were published in the *Philadelphia North American* on September 27, 1920, and re-published in newspapers nationwide the following day.

21. The transcript of Eddie Cicotte's grand jury testimony has not survived intact. But the record inarguably documents that Replogle (not Austrian) elicited the waivers of Jackson and Williams. See transcript of Jackson grand jury testimony at JGJ1-5 to 22. For Williams, see WGJ23-10 to WGJ24-8.

22. By 1903, Comiskey had bought out the minority shareholders in the White Sox corporation. From then on, Comiskey would exercise complete and unilateral control the franchise until his death in October 1931.

23. The extent to which Jackson revealed his fix complicity in the Austrian office is unclear. The record only establishes that the telephone calls Jackson made to Judge McDonald to arrange his appearance before the grand jury were placed from Austrian's office. Once in chambers, Jackson admitted his involvement in the fix to Judge McDonald. He thereafter repeated those admissions under oath before the grand jury.

24. Hoyne lost his bid for re-nomination to the State's

Attorney's post in the September 1920 Democratic Party primary, and left the office in a huff to vacation out the remainder of his term in New York City.

25. See e.g., "Baseball Probe Goes to Grand Jury," *Kansas City Star*, and "No Loophole for Indicted," *Seattle Star*, September 30, 1920, and "Baseball Inquiry Will Go Through to End, Says Judge," *New York Tribune*, October 1, 1920. Judge McDonald and grand jury foreman Henry Brigham also publicly rebuffed Hoyne, and resolved to continue the proceedings.

26. "League Magnates Favor Lasker Tribunal Plan," *Omaha World Herald*; "Baseball Magnates Talk Over Re-organization Plan," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 6, 1920, and elsewhere.

27. "Owners Prepare for Bitter Legal Battle," *Evansville (Indiana) Courier*, and "AL Hold on Men Denied," *The (Portland) Oregonian*, November 10, 1920.

28. "Confessions of Ball Players Go to Jury," *The Sporting News*, July 28, 1921.

29. "Joyce Wins; To Pay Peggy," *Los Angeles Times*, November 21, 1921.

30. For more detail on the Jackson perjury citation and the civil proceedings from which it emanated, see William F. Lamb, *Black Sox in the Courtroom: The Grand Jury, Criminal Trial, and Civil Litigation* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2013), 149-198. The scene in *Eight Men Out* where the Jackson grand jury transcript mysteriously emerges from the briefcase of White Sox defense attorney George Hudnall is just one of the many Asinof fabrications that hamper enjoyment of his book.

31. See generally, transcript of Jackson civil trial, 889-958; 1028-1035. See also, "Lawyer Says Jackson Admitted Part in Plot," *Milwaukee Journal*, February 6, 1924.

32. See e.g., "American and National League Club Owners Assembled in New York," *The Sporting News*, December 19, 1929. Published with the article is a photograph showing Austrian and Grabiner among AL magnates.

33. "Chewing Gum Man Files Suit Against Anti-Klan Weekly," *Baton Rouge State-Times*, February 3, 1923, and "Wrigley Sues Anti-Klan," *Rockford (Illinois) Republic*, February 6, 1923. The accusation was untrue, and the institution of the Wrigley lawsuit led to the publication's closing shortly thereafter.

34. "It Costs \$10,000 to Win \$5 Bet," *Benton Harbor (Michigan) News-Palladium*, June 22, 1929, and "Lawyer Pays \$10,000 to Pro Who Helps Him Break 80," *Danville (West Virginia) Bee*, July 21, 1929.

35. "A.S. Austrian in Hospital; Recovering after Surgery," *Chicago Tribune*, September 27, 1930.

36. "Leaders of Bar and Business Honor Austrian," *Chicago Tribune*, January 28, 1932.

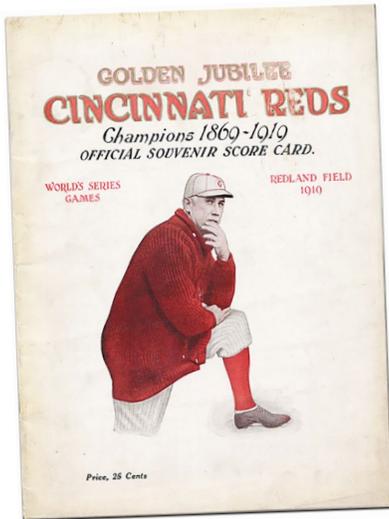
37. A review of the historically maladroitness opera is provided in Dan Levitt's review published in SABR Deadball Era Committee newsletter, [The Inside Game](#), Vol. XIX, No. 3, June 2019.

# Check out the full 1919 Reds' World Series program

“You can’t tell the players without a scorecard!”

The scorecard was an essential item for baseball fans in 1919, a decade before uniform numbers were added to major-league players’ jerseys.

The Cincinnati Reds produced a special souvenir scorecard for the World Series games that were played at Redland Field 100 years ago, with an iconic cover photo of manager Pat Moran standing on the top step of the dugout.



Many baseball fans have seen the cover of this scorecard — but there were 24 other pages inside the program that have rarely been viewed by the public.

Thanks to [Cam Miller](#), an independent filmmaker who [works closely](#) with the Cincinnati Reds Hall of Fame and Museum, we are pleased to show you the rest of the 1919 World Series program, which sold for 25 cents at Redland Field.

Visit [bit.ly/1919-WS-program](http://bit.ly/1919-WS-program) to download a copy of the 1919 World Series program (PDF)

The program includes rare photos of the 1919 Reds players in civilian clothing, along with biographical sketches of their careers, plus essays by sportswriters W.A. Phelon, Tom Swope, and Ren Mulford Jr., and photos of the celebrated 1869 Red Stockings and 1882 American Association pennant winners. Highlights also include a photo of the Reds inside their clubhouse on the day they clinched the National League pennant, in an advertisement for the Piqua Hosiery Co., and promotions for a few concession items sold at the ballpark: Partridge ham and baked meat loaf sandwiches and French Bros.-Bauer ice cream.

The most noteworthy ad of all is one placed by the Cal Crim Detective Bureau — Crim was the former chief of detectives for the Cincinnati Police Department who was hired by American League president Ban Johnson to help investigate rumors about the fixed World Series (as detailed in Dr. Susan Dellinger’s book, *Red Legs and Black Sox*.)

Another harbinger of the scandal to come is in an ad from the Goldsmith sporting goods company, which exclaims, “Put a bet on the Reds in the World’s Series.”

◆ Committee member **Michael Miller** has published a collection of his original research into Shoeless Joe Jackson’s life and career in the *Joe Jackson Reference Book*, which is [available for download online](#) at the Greenville (South Carolina) Public Library website.

## AROUND THE WEB

The PDF file includes more than 1,500 pages of notes from local newspaper accounts of games and stories from throughout Jackson’s baseball career, beginning with his minor-league days on the Greenville Spinners in 1907 to his major-league career with Cleveland and Chicago to his outlaw days back in his hometown in 1932.

◆ The launch of our [Eight Myths Out](#) project in March has brought forth a good deal of positive publicity about our committee’s work. Here are some highlights:

**Phil Rosenthal** of the *Chicago Tribune* included a link to our project in [his syndicated column](#) about MLB’s new partnership with gambling entities on April 3.

**Richard Deitsch** of The Athletic mentioned the project in his [Media Circus column](#) (scroll down to item #5) on April 1.

**Sean Crawford** of NPR Illinois highlighted the project in [his feature story](#) that ran on public radio stations around the country on March 27.

**Colby Cosh** of the *National Post* in Toronto called our project “a fascinating exercise in historiography” in [his column](#) on March 25.

**Keith Olbermann** gave us [a nice shoutout](#), calling Eight Myths Out “spectacular research ... SABR at its finest.”

**Ben Lindbergh** had a segment about our project on FanGraphs’ [Effectively Wild podcast](#) on March 26.

**Justin McGuire** of the [Baseball by the Book podcast](#) showcased our *Scandal on the South Side* book in an episode that aired on March 25.

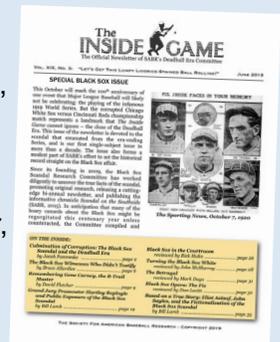
**Bill Felber** expanded on the Eight Myths Out misconceptions in a story at [Call to the Pen](#) on March 20.

## THE INSIDE GAME: BLACK SOX EDITION

This month’s SABR Deadball Era Committee newsletter, *The Inside Game*, will be a special issue devoted entirely to Black Sox-related material.

The June 2019 newsletter, [available for download at SABR.org](#), features original research articles by Bill Lamb, Jacob Pomrenke, Bruce Allardice, and David Fletcher, plus reviews of three notable entries in the Black Sox canon.

There will also be critical analysis of the book and film versions of *Eight Men Out*, and review of a recently-debuted Black Sox opera, *The Fix*.



# Shoeless Joe Jackson Museum on the move again

The **Shoeless Joe Jackson Museum** is once again planning to move — this time about 100 yards south — as a developer plans to [build a luxury apartment complex](#) next to Fluor Field in Greenville, South Carolina.

The museum has been at its current location at 356 Field Street, across from the ballpark entrance, since 2006. The house was moved from its original location on Wilburn Street, where Jackson lived for the final decade of his life until his death there in 1951.

## NEWS & NOTES

This move is precipitated by a developer's plans to open a sprawling, five-story apartment complex called .408 Jackson, named after Jackson's record-setting batting average in his rookie season in 1911. The Charlotte-based Woodfield Development would also build a public plaza at the corner of South Markley and Field streets to house the museum, which would retain its current address. The site is directly behind home plate of Fluor Field, home of the Greenville Drive, the Single-A affiliate of the Boston Red Sox.

The development will include some structural changes to the museum and the addition of a brand-new Shoeless Joe Jackson Store.

The museum's Board of Directors supports the move, [releasing a statement](#) saying, "What we see is a very bright future with bigger and better things to come. Just as Greenville is going through such tremendous growth, look for our museum to do the same."

To learn more about the Shoeless Joe Jackson Museum, visit [ShoelessJoeJackson.org](http://ShoelessJoeJackson.org).



Patricia Anderson

◆ **Patricia Anderson**, Buck Weaver's niece and surrogate daughter, died at the age of 92 on April 14.

As David Fletcher wrote in [his tribute to Pat at the Chicago Baseball Museum website](#), "Pat was one of the last living direct links to the Black Sox Scandal and an unlikely front person for the campaign to reinstate her beloved uncle."

At age 77, Anderson took up the fight to clear her Uncle Buck after the death of her sister Bette Scanlan, who had previously been the family's spokesperson to promote Weaver's cause. Buck and Helen Weaver helped to raise Pat and Bette after the death of their father, William Scanlan, in 1931.

Anderson was joined by another Weaver niece, Marjorie Follett of Pontiac, Illinois, in a "Clear Buck" protest at the 2003 All-Star Game at Chicago's U.S. Cellular Field. The protest took place at 35th and Shields, only a few feet from the site of the original Comiskey Park.

We were honored to have Pat participate in a panel



**The Shoeless Joe Jackson Museum in Greenville, South Carolina, is temporarily closed this summer. The house will move 100 yards down the street as a developer plans to build a luxury apartment complex on the site near Fluor Field.**

discussion on the Black Sox Scandal at the 2013 SABR convention, traveling to Philadelphia along with her daughter Sandy Schley and granddaughter Kristi Berg.

Originally, the panel was intended to be about the 50th anniversary of "Eight Men Out," but we could not pass up the opportunity to have Pat tell stories about growing up with her uncle Buck and aunt Helen. [Watch highlights from the panel at SABR.org](#).

◆ The popular Comedy Central show *Drunk History* [aired a Black Sox Scandal segment](#) in its baseball-themed episode on January 29.

ESPN personality Katie Nolan drunkenly narrated the Black Sox segment. The other two segments were about black baseball pioneer Moses Fleetwood Walker and the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League.

One of the actors on the show, Eric Edelstein, who plays Shoeless Joe Jackson, said he brought in a copy of our *Scandal on the South Side* book to the set to use as a resource while they were filming the episode.

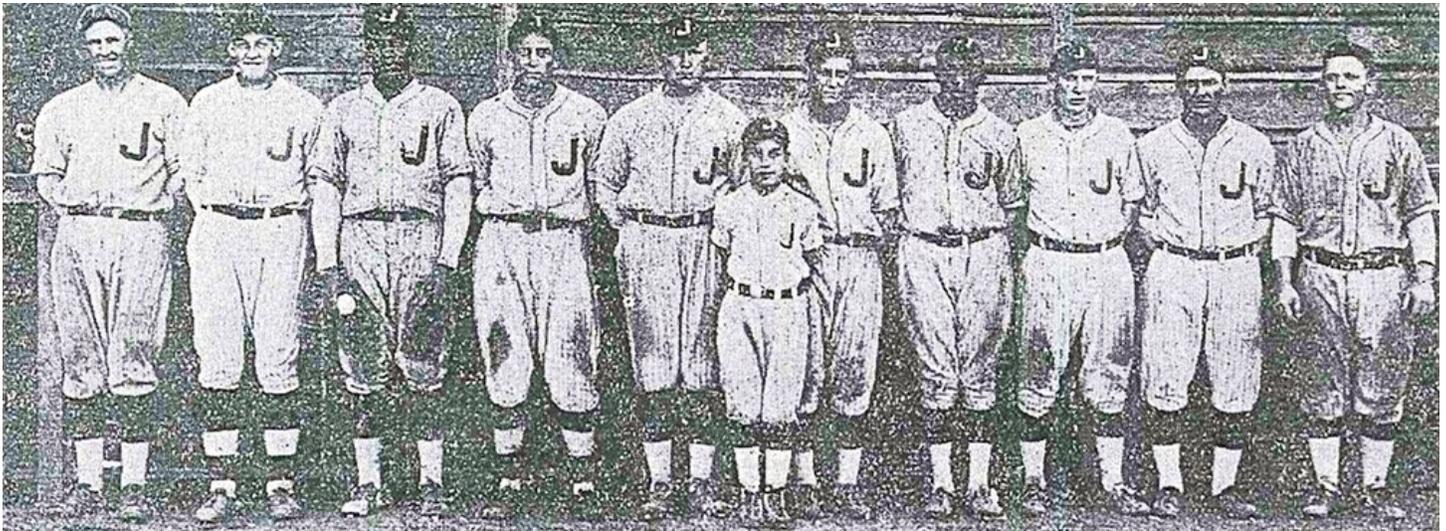
Edelstein said the crew was "magically" able to acquire the same White Sox and Reds uniforms that were used in the film *Eight Men Out* thirty years ago (although in characteristic *Drunk History* fashion, they covered up the original logos to avoid licensing issues with MLB.)

Edelstein is a big fan of Black Sox history and says making this episode was "a dream come true." He has collected vintage baseball cards of seven of the Eight Men Out — missing only a Fred McMullin card.

You can [watch the complete episode online](#) at the Comedy Central website.



Katie Nolan



Swede Risberg, far left, played two seasons on an integrated semipro team in Jamestown, North Dakota, in 1929-30 following his banishment from Organized Baseball in the Black Sox Scandal. Two of his teammates, pitcher/outfielder Joe Johnson (third from left) and pitcher Freddie Sims (seventh from left) had played in the Negro National League. Risberg hit .436 in 47 games and threw a no-hitter in 1930 before moving on to play elsewhere. (Photo: *Jamestown Sun*, July 17, 1930.)

## Swede Risberg's journey to Jamestown

By Thomas E. Merrick

[judgetom1950@outlook.com](mailto:judgetom1950@outlook.com)

It is a long way from Chicago to Jamestown, North Dakota, especially for a ballplayer. Charles A. "Swede" Risberg could attest to that. From 1917 to 1920 he played shortstop for the White Sox, and twice appeared in the World Series under the scrutiny of an entire nation.

A decade later in 1929 and 1930, following his banishment from professional baseball in the Black Sox Scandal, Risberg plied his trade as an infielder and pitcher for an independent baseball team in Jamestown, playing mostly against other small-town nines or barnstorming teams before a few hundred people. He went from the "City of Big Shoulders" with 2.7 million inhabitants to a prairie town of 8,000.<sup>1</sup> Of course, it was a detour Risberg took voluntarily, if unexpectedly.

Risberg was born in San Francisco in 1894. He had little formal education, something commentators have pointed to as contributing to "a divisive clubhouse" on the 1919 White Sox.<sup>2</sup> He and Chick Gandil, a former professional boxer, were boisterous card players, with "crude manners and connections to gamblers," and were often in conflict with gentlemanly Ray Schalk and college educated Eddie Collins.<sup>3</sup> Even though they formed a potent double play partnership, Risberg reportedly hated Collins.<sup>4</sup>

In 1920 Risberg was still playing shortstop for the White Sox, and had perhaps his finest season. In 124 games, he played stellar defense while batting .266 with 33 extra-base hits and 65 RBIs; more RBIs than any other major-league shortstop that season. One source claimed Risberg possessed

the greatest throwing arm of any infielder in the big leagues.<sup>5</sup> According to another commentator, "He boasted one of the greatest arms in the national sport and covered more ground in the infield than a week's rain."<sup>6</sup>

Late in 1920, however, the World Series fix was exposed. Despite his acquittal by a Chicago jury, Risberg and the other Black Sox players were banned from Organized Baseball by Commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis.

Even though his days in the major leagues came to an end, Risberg's baseball career continued for the rest of the 1920s and into the mid-1930s. He enjoyed a lucrative career playing baseball every summer for teams based in Minnesota, the Dakotas, Montana, and Western Canada, often with or against some of his former White Sox teammates.<sup>7</sup>

According to Happy Felsch, at a time when the average income in America was roughly \$100 per month, he and Risberg were each paid \$600 per month plus expenses in 1925 to play for a team in Scobey, Montana.<sup>8</sup> Risberg's son Robert later claimed his father made far more money playing baseball after his banishment than he ever did with the White Sox.<sup>9</sup>

Risberg, Felsch, and the other Black Sox players could continue to ply their trade because of the extensive network of independent professional, semipro, and amateur teams that were unaffiliated with Organized Baseball.<sup>10</sup> During this era, which lasted through the end of World War II, Jamestown — and thousands of other towns like it — sponsored their own teams, with civic boosters and business owners putting up the money to operate a full schedule of games every summer. Sometimes, they raised enough to bring in talented players

► Continued on page 16

## ► RISBERG

Continued from page 15

from the outside — such as the Black Sox and other major-leaguers who had been banned from Organized Baseball. These independent teams were sometimes integrated, with Negro Leagues stars like Satchel Paige agreeing to pitch for any team willing to meet his salary demands.

Organized Baseball and this brand of “outlaw” baseball often intersected. Minor-league and major-league teams would sometimes play independent teams on open dates in their schedule for added income. After their season concluded, some big-league players would tour the country playing for or against independent teams to make extra money.

During the Great Depression in the 1930s, salaries of minor-leaguers and major-league rookies were extremely low, and semipro teams were an attractive alternative.<sup>11</sup> Many players jumped back and forth between Organized Baseball and independent teams.<sup>12</sup> The baseball played in Jamestown during Risberg’s stay, while certainly not major-league caliber, was quite good.

Many factors made Jamestown an ideal location for an independent team. In the days before air conditioning, television, and the Internet, baseball truly was the national pastime, dominating newspaper coverage year-round. It was one of the few recreational outlets available to many Americans.

That was certainly true on the Great Plains, where even electricity was unavailable to most people in 1930.<sup>13</sup> Although Jamestown was small, it was the largest town for about 90 miles in any direction. US Highways 10 and 52 intersected the town, and the city was a stop on the Northern Pacific Railway between St. Paul and Seattle, making it easily accessible to popular barnstorming teams, Negro League teams, and teams from the Northern League or American Association. The Central Hotel in Jamestown also was known for its practice of integration, hosting African American ballplayers, the Harlem Globetrotters, and traveling musicians on a regular basis.<sup>14</sup> Jamestown had a fine ballpark at McElroy Park and rabid hometown fans.

Jamestown’s baseball bona fides were established years before, with the game becoming popular as early as 1879, before the town was incorporated.<sup>15</sup> Many star players took the field in Jamestown either before, after, or during their

time in the major leagues, including a dozen Baseball Hall of Famers who donned their flannels, spikes, and mitt for at least one game in Jamestown.<sup>16</sup>

It is also the birthplace of two more recent major-leaguers: Travis Hafner, who grew up in nearby Sykeston, and Darin Erstad, the first overall pick in the 1995 MLB amateur draft. Hafner and Erstad played in the same ballpark where Risberg and those Hall of Famers played. Now known as Jack Brown Stadium, it remains an idyllic setting, hosting more than 100 college, American Legion, high school, and amateur baseball games each summer.

Risberg played in Jamestown’s peak years of 1929 to 1935 when it fielded integrated semipro teams that rivaled any independent team in the nation. During that era, all-black pitcher and catcher batteries were all the rage in the Upper Midwest.<sup>17</sup> One of the most notable players was legendary Negro Leagues star John Donaldson, who combined with Sylvester Foreman in Bertha, Minnesota, to turn the small town into a baseball powerhouse in the early 1920s.<sup>18</sup> To stay competitive, other small towns, including Jamestown, followed suit.

In 1929, the year Risberg joined the team, pitcher Freddie Sims and catcher Roosevelt “Chappie” Gray, who had played briefly in the Negro National League and was “a legendary baseball figure throughout the Midwest,” were signed to become Jamestown’s first African American battery.<sup>19</sup> A few years later, following Risberg’s departure, Wilber “Bullet” Rogan, a future Baseball Hall of Famer, compiled a 20-3 record on the mound for Jamestown’s 1932 team with catcher Charlie Hancock.

During that era, Jamestown regularly hosted games against top professional teams such as the Minneapolis Millers<sup>20</sup> and Philadelphia Athletics<sup>21</sup> and notched wins against several Northern League teams, the House of David, Kansas City Monarchs, Minneapolis Colored Giants, Chicago American Giants, and a barnstorming team of major-league all-stars that included Jimmie Foxx, Heinie Manush, and Ted Lyons. Satchel Paige — who compiled a 30-2 record for Bismarck’s team in 1935

— lost 2-1 to Jamestown that summer.

Risberg, “the famous outlaw of big-league ball,”<sup>22</sup> joined Jamestown on August 11, 1929, playing second base in a victory over Enderlin. He needed no introduction to one of his teammates: Duckie Guidas had been Risberg’s catcher in Scobey, Montana in 1925, which may partially explain how

► Continued on page 17



**Swede Risberg spent most of the summer in 1929 playing on a traveling team in Virden, Manitoba, with his old White Sox teammate Happy Felsch.** (Courtesy of Alan Muchlinski)

## ► RISBERG

Continued from page 16

Swede ended up playing in North Dakota four years later.<sup>23</sup> Harry Drumbeater, a Cass Lake Chippewa who had played several seasons for Jamestown, replaced Risberg defensively in the seventh inning and hit a home run in the eighth.

Risberg played again the next two evenings as Jamestown extended its winning streak to 16 games before losing to Hatton despite four hits from Risberg. The 34-year-old former major-leaguer was recruited to provide pitching help to Freddie Sims and to play first base.<sup>24</sup> In his first at-bat on August 16, he hit a home run “over the riverbank in right field,”<sup>25</sup> as Jamestown beat Hatton in a rematch. “Risberg at first base was the real batting mogul and played a sensational defensive game as well,” the *Jamestown Sun* reported.<sup>26</sup> The team he joined was an experienced semi-pro team, but Risberg made it much better.

Pitching was not out of character for Risberg. He had won wide acclaim as a teenager pitching in semipro leagues in San Francisco, and pitched occasionally in the minor leagues before making his debut with the Chicago White Sox as a shortstop in 1917.<sup>27</sup> Pitching was in demand in independent ball, and Risberg pitched frequently and effectively after his banishment.

Risberg played first base or pitched for Jamestown during the remainder of the 1929 season, compiling 25 hits, including four home runs, in just 49 at-bats, and finishing 3-1 on the mound. One of his victories was over the Virden (Manitoba) Royal Canadians — which featured player-manager Happy Felsch.

Before joining Jamestown in mid-August, Risberg had played at least one game for a team based in Watertown, South Dakota<sup>28</sup> and spent several weeks that summer touring Western Canada with Felsch on the Virden team.<sup>29</sup> A March 29 newspaper article said the Havre (Montana) baseball team had received a letter from Risberg “offering to don a local uniform.”<sup>30</sup> Apparently, they had been unable to meet his terms.

Virden, located 180 miles west of Winnipeg, was a small town with a big baseball following.<sup>31</sup> Risberg played with Virden from July 11 until August 5 when their season ended.<sup>32</sup> Most of their games were played in regional tournaments, which sometimes featured up to three games in one day.<sup>33</sup> A player’s pay likely depended on a split of the prize money. For instance, a tournament in Brandon (Manitoba) in which Virden participated guaranteed \$500 for the tournament champions, \$300 for the runners-up, \$200 for third place, and \$50 for fourth through eighth places.<sup>34</sup>

It is unclear whether Risberg lodged in Virden while with the team, or lived in Minnesota and traveled to Virden’s games. The Havre letter indicates he was in the Rochester area, and his June appearance for the Watertown team was in southern Minnesota.

It seems unlikely he would have taken his wife, Mary,



**Jamestown was an ideal location for Swede Risberg and his family, offering him a chance to play baseball with housing, limited travel, and year-round employment. Swede is seen here with his wife, Mary, and infant son Robert in 1927. Their second son, Gerald, was born in 1933. (Photo: *El Paso Herald*, January 7, 1927)**

and their young son, Robert, to a small town in Canada for such a brief time. Whether he had been traveling from home for Virden’s games, or had been separated from his family for the three weeks he played for Virden, the chance to play in Jamestown — with housing, year-round employment, limited travel, and predictable pay — must have been appealing.

The 1929 Jamestown team was successful on the field and turned a profit of just over \$500.<sup>35</sup> Based on ticket receipts, paid attendance was 23,133, averaging more than 600 fans per home game. Player salaries for the year totaled \$4,801.56 and all players on the team were paid on a per-game basis. The directors voted to continue that policy in 1930.<sup>36</sup>

When the 1929 season concluded, Risberg remained in Jamestown. According to the City Directory, Risberg and his wife, Mary, lived at 801 Milton Avenue South (now 6th Avenue SE), a newly constructed stucco bungalow which still stands. He was employed as a tire repairer at B&B Tire Jobbers. Both the house and the business were owned in part by O.K. Butts, the baseball team’s manager. It is likely the house was provided rent-free as part of Risberg’s compensation, and, since games were played on weekends or evenings, Risberg worked at B&B Tire during the season as well as over the winter.

In March 1930 the Jamestown Baseball Association announced that “Fred Sims, Negro pitching ace of last year, has already been signed up for the coming season, and ‘Swede’

► Continued on page 18

## ► RISBERG

Continued from page 17

Risberg of Chicago White Sox fame, who finished the season with the local club, has been a resident of the city ever since, and can be counted on to be a pillar of strength both on the mound and at the initial bag.<sup>37</sup> Catcher Eddie Deal joined the team from the House of David, and O.K. Butts returned as manager.<sup>38</sup>

Once play began, Risberg was the regular second baseman rather than first baseman and the number two pitcher behind Sims. In June they added pitcher and outfielder Joe Johnson, “one of the best athletes ever to attend the University of Minnesota,” who had been with the Gilkerson Union Giants, a Chicago-based barnstorming Negro Leagues squad.<sup>39</sup> Local ballplayers of varying talent levels filled out the roster.

Risberg hit and pitched well for Jamestown all summer. He finished with an 8-4 record on the mound, highlighted by a no-hitter on July 11 against a team from neighboring LaMoure, North Dakota. Jamestown won 4-0 “in sweltering heat” and “the nearest thing they ever got to a hit was when Sperling sent a hot one into left field and George Deeds ran and got it safely in his mit (sic).”<sup>40</sup> LaMoure did not advance a runner past first base. Risberg also stole a base, scored Jamestown’s first run of the game, and drove in a run.

It was not Risberg’s first no-hitter as an outlaw player. He had also thrown one in 1923 while playing for Rochester, Minnesota.<sup>41</sup>

On Labor Day, with both Sims and Johnson unavailable, Risberg pitched and won both games of a doubleheader; “the tall moundsman being master of the situation every minute.”<sup>42</sup> For the season, Risberg pitched 94 1/3 innings, allowing 89 hits, striking out 67 and walking 23. As a batter, he hit .436 with eight home runs, 11 doubles, three triples, and six stolen bases in 47 games, as Jamestown compiled a 31-16 record.<sup>43</sup>

Risberg received favorable coverage in the Jamestown newspaper, but that was not always true of opposition press. After the Fargo-Moorhead Twins “jumped on Sims” and beat visiting Jamestown 13-4 behind the pitching of Harold Anderson, their hometown reporter derisively proclaimed, “The mighty Swede Risberg was just another ballplayer, one of the most helpless against Anderson.”<sup>44</sup>

The 1930 season was summed up in this way: “The team this year played very few easy teams and won from the toughest aggregation in the state and the traveling teams. Many of the best went out having lost to mighty Jamestown.”<sup>45</sup> No financial information for the season has been discovered. A Memorial Day crowd of over 1,800 was described as one of the largest in many years,<sup>46</sup> and indicates fan support was robust despite the stock market crash the previous fall.

After the season, Risberg remained in Jamestown, only to be stalked by misfortune. In addition to his job at B&B Tire,

he opened a miniature golf course. On November 18 he was robbed at gunpoint. The thief fled after Risberg handed him the \$18 in the till.<sup>47</sup>

On March 20, 1931, he was traveling with teammate Harry Fergus and three others to watch a basketball tournament in which another teammate, Lloyd Withnell, was scheduled to play. Their car struck a vehicle while attempting to pass, and the driver, Pierce Scott, was thrown from their vehicle and killed instantly.<sup>48</sup> “No one in the car save Mr. Scott was injured.”<sup>49</sup> The other passengers, including Risberg, “escaped with minor bruises.”<sup>50</sup>

It can be inferred from the accounts of these tragic events that Risberg was fully involved in the Jamestown community and was socializing with other ballplayers off the field. There is no evidence Risberg ever caused trouble, as he had in Scobey, Montana,<sup>51</sup> or caused dissension, as he had with the White Sox. He fit in well on a predominately working-class team, stepping onto the diamond anywhere he was needed.

In April, the Jamestown Baseball Association made an announcement that, in our day, makes the jaw drop. In an article titled “Jamestown to have All White Team this Year,” they notified the public that “because of the many requests of the fans, Jamestown will have an all-White team this year and have secured the services of a white battery ... considered superior to any battery we have had in the past.”<sup>52</sup>

Middling semi-pros Art Vetter and Andy Padavan were not superior to Freddie Sims and Chappie Gray, whom they replaced. Marty O’Neill, a talented shortstop from the Twin Cities, was also added to the roster. But the 1931 team was by far Jamestown’s weakest of that era. The decline in play caused Jamestown to reverse course for 1932. After signing Negro Leagues veterans Bullet Rogan and Charlie Hancock, they compiled a 32-7 record and enjoyed great fan support.<sup>53</sup>

In May 1931 it was reported Risberg had signed to play for Little Falls, Minnesota.<sup>54</sup> Instead, he spent 1931 and 1932 playing for the Sioux Falls Canaries. Why did Risberg leave Jamestown for Sioux Falls? The Jamestown Baseball Association, yielding to base prejudice and economic fears, had clearly lowered its sights and got rid of several talented players. It may not have wanted Risberg either, at least not on the more lucrative terms that had compelled him to sign there in 1929.

Risberg had no ties to Jamestown other than baseball, and the winter had been unkind, so perhaps he had decided to go elsewhere. The late start to Risberg’s search for a new team, however, indicates that he originally planned to play in Jamestown but could not reach an agreement.

Sioux Falls was a very strong team with players from all over the country and a 95-game schedule in 1931.<sup>55</sup> Attendance was between 1,000 to 3,000 per game.<sup>56</sup> It was clearly a step up from Jamestown. Whether initiated by Risberg or Jamestown’s baseball officials, leaving North Dakota was no doubt an economic decision. While fans think in terms of loyalty and community pride, teams think of the bottom line,

► Continued on page 19

## ► RISBERG

Continued from page 18

and players, then and now, think about financial obligations and family. Jumping from team to team was the norm for independent players.

After two seasons playing for Sioux Falls, Risberg moved his family to Klamath Falls, Oregon, and continued playing ball for a few years into his early 40s. They eventually settled in northern California, where for many years Swede owned a tavern called “Risberg’s” in Weed.<sup>57</sup> He spent his final years living with his son Robert’s family in Red Bluff and died there in a convalescent home in 1975 on his 81st birthday, the last of the Black Sox to leave the earth.

### Notes

1. The quotation is from Robert Frost’s poem, *Chicago*. The population for Chicago is an approximation from the 1920 census. According to the 1930 census, Jamestown had a population of 8,187.

2. Jim Nitz, “[Happy Felsch](#),” SABR BioProject, accessed on May 20, 2019.

3. Ibid.

4. Kelly Boyer Sagert and Rod Nelson, “[Swede Risberg](#),” SABR BioProject, accessed on May 20, 2019.

5. Ibid.

6. Al Warden, “The Sporting Highway,” *Ogden Standard-Examiner*, October 3, 1939: 3-B.

7. Sagert and Nelson, op. cit.

8. Nitz, op. cit.

9. Sagert and Nelson, op. cit.

10. The distinction is explained well by Mark Metcalf in “[Organized Baseball’s Night Birth](#),” *SABR Baseball Research Journal*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (Phoenix, Arizona: SABR, Fall 2016), 47: “Organized Baseball was the term used to describe Major League Baseball and the associated minor leagues.” Although Jamestown fielded minor-league teams in 1922, 1923, 1936, and 1937, at the time Risberg played it was not part of Organized Baseball.

11. Kyle P. McNary, *Ted ‘Double Duty’ Radcliffe: 36 Years of Pitching & Catching in Baseball’s Negro Leagues* (McNary Publishing, 1994), 90.

12. Ibid.

13. In 1930, only about 10% of rural and small-town homes had electricity. See: “[Rural Electrification Administration](#),” Roosevelt Institute, accessed on May 20, 2019.

14. Bruce Berg, *Common Ground: McElroy Park’s Jack Brown Stadium* (Common Ground Press, 1996), 4.

15. Terry Bohn, *Sunday Afternoons on the Prairie: The Growth of Baseball in North Dakota*. (CreateSpace, 2016), 30.

16. The author’s research has identified games in which Grover Cleveland Alexander, Cool Papa Bell, Jimmie Foxx, Charlie Gehringer, Lefty Grove, Goose Goslin, Ted Lyons, Heinie Manush, Satchel Paige, Bullet Rogan, Al Simmons,

and Hilton Smith played in Jamestown.

17. Phil S. Dixon, *The Monarchs 1920-1938 Featuring Wilber ‘Bullet’ Rogan* (Sioux Falls, South Dakota: Mariah Press, 2002), 160.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid., 100.

20. The 1934 American Association champions left Jamestown with a 5-1 victory.

21. Although billed as the Athletics, the team would be better described as the Earle Mack All-Stars since it included players from the Senators, Tigers, and White Sox. They edged Jamestown 3-2 on October 4, 1932.

22. *Jamestown Sun*, August 12, 1929. That was the newspaper’s only reference to the Black Sox Scandal during Risberg’s entire stay in Jamestown.

23. Alan Muchlinski, *After the Black Sox: The Swede Risberg Story* (Author House Publishing, 2005), 117.

24. *Jamestown Sun*, August 14, 1929.

25. *Jamestown Sun*, August 19, 1929.

26. Ibid.

27. Sagert and Nelson, op. cit.

28. *Waterloo (Iowa) Evening Courier*, June 20, 1929.

29. Muchlinski, op. cit. 69-70.

30. *Havre (Montana) Daily News Promoter*, March 29, 1929.

31. Muchlinski, op. cit.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. *Brandon (Manitoba) Daily Sun*, July 17, 1929.

35. *Jamestown Sun*, March 27, 1930.

36. Ibid. Jamestown sold 10,530 grandstand tickets at 10 cents each and 12,581 admissions at 50 cents each for approximately 36 home games.

37. *Bismarck Tribune*, March 19, 1930.

38. Ibid.

39. *Jamestown Sun*, June 19, 1930.

40. *Jamestown Sun*, July 12, 1930.

41. Stew Thornley, *Baseball in Minnesota: A Definitive History* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2006), 124.

42. *Jamestown Sun*, September 2, 1930.

43. *Jamestown Sun*, September 13, 1930.

44. *Moorhead Daily News*, May 26, 1930.

45. Ibid.

46. *Jamestown Sun*, May 31, 1930.

47. *Bismarck Tribune*, November 19, 1930.

48. *Jamestown Sun*, March 21, 1931.

49. Ibid.

50. *Bismarck Tribune*, March 21, 1930.

51. Muchlinski, op. cit., 34.

52. *Jamestown Sun*, April 9, 1931.

53. *Jamestown Sun*, August 24, 1932.

54. *Moorhead Daily News*, May 22, 1931.

55. Muchlinski, op. cit., 79-81.

56. Ibid.

57. Sagert and Nelson, op. cit.

# Don't believe the dope: Few saw fix coming

By Kevin P. Braig

[kbraig@shumaker.com](mailto:kbraig@shumaker.com)

Like many other aspects of the 1919 World Series, reports relating to odds-making and betting on the outcome of the Series are contradictory. On one hand, some accounts claimed the action was hot and the odds shifted dramatically toward Cincinnati as “hundreds believed that the thing was fixed” before Game One.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, almost all contemporaneous reports describe sluggish handle and typical odds movement from the day after the Chicago White Sox clinched the American League pennant to the day the Cincinnati Reds clinched the Series with a 10-5 win in Game Eight.

The media's coverage of the 1919 World Series presents a textbook example of the “golden age of media coverage of sports betting.” Reporters covered the betting action on the Series with every bit as much — and perhaps more — detail as David Purdum of ESPN or Darren Rovell of the Action Network do today.

Betting on sports was less centralized in 1919 than it is today and, of course, reporters did not enjoy the advantages that digital network communications provide today. Still, a reasonably representative data set supplemented by anecdotal evidence is available to be analyzed.

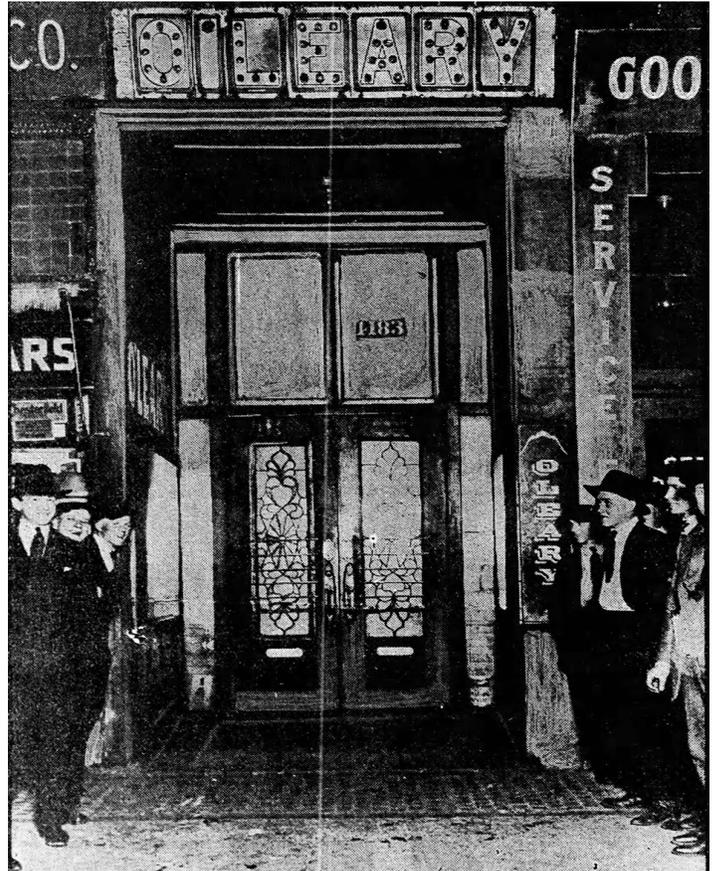
There is little to no reason to think the fundamental economics of odds-making in the early 20th century was radically different from the fundamental economics of odds-making in the early 21st century. For this paper, the fundamental economics of odds-making are contained in economist Kōleman Strumpf's 2003 paper *Illegal Sports Bookmakers*.<sup>2</sup> In his paper, Professor Strumpf found that:

- ◆ Economic self-interest plays a central role in shaping the industrial organizations of bookmakers.
- ◆ Bookmakers are not risk-averse or perfectly diversified, but rather gamble and take positions on games.
- ◆ Bookmakers have some limited market power and use that power to price discriminate by setting adverse odds for home-town teams, the sentimental favorites.

This paper will focus on odds-making and betting on the 1919 World Series in Cincinnati, Chicago and New York. The focus on Cincinnati and Chicago is justified by Professor Strumpf's findings that bookmakers in those cities should have been able to charge local fans higher prices in the form of worse odds on the Reds and White Sox, the sentimental favorites. The focus on New York is justified by the fact that much of the planning and preparation to fix the 1919 World Series occurred in New York.

The analysis in this paper includes examination of the following aspects of the 1919 World Series odds-making and betting markets:

- ◆ Comparison of the odds that the favored White Sox



**James O'Leary's saloon and gambling hall at 4183 South Halsted Street in Chicago was one of the most renowned betting establishments in the country. It was also where the betting market during the 1919 World Series was at its most peculiar.** (Photo: *Chicago Tribune*, March 31, 1935)

would win the 1919 World Series to the odds on other World Series favorites, particularly favorites since 1985;

- ◆ Key injury reports, Game One starting pitcher speculation, and a key expert report from former New York Giants' star pitcher-turned-analyst, Christy Mathewson;

- ◆ Opening odds and betting and changes in the odds and betting as the 1919 World Series played out;

- ◆ Betting practices of celebrity/quasi-professional bettors Nick “The Greek” Dandolos, Abe Attell, and George Cohan; and discussion of reasons to doubt Abe Attell ever stood atop a chair in the lobby of the Sinton Hotel in Cincinnati clutching \$1,000 bills and frenetically booking bets on the White Sox; and

- ◆ Odds-making and betting at two of the most renowned and respected betting establishments in the country: Jack Doyle's pool room in Times Square in New York and James O'Leary's handbook in the Stockyards District on the South Side of Chicago.

► Continued on page 21

**Table 1**

Year	Favorite	Fractional Odds	American Odds	Implied Probability	Result
1919	White Sox	4 to 5	-125	55.56%	Lost to Reds (5-3)
1987	Twins	4 to 5	-125	55.56%	Def. Cardinals (4-3)
1992	Blue Jays	4 to 5	-125	55.56%	Def. Braves (4-2)
2002	Angels	5 to 6	-120	54.55%	Def. Giants (4-3)
2015	Mets	25 to 29	-116	53.70%	Lost to Royals (4-1)
2014	Royals	10 to 11	-110	52.38%	Lost to Giants (4-3)

► **DOPE**

Continued from page 20

Based on the analysis contained herein, this paper concludes that with one important exception — odds-making and betting at James O’Leary’s handbook — odds-making and betting on the 1919 World Series looked pretty much like one would expect it to look if the Series had been played completely on the level.



**James O’Leary**

It does not appear that other than at O’Leary’s handbook the odds changed much from the open until after the White Sox lost Game One and did not change dramatically until after Chicago also lost Game Two. Further, it does not appear that “hundreds of people” knew the 1919 World Series was fixed before the first pitch of Game One was thrown or that any significant number of people had pre-Series knowledge of The Fix and acted to bet Cincinnati based on such knowledge.



**Jack Doyle**

Make no mistake: The 1919 World Series was fixed. A few people outside of The Fix operators really knew or were actionably confident that “The Fix was in” and, undoubtedly, a significant number more were suspicious.

But no contemporaneous odds-making or betting evidence has been located that would support Hugh Fullerton’s October 3, 1920 claim that “[s]o openly and notoriously was the attempted prostitution of the world series carried out that before the first ball was pitched hundreds believed that gamblers at last had succeeded in corrupting the sport which had been considered incorruptible.”<sup>3</sup>

**Comparison to Other World Series Favorites**

A good place to begin analyzing the odds-making and betting on the 1919 World Series is by comparing the odds on the favored White Sox to the odds on other World Series favorites. On October 3, 1920 — after Chicago pitcher

Eddie Cicotte confessed his involvement in The Fix to the Cook County Grand Jury — Hugh Fullerton wrote:

Never before in a world’s series (with one exception) had any team been as greatly outclassed as the Reds were in that series.... The odds quoted by the gamblers three days before the Series opened [September 28] were at two and a half to one [-250, 71.43% implied probability] that Chicago would win.<sup>4</sup>

Fullerton’s facts are plainly incorrect. The White Sox clinched the American League pennant on September 24, 1919. The next day, the *Chicago Tribune* reported Chicago’s bookmakers had installed the White Sox as a 4 to 5 favorite to win the World Series [-125, 55.56%].<sup>5</sup> According to a September 29 column by Harvey T. Woodruff, that figure attracted an \$8,000 bet [\$121,809.94 in today’s dollars] on the Reds from Milwaukee.<sup>6</sup> Still, the odds moved in Chicago’s direction to 13 to 20 [-154, 60.61%].<sup>7</sup>

No reports were found in Chicago, Cincinnati, or New York newspapers of the pre-Game One odds favoring the White Sox that topped the 61 percent implied probability of victory in the Series,<sup>8</sup> much less approaching Fullerton’s implied probability that Chicago was 71.43% likely to capture the Series.

Further, one only has to look back to the 1916 World Series between the Boston Red Sox — led by star pitcher Babe Ruth — and the Brooklyn Robins to find a bigger opening favorite than the 1919 White Sox. In 1916, Ruth’s Red Sox opened as 5 to 7 favorites [-140, 58.33%] at Jack Doyle’s pool room in Times Square in New York City and within an hour after the Robins were declared National League champions, \$3,500 was placed on deposit at Doyle’s to be bet against \$2,500 that the Red Sox would win. As *The (New York) Evening World* observed, “The money at Doyle’s is the only real coin that has been shown, and the odds fixed there are probably correct.”<sup>9</sup>

Comparisons to the odds on favorites in more recent World Series reveal that the opening odds on the White Sox would tie for the fourth weakest odds on a World Series favorite since 1985 (See Table 1.<sup>10</sup>) In other words, since 1985, odds-makers thought more highly of the World Series

► Continued on page 22

## ► DOPE

Continued from page 21

favorite than odds-makers thought of the White Sox in 29 of 34 World Series matchups (85.29%).

These figures demonstrate that while Hugh Fullerton strongly thought Chicago was nearly a lock to win the 1919 World Series, Chicago's odds-makers and bettors had much more respect for Cincinnati and expected the matchup to be one that was fairly even and would be closely contested.

### Key Injury Reports

It is well-established that key injuries, starting pitcher matchups and the views of key experts can move betting odds in baseball. The 1919 World Series was no exception. Yet, prior discussion of odds movement and betting on the Series has heretofore dismissed or minimized these factors.

In *Eight Men Out*, Eliot Asinof relied on an October 1, 1919, report in the *New York Times* that odds in New York shifted toward the Reds on September 30 as evidence The Fix had become “actionable information” in the betting markets.<sup>11</sup> But Asinof dismissed the first sentence of the report which clearly identified the reason for the move: “The report to the effect that Eddie Cicotte has a sore arm, which was current in New York yesterday, had a material effect on the world series betting.”<sup>12</sup>

Rather than accept at face value that doubts about Cicotte's pitching fitness and form had emerged, Asinof drew the following conclusions: “The smart money had abandoned the White Sox. The excuse given for — or so it was rumored — was a report that Cicotte's arm was sore. Gamblers knew this was nothing more than a cover-up for the fix.”

There are numerous alternate, reasonable bases to reject Asinof's conclusion that information, whether accurate or inaccurate, about Cicotte's fitness was a “cover-up for the fix,” including:

- ◆ No first-hand source with direct, personal knowledge of both The Fix and the origin of the information about Cicotte's fitness has been located that would corroborate the conclusion that the health status of Cicotte's arm was a “cover-up.”

- ◆ As Professor Strumpf has stated, gamblers are economically self-interested and creating a “cover up” that weakened the odds on Chicago — such as Cicotte was suffering from a sore arm — would have conflicted with the economic self-interest of Reds' backers — including those with knowledge of The Fix, who would make more money if the White Sox odds strengthened.

- ◆ On September 28, the most popular and respected pitching expert in New York, Christy Mathewson, wrote in the *New York Times* that bettors should beware putting too much faith in Cicotte and that he believed the Reds hitters would enjoy success against Cicotte.<sup>13</sup>

As is discussed below, several reports relating to the odds

the morning of Game One indicate money did not “abandon” Chicago on September 30 or the morning of October 1.

As is also discussed below, one of the places in New York where the odds moved toward Cincinnati was Jack Doyle's Times Square pool hall and, if other gamblers had knowledge of The Fix, it is likely that Doyle would have had that knowledge too. Finally, Cicotte was hit fairly hard in his last two appearances during the 1919 regular season, which may have been an alternate basis for bettors to believe Cicotte was not fit or in top form.<sup>14</sup>

Health and pitching uncertainty also swirled around the Reds during the days before Game One. On September 30, Frederick G. Lieb reported in the *New York Herald* that “Cincinnati fandom received quite a shock to-day when Heinie Groh, the little captain and star third baseman of the Reds, confessed that the injury which kept him out of the Redland lineup for the last month of the season wasn't a bruised finger, as was announced by the club, but that the finger actually was broken.”<sup>15</sup> However, the report also confirmed that Groh would in fact play in the Series as he had in the last two regular-season games after missing a month of action.

Until at least the night before Game One, most scribes believed manager Pat Moran would start 21-game winner Slim Sallee against Cicotte. However, on September 30, Moran and White Sox skipper Kid Gleason “established somewhat of a world series precedent” by announcing the day before Game One that Dutch Ruether and Cicotte would oppose each other in Game One.<sup>16</sup>

Without any first-hand, corroborating evidence that anyone in New York outside a small band of fixers had actionable information about The Fix and with publicly available information that the White Sox's star pitcher possibly was less than 100% fit and an esteemed ex-New York pitching star believed Chicago was relying too heavily on its star hurler (even if completely healthy), Asinof's contention that movement of the odds in New York toward Cincinnati is best characterized as evidence of the author's “hindsight bias,” not evidence The Fix had attained the level of actionable information in the New York betting market.

A more reasonable analysis of all the information that was available in 1919 is that the odds in New York moved slightly toward Cincinnati on September 30 as:

- ◆ Bettors absorbed the uncertain information about Cicotte's fitness and Mathewson's views on Chicago's over-dependence on Cicotte; and

- ◆ Bettors became more certain of the identity of the Reds' starting pitcher and that Groh's injured finger might inhibit his performance, but not keep him out of the lineup entirely.<sup>17</sup>

### Opening Odds and Changes in Odds

The work week of the 1919 World Series began on

► Continued on page 23

► DOPE

Continued from page 22

Monday, September 29 in Cincinnati. According to the Reds’ beat writer, Jack Ryder, there was heavy betting that day. It just was not betting on baseball ... or even in Cincinnati. Ryder reported:

It was a big afternoon at the Latonia track, for most of the baseball bugs, including a large delegation of the Red players, dashed over the river to glance at the ponies. The track officials reported that it was one of the biggest Monday crowds they have ever entertained and that the mutual machines did an unusually heavy business.<sup>18</sup>

Back in the city, according to Ryder and others, there was “very little betting” on the World Series before Game One.<sup>19</sup> But that was not due to a lack of money backing the White Sox. On the same day the Latonia track was enjoying record handle, Harvey T. Woodruff reported in the *Chicago Tribune* the Chicago “board of trade has \$25,000 [\$365,871.15 in today’s dollars] seeking even money, which will be taken to Redland and offered at 5 to 4 [-125, 55.56%] if even money cannot be secured.”<sup>20</sup>

One would think the fixers would have pounced on the Chicago Board of Trade’s \$25,000 the moment it hit the city limits. To the contrary, on October 1, not only did the *Chicago Tribune* not report anyone willing to cover the Board of Trade’s proposed big bet, but it also reported that “big money” from New York seeking action on the White Sox was being ignored at stronger odds, stating:

It has been learned that a big sum of money from New York has been here several days and offered at odds of 7 to 5 on the White Sox [-140, 58.33%], and only a little of it has been covered by the enthusiastic Cincinnati fans.

Table 2

Date	Odds Location	Favorite	Fractional Odds	American Odds	Implied Probability
Sept-25	Chicago	White Sox	4 to 5	-125	55.56%
Sept-29	Chicago	White Sox	13 to 20	-154	60.61%
Sept-30	New York	White Sox	5 to 6	-120	54.55%
	Cincinnati	White Sox	5 to 7	-140	58.33%
	Chicago (O’Leary’s)	Reds	5 to 6	-120	54.55%
Oct-1	Cincinnati	White Sox	5 to 7	-140	58.33%
<b>Reds win Game One (Reds lead 1-0)</b>					
Oct-2	New York	Reds	7 to 10	-143	58.82%
	Cincinnati	Reds	5 to 6	-120	54.55%
<b>Reds win Game Two (Reds lead 2-0)</b>					
Oct-3	New York	Reds	1 to 4.5	-450	81.82%
	Chicago	Reds	3 to 5	-167	60.00%
	Chicago	Reds	5 to 9	-180	64.48%
<b>White Sox win Game Three (Reds lead 2-1)</b>					
Oct-4	Chicago	White Sox	5 to 6	-120	54.55%
<b>Reds win Game Four (Reds lead 3-1)</b>					
Oct-5	New York	Reds	1 to 6	-600	85.71%
	Chicago	Reds	2 to 7	-350	77.78%
<b>Game Five rained out</b>					
<b>Reds win Game Five (Reds lead 4-1)</b>					
Oct-6	Chicago	Reds	1-15	-1500	93.75%
<b>Betting on the outcome of the World Series effectively ends</b>					

The New York money also was to be placed at 6 to 5 [-120, 54.55%] that Chicago wins the first game, and the commissioner in charge of the bank roll found few takers. It looks as if the odds might go as high as 2 to 1 [-200, 66.67%] in favor of the Sox before the first game tomorrow.<sup>21</sup>

As shown in Table 2, in Cincinnati, according to the *Chicago Tribune*, on Tuesday, September 30 — the day before Game One — the White Sox “still rule[d] a heavy favorite at odds from 7 to 5 to 3 to 2.” On October 1, the *Cincinnati Enquirer* reported:

There has been very little betting on the series to date. White Sox money is prevalent, but nearly all of it is offered at evens, or six to five at best. There are many thousands of dollars in town to bet on the White Sox at even money, but no takers. The Reds supporters, while expressing great confidence in their team, are demanding seven and eight to five, and this is a little more than

Sox speculators care to offer.

Not a single wager of any considerable size had even registered up to a late hour last evening. There may be some action today, but there will have to be mutual concessions. All day yesterday Sox money was going begging all over town with no one to cover it at even money. The White Sox continue favorites in the dope and betting talk. It is mostly talk. Owing to the weak purchasing power of a dollar these days money speaks in whispers.<sup>22</sup>

On October 2, the *Chicago Tribune* reported, “With the arrival of out of town visitors, betting on the series became brisker and more Cincinnati money was in evidence, but odds were demanded.” Several substantial wagers were placed at 6 to 5 that the White Sox would win the first game and 7 to 5 [-140, 58.33%] the Sox would win the Series.<sup>23</sup>

The *New York Times* also reported

► Continued on page 24

## ► DOPE

Continued from page 23

the odds in Cincinnati the morning of Game One still had the White Sox 5 to 7 favorites [-140, 58.33%]<sup>24</sup> and that “Bets of \$33,000 [\$502,466.00 in today’s dollars] were lost on Wednesday’s game by the Woodland Bards, the 234 ‘sweet singers’ from Chicago, who came here in an effort to root the White Sox to victory.”<sup>25</sup>

On October 3, the *Boston Globe* reported Chicago as an even bigger 5 to 8 favorite [-160, 61.54%] in Cincinnati the morning of Game One.<sup>26</sup> These real-time, on-the-scene reports flatly contradict accounts that the odds moved dramatically in Cincinnati toward the Reds the morning of Game One.

Even after Cincinnati trounced Chicago, 9-1, in Game One, odds reports on the ultimate outcome of the World Series were conflicting. In New York, according to the *Chicago Tribune*, Cincinnati moved to a 7 to 10 favorite.<sup>27</sup> The *Boston Globe* reported the Reds had transitioned to 5 to 6 favorites in Cincinnati.<sup>28</sup> But the *Chicago Tribune* reported Reds’ supporters still were asking even money on the outcome of the Series. The *New York Times* added additional detail to the change in the odds, reporting:

There had been up to this morning very little Cincinnati money in evidence. It appears, however, that it was not lack of confidence in the team and its ability to mow down the White Sox which kept the local partisans from letting their money talk as it was a canny desire to get better odds by withholding their wagers. At any rate when followers of the White Sox began today in the after breakfast hours to offer odds hovering around 7 to 5, the concealed backers of the Reds made their appearance, and considerable money was bet at these odds or thereabouts.

...

[As a result of the Reds’ Game One victory,] the complexion of the betting has entirely changed. Instead of demanding 7 to 5, or even 8 to 5, as was the case last night and this morning, some Cincinnati money has been placed at evens tonight. It has appeared, in spots, but not in bulk, at more preferential rates for the White Sox backers, some of whom have received odds of 11 to 10, and occasionally 6 to 5, in small wagers placed at about the dinner hour.<sup>29</sup>

After Cincinnati won Game Two, 4-2, and jumped to a 2-game lead in the Series, the odds, finally, dramatically moved toward the Reds.<sup>30</sup> In a story titled “Chicago ‘Wise Ones’ Are Putting Their Money on the Redlegs,” the *Cincinnati Enquirer* reported on October 3 that Cincinnati had become a solid 3 to 5 favorite [-166.67, 60%]<sup>31</sup> and reported on October 4 that the odds strengthened further to 5 to 9 [-180, 64.48%] before Game Three.<sup>32</sup>

White Sox backers in New York had become even more skeptical, refusing to wager on Chicago at inflated odds as long as 1 to 4.5 [-450, 81.82%] according to a *New York Times* report on October 3.<sup>33</sup>

According to Bozeman Bulger of The *Evening World* in New York, the White Sox’s 3-0 win behind pitcher Dickey Kerr in Game Three temporarily restored the faith of Chicago’s backers. Bulger wrote:

With the count two to one in favor of the Reds so far, the betting commissioners are badly confused in fixing the betting odds. In a nine-game series it is quite different from a seven game affair. The moral effect is telling. Cincinnatians are loath to step out. And with the White Sox rooters overanxious several big bets were placed this morning at 6-5 [-120, 54.55%], despite the fact the Reds still have the edge.<sup>34</sup>

But that faith was short-lived. After Cincinnati’s Jimmy Ring won a 2-0 pitcher’s duel against Eddie Cicotte in Game Four to put the Reds up 3-1 in the World Series, the Reds skyrocketed to 1 to 6 [-600, 85.71%] favorites in New York,<sup>35</sup> although Cincinnati remained a somewhat more modest 2 to 7 [-350, 77.78%] favorite in Chicago.<sup>36</sup>

Reds manager Pat Moran could not contain himself, saying, “It was amusing to me when the White Sox people were offering big odds that they would beat us. How are they going to beat pitching like Ring displayed yesterday? Not a chance in the world.”<sup>37</sup>

When Cincinnati’s Hod Eller again blanked the Sox, 5-0, in Game Five and the Reds took a commanding 4-1 lead in the World Series, the media proclaimed betting on the outcome of the Series over. Under the headline, “Series Betting Ends,” the *New York Times* observed, “The betting in Chicago on the world’s series has become almost entirely a matter of one game at a time. There is talk tonight of a few wagers at long odds, two of them being at fifteen to one [-1500, 93.75%], on the ultimate result, but the sums were comparatively small.”<sup>38</sup>

In general, there is little about the odds-making or betting on the 1919 World Series that suggests a significant number of bettors possessed actionable knowledge that “The Fix was in.” Almost everywhere, the White Sox opened up as somewhat weak favorites and — after the odds bounced around a little in response to pre-Game One uncertain information stemming from injury reports and Christy Mathewson’s expert analysis — went off the morning of Game One as favorites.

After Cincinnati seized early control of the Series, White Sox backers began to beat a retreat and completely abandoned Chicago after the Reds took an insurmountable 4-1 lead in the Series. From afar, the action on the World Series looks almost perfectly normal.

However, because there is no dispute the 1919 World

► Continued on page 25

## ► DOPE

Continued from page 24

Series was fixed, a closer, more personal examination of some of the bettors and odds-makers is warranted. When a micro-examination of celebrity/quasi-professional bettors and leading odds-makers is undertaken, a clear anomaly is revealed. But this anomaly did not arise in Cincinnati as Eliot Asinof, Hugh Fullerton, and James Crusinberry would have you believe. Nor did the anomaly arise in New York, where The Fix was masterminded.

Rather, the anomaly arose in Chicago, right in the shadow of Comiskey Park: at James O'Leary's handbook in the Stockyards District on the South Side.

### Celebrity Betting Practices

There is no doubt celebrity and quasi-professional bettors wagered on the 1919 World Series. Under the headline, "Celebrities Were There," the *Dayton Daily News* identified a roster of celebrities present in the lobby of the Sinton Hotel in Cincinnati, including members of the National Commission, theater magnate George M. Cohan, former boxer Abe Attell, and a host of major-league ballplayers, including Chicago Cubs shortstop Joe Tinker, who the newspaper caught "listening in while his friend tried to place a bet on the later battered Hose team."<sup>39</sup>

But the *Dayton Daily News* did not mention the most famous gambler in Cincinnati for Game One of the World Series: Nick "The Greek" Dandolos. By the time Game One arrived, Nick the Greek already was a gambling legend in Chicago and beyond. In 1919, in addition to wagering on the World Series, he reportedly "broke one of the roulette banks in Monte Carlo."<sup>40</sup>

According to the *Chicago Tribune*, on the morning of Game One, Nick the Greek "wagered \$6,500 [\$98,970.59] on the Sox against \$5,000 [-130, 56.52%]."<sup>41</sup> The report does not identify who booked Nick the Greek's bet, but the bet is strong evidence that the White Sox remained the favorite the morning of Game One and that Nick the Greek did not have any knowledge of The Fix that morning.

Broadway actor and writer George M. Cohan also was a hard-core baseball fan and a respected sports bettor in 1919. On the morning of Game One, Cohan was in the lobby "all foxed up and ready to applaud any good playing, although a supporter of the Reds."<sup>42</sup> The *Dayton Daily News* probably believed Cohan was backing Cincinnati before Game One because Cohan had been in Cincinnati on September 27 on theater business, attended one of the Reds' last regular season games, and "announced after the game that he would back the Reds in the coming world series if he received the proper odds."<sup>43</sup>

On the other hand, on October 2, the *Akron Beacon Journal* reported Cohan "came here as a White Sox supporter, and brought something like \$25,000 to place on

the Gleasonites."<sup>44</sup>

In *Eight Men Out*, Eliot Asinof claimed Cohan did not bet his bankroll (\$30,000) in Cincinnati on the White Sox because fixer Abe Attell tipped Cohan off that "The Fix was in" and Cohan switched his backing to the Reds via a phone call to direct his partner, Sam Harris, to bet Cincinnati in New York.<sup>45</sup>

No evidence of Cohan giving such direction has been found. Also, the need for Attell's tip is contradicted by Cohan's own September 27 statements to the *Cincinnati Enquirer* that he was strongly considering backing Cincinnati to win the World Series days before Asinof claims he ran into Attell.<sup>46</sup>

There is still more evidence that contradicts Asinof's theory. On October 2, after the White Sox lost Game One, the *Pittsburgh Daily Post* reported that "George Cohan [still] wanted to bet \$25,000 on the Sox before the second game."<sup>47</sup> Likewise, the *St. Louis Star and Times* reported "George Cohan is carrying a roll of \$25,000 and he is still anxious to wager that the Chicago White Sox will win the series. At game time today Mr. Cohan had placed little of his money."<sup>48</sup>

On October 4, the *Star-Gazette* in Elmira, New York reported "George Cohan was around the Blackstone lobby yesterday [before Game Three in Chicago] toting a bank roll that was big enough to choke a hippo. The Yankee Doodle Boy wanted to bet on the Sox despite anything and everything."<sup>49</sup> On October 6, with the Reds dominating the Series 4 games to 1, the *Boston Globe* reported, "Even the World's Series fails to cheer George M. Cohan. He has been backing the Sox."<sup>50</sup>

The only first-hand 1919 reports of Abe Attell's betting that could be located were from James C. O'Leary of the *Boston Globe* (presumably no relation to the eponymous Chicago bookmaker.)

On October 2, O'Leary reported from Cincinnati that "Abe Attell won about \$2500 [\$38,065 in today's dollars] on yesterday's game and is playing the Moranites to win again today."<sup>51</sup> The next day, O'Leary reported:

Abe Attell, who cleaned up about \$2500 yesterday, repeated today, and altogether has cleaned up about \$10,000 [\$145,148.46 in today's dollars] on the two business days. It has been said that Abe is betting George Cohan's money.<sup>52</sup>

O'Leary's reports corroborate that Abe Attell was in Cincinnati, betting, doing very well, and possibly assisting George Cohan. But O'Leary's account of Attell's behavior is still more muted and mundane than the legend created by James Crusinberry's 1956 account in *Sports Illustrated*.

Crusinberry claimed he saw Attell in the Sinton Hotel lobby the morning of Game One "standing on a chair — his hands filled with paper money — calling for wagers on

► Continued on page 26

## ► DOPE

Continued from page 25

the ball games. ... He was waving big money. There were \$1,000 bills between his fingers of both hands and he was yelling in a loud voice that he would cover any amount of Chicago money."<sup>53</sup>

There are numerous reasons to doubt Crusinberry's claim. First, the media recognized Attell as a "celebrity" as evidenced by the *Dayton Daily News* including him on its "World Series Celebrity A-List."

But there are no 1919 reports of Attell standing on a chair, booking bets, and making it rain \$1,000 bills. If such a scene occurred, it seems likely the media would have reported it.

Most conspicuously, reports from Crusinberry's own paper, the *Chicago Tribune*, do not report anything at all about Attell. Rather, the paper reported the most attention-grabbing activity occurring in the Sinton Hotel lobby the morning of Game One was White Sox first baseman Chick Gandil mending fences over breakfast with Cleveland outfielder Tris Speaker following their fistfight at Comiskey Park earlier in the season.<sup>54</sup>

The story Crusinberry filed for the *Tribune* gave no indication that he believed gambling was influencing play on the diamond, but rather Chicago merely had been overconfident of its superiority. Crusinberry wrote:

When an 8 to 5 favorite in a world's series is beaten by a score of 9 to 1 in the first game, it looks as if all the dope has been upset and all the wise experts are cuckoos. Before the Sox began the combat today, the betting was 8 to 5 in their favor, but the Reds beat them just the same. Something was wrong, and it looks as if it was nothing else but overconfidence on the part of Chicago's team.

If that was the main cause of defeat, the severe beating was better than if the Sox had hooked up in a close contest and lost. There will be no overconfidence on the Sox team tomorrow when they meet the Reds in the second battle. The confidence may be on the other side. The best thing that could have happened to the Sox in their present mental condition was the crushing defeat today. From now on they will fight.<sup>55</sup>

Second, reports of conspicuous, big betting in Cincinnati did emerge, but not until after the World Series started and the betting did not involve Attell and it was not at the Sinton Hotel. Westbrook Pegler reported "a party of wild Western oil men" bet thousands of dollars on both the White Sox and the Reds from their seats behind home plate before

Game Two.<sup>56</sup> The *New York Times* reported after Cincinnati won Game One: "Betting appeared more active in the Hotel Havlin than in any of the other hotels, with the Reds as favorites."<sup>57</sup>

Third, by 1919, boxers in general and Attell in particular were already perceived by the media and public as sketchy figures. In 1912, accusations were so strong that Attell had attempted to fix his fight with "Harlem Tommy" Murphy that Attell threatened to sue for libel.<sup>58</sup>

The media's low expectations for boxers like Attell is illustrated by a 1906 report in *The Daily Times* of Davenport,

Iowa, which opined with respect to another fighter, "[he] is about 32 years of age and has been fighting for more than 12 years. ... While he may have participated in one or two fakes, he has not done so often enough to be classed a 'crooked boxer.'"<sup>59</sup>

Finally, perhaps most importantly, unlike Chicago, Cincinnati was definitely not a "wide open" gambling town when the 1919 World Series arrived. After Henry T. Hunt claimed the mayor's office, Cincinnati law enforcement created a "gambling squad" that by the end of 1916 shut down all sports betting handbooks in the city and drove gambling across the Ohio River to Newport, Kentucky.<sup>60</sup>

Cincinnati law enforcement's gambling squad appears to have been on high alert when the Latonia race track — now known as Turfway Park, located just 10 miles from downtown Cincinnati across the Ohio River in Northern Kentucky — held a meet.<sup>61</sup>

In 1914, Ohio native Hugh Fullerton documented Cincinnati City Hall's "crusade" against sports betting handbooks as part of a three-part series he wrote for *The American Magazine*. In that series, Fullerton wrote, "Cincinnati affords a unique case proving that gambling can be suppressed if the authorities really desire it."<sup>62</sup> In *Eight Men Out*, Asinof claimed it was Fullerton who saw Attell making a scene in the Sinton Hotel.<sup>63</sup> But no evidence that Fullerton ever made this particular claim has been located.

Further, no evidence was found to support Asinof's claim that Fullerton wired a pre-Game One warning to the newspapers that published his syndicated column and advised them to print "ADVISE ALL NOT TO BET ON THIS SERIES. UGLY RUMORS AFLOAT." It is clear Fullerton did not mention that he had issued such a warning in his post-World Series reports that were published on October 10 and December 15 of 1919 or in his reports in the immediate aftermath of the White Sox player confessions to the grand jury on October 3 and October 20, 1920.<sup>64</sup>

Rather, Fullerton did not make any claim until 1935 to have seen *The Fix* coming and to have tried to warn the public not to bet when he made the claim in a column



Abe Attell

► Continued on page 27

## ► DOPE

Continued from page 26

for *The Sporting News*.<sup>65</sup>

Fullerton's pre-Game One confidence in the White Sox appears to have evolved in the weeks leading up to the meeting in Cincinnati. On September 18, 1919, Fullerton wrote, "The world's series of 1919 presents one of the toughest doping problems ever offered." He added the Chicago vs. Cincinnati matchup "is unlike any ever played in modern baseball with the exception of the battle royal between Detroit and Pittsburgh [in 1909]."<sup>66</sup>

On September 30, after putting the matchup through his system,<sup>67</sup> Fullerton concluded "Chicago's White Sox dope to win the world's series in five out of eight games. The extension of the series to nine games gives the Reds three victories and prolongs the struggle which in a four out of seven series the White Sox probably would have won in four out of five — on the dope."<sup>68</sup>

It appears that it was not until October 6, after the Reds had taken an insurmountable 4-1 lead, that Fullerton first publicly articulated concern about the integrity of the World Series. On that day, under the sub-headline, "More Ugly Talk Heard," newspapers in San Francisco and Muncie published Fullerton's report which raised the issue that gamblers might be trying to fix the World Series. However, Fullerton concluded his report by saying that fixing the Series would be impossible:

There is more ugly talk and more suspicion among the fans and among others in this series than there ever has been in any world's series. The rumors of crookedness, of fixed games and plots are thick. It is not necessary to dignify them by telling what they are, but the sad part is that such suspicion of baseball is so widespread.

There are three different lies making the rounds — all equally ridiculous. The only answer to such stories is that if anyone can evolve a way of making baseball crooked without being discovered in his second crooked move he probably could peddle his secret to some owners for a million. It cannot be done.<sup>69</sup>

Why would Fullerton have felt the need to warn the public before Game One against betting on the World Series if he still believed after the White Sox had fallen behind 4-1 that The Fix could actually be executed was "ridiculous?" To believe Fullerton voluntarily assumed a duty to warn anyone before Game One is to believe he acted to warn against an idea he (publicly) said was absurd. This would have risked jeopardizing his long-standing relationships in baseball — particularly with Chicago owner Charles Comiskey — with little or no expectation of positive compensation in return.

Based on the information available that reflects Fuller-

ton's measured and rational appetite for risk and his studious acquisition of knowledge of odds and gambling, it seems incredible that Fullerton would have been willing to stake his reputation on such a crazy bet by giving a pre-Game One warning based on an event he believed could not actually occur.

This is not to say Fullerton and/or Crusinberry were negligent in the fall of 1919 or that they were deceitful or deceptive decades later when they recalled the events that swirled around the World Series. Rather, it is more likely that the passage of time, memory failure, memory distortion, and personal biases led them to consolidate events into a single time and/or to lose a firm grasp of the subtler details.<sup>70</sup>

There is no doubt both Fullerton and Crusinberry chased the story of The Fix in the immediate aftermath of the 1919 World Series. But it is also likely that the more dramatic elements they did not mention until long after their post-Series investigations had ended were embellishments characteristic of how the news business operated in the early 20th century. These have grown into urban legends despite the absence of a strong evidentiary foundation in reality.

To believe otherwise is to believe a boxer and accused fixer (Abe Attell) stood on a chair in a media maelstrom in the Sinton Hotel in front of baseball's National Commission in a town that was completing a "crusade" to eradicate sports betting handbooks and relentlessly booked bets — except for \$25,000 that was available from the Chicago Board of Trade — until he had \$1,000 bills raining from the rafters.

It seems unlikely that even a punch-drunk, ex-fighter like Abe Attell would be that reckless in public.<sup>71</sup> And if Attell was that stupid, you would think the media would have paid more attention at the time.

### Expert Odds-Making

As a micro-examination of the betting of celebrity/quasi-professional bettors on the 1919 World Series yields valuable insight into how the betting markets were behaving before and during the Series, an examination of high profile odds-makers Jack Doyle and James O'Leary yields valuable insight.

In *Eight Men Out*, Eliot Asinof wrote, "In New York, Jack Doyle's betting establishment had witnessed a sudden sweep of Cincinnati money that had jolted the odds from 7-10 to 5-6" and implied this movement in the odds demonstrated "that the word [that The Fix was in] was spreading."<sup>72</sup> Asinof's conclusion lacks any context and when this movement in the odds is put into proper context, it is clear that Asinof's conclusion is dubious at best.

At the time of the 1919 World Series, Jack Doyle probably was the most respected odds-maker in the United States. Asinof's own source noted that Doyle "manages to keep his finger on the public pulse with a pretty certain

► Continued on page 28

## ► DOPE

Continued from page 27

degree of accuracy.”<sup>73</sup> In its obituary of Doyle, the *New York Daily News* observed:

He quoted odds on all presidential elections and other political fights; set the “line” on the big league pennant races; made the Winter book prices on the Kentucky Derby; and gave betting figures in all important racing stakes, football games, fights and other sports events.

His word was gospel in the gambling world. The newspapers accepted his quotations without question and pinned the honorary title of “Betting Commissioner” on him.<sup>74</sup>

Further, no odds-maker was more plugged into baseball than Doyle. His partner when he opened his first pool hall in New York was none other than New York Giants manager John McGraw, who remained a life-long friend.<sup>75</sup> He held pool tournaments for newspapermen in New York, including Grantland Rice.<sup>76</sup> Finally, most importantly, he had a long relationship with Giants first baseman Hal Chase, a pool hustler who played in Doyle’s establishment, sometimes worked for Doyle as a cashier,<sup>77</sup> and indisputably had prior knowledge of The Fix.<sup>78</sup> If any person in the business of betting outside the fixers was likely to know about The Fix, it was Doyle.

But there is no evidence that Doyle knew about The Fix before Game One. If he did, he might not have taken bets on the World Series or, at least, not taken bets on the Reds. However, even if he knew, he still could have taken the bet on Cincinnati.

Given Doyle’s position in the business of betting in New York and his access to information, the fact Doyle covered a significant bet on the Reds indicates only that Doyle had plenty of White Sox money to off-set the bet,<sup>79</sup> not that the bettor who backed Cincinnati knew that “The Fix was in.” There is no evidence in the historical record that odds-making, bookmaking, and betting at Jack Doyle’s reflected anything other than “business as usual” during the 1919 World Series.

The same cannot be said for the odds-making, bookmaking, and betting at James O’Leary’s handbook in the Stockyards District of the South Side of Chicago. It is at O’Leary’s — and only at O’Leary’s — where the betting market on the 1919 World Series looks peculiar.

Pursuant to Professor Strumpf’s findings that bookmakers possess market power to charge backers of hometown sentimental favorite teams more in the form of stronger-than-market odds, the odds on the White Sox in O’Leary’s handbook should have been stronger than anywhere else in the country given its location in the shadow of Comiskey Park.

Interest in Chicago in the World Series was massive: the franchise was flooded with 100,000 ticket applications for 18,000 seats at Comiskey Park and the Internal Revenue Service announced it would send 40 agents to Chicago to chase a 50 percent tax applicable to scalped tickets.<sup>80</sup> O’Leary should have been awash in White Sox money, much like Rhode Island sports books were awash in New England Patriots money in 2019 when the Patriots defeated the Los Angeles Rams in Super Bowl LIII.<sup>81</sup>

But that does not appear to have been the case. On October 1, 1919, under the headline “Red Money Appears,” the *Chicago Tribune* reported:

At the establishment of Jim O’Leary, near the stockyards, the best known clearinghouse for wagers in this city, Cincinnati money was more in evidence than White Sox coin yesterday. As a result the odds which had been current around the city, were changed, bringing the Reds nearer to an even money proposition.

O’Leary last night [September 30] quoted the odds at this place as 5 to 4 on the Sox [+125, 44.44%] to win the Series and 5 to 6 on Cincinnati [-120, 54.55%]. He did not handle bets on the first game. Much of the money which arrived to depress the odds given the Reds was from out of town. There was considerable wagering.<sup>82</sup>

Such strong backing of Cincinnati at O’Leary’s handbook must have come as a shock. After all, the Chicago Board of Trade and the Woodland Bards reportedly took a combined \$58,000 [\$883,123.06 in today’s dollars] to Cincinnati before Game One because they expected to find weaker odds on the White Sox in Cincinnati than were available when they left Chicago [13-20, -153.85, 60.61%].<sup>83</sup>

The change in the odds in Chicago after the city’s big bettors left for Cincinnati seems to have surprised those who remained in Chicago. On October 3, the *New York Times* reported:

White Sox fans who are here for the series reported that telegrams from their home city indicated that plenty of Cincinnati money had appeared upon Lake Michigan’s border, and that it was aggressive money — so aggressive in fact that White Sox supporters could get even better terms for their wagers in Chicago than in Cincinnati.<sup>84</sup>

Confronted with the wave of Reds money, it appears that O’Leary plunged deeply on the White Sox by opening his handbook to Game One action on Cincinnati that morning. In a special dispatch from Chicago on October 2, Walter Eckersall of the *Cincinnati Enquirer* reported:

In the Stock Yards district a lot of money was won on

► Continued on page 29

## ► DOPE

Continued from page 28

the Reds. According to a well-known gambler the tip went out through the yards that Cicotte was not in his best form, and as soon as it was known he was Manager Gleason's selection there was enough Cincinnati money to cover all Sox offerings.<sup>85</sup>

That a bookmaker like O'Leary would form and back an opinion and plunge on the White Sox is not suspicious. After all, Professor Strumpf found that bookmakers are not risk averse, but rather gamble and take positions on games. Clearly, the evidence that O'Leary refused action on Game One until after the big Chicago bettors left for Cincinnati and then plunged deeply on the hometown White Sox shows that he believed strongly in the Sox and wanted to back his opinion that Chicago would prevail in both Game One and also the entire Series.<sup>86</sup>

It also seems clear O'Leary had no knowledge of The Fix. Given that he was one of the biggest bookmakers in Chicago and doing business in the same neighborhood where the White Sox played their home games, O'Leary's lack of knowledge indicates The Fix was a well-kept secret prior to Game One and few saw the Black Sox Scandal coming.

While O'Leary's odds-making and bookmaking behavior is understandable, questions abound regarding the "aggressive out-of-town money" that flooded his handbook with action on the Reds. Who aggressively bet all that money on Cincinnati? Why did the bettors wager at stronger odds on the Reds with O'Leary when it appears they could have gotten weaker odds on the Reds in either New York or Cincinnati?

As Professor Strumpf found, gamblers are economically self-interested so it is puzzling why these Cincinnati backers appear to have chosen to pay a higher price to bet on the Reds and cost themselves marginal profits by hammering O'Leary. These questions are intriguing and may never be definitively answered.

### Notes

1. Hugh Fullerton, "Hugh S. Fullerton Vividly Describes the Full Details Of Great Baseball Scandal," *Atlanta Constitution*, October 3, 1919.

2. Koleman Strumpf, *Illegal Sports Bookmakers* (Chicago: University of Chicago, George J. Stigler Center for the Study of the Economy and the State, 2003).

3. Fullerton, op. cit.

4. Ibid. Fullerton's reference to his "one exception" is likely to the 1914 "Miracle" Boston Braves, who upset the Philadelphia A's in a four-game sweep.

5. "Bookies Favor Sox," *Chicago Tribune*, September 25, 1919. In 1919, odds on the World Series and other more exotic propositions — known in 1919 as "freak bets"

## ARNOLD ROTHSTEIN WEBINAR

From September 4 to December 31, 2019, you can join the author of this paper, Kevin P. Braig — a partner with the law firm of Shumaker, Loop & Kendrick, LLP and a member of the International Masters of Gaming Law — for an on-demand webinar, ***Rothstein on Trial: The Evidence Against "The Brain" That Bribed the Black Sox.***



The cost is \$50. The webinar does not constitute legal advice and purchasing the webinar will not obligate you to purchase any legal services or create an attorney-client relationship. For a 10 percent discount, visit [www.shumaker.com/rothstein](http://www.shumaker.com/rothstein) when the webinar is released and enter the product code "SABR."

— were expressed exclusively as "fractional odds," e.g., "4 to 5." For the purposes of this paper, odds also will be expressed in brackets as "American odds" and "implied probability" that the outcome will actually occur, e.g. "[-125, 55.56%]."

6. Harvey T. Woodruff, "If Your Money Goes on Sox The Odds Are 13-20," *Chicago Tribune*, September 29, 1919. Woodruff, the *Tribune's* sports editor, also noted in this report, "One \$10,000 pool from Cincinnati was placed at evens more than a week ago." In other words, this bet was made after the Reds clinched the National League pennant on September 16, but before Chicago clinched the American League pennant on September 24.

7. Ibid. This shift in the odds in the direction of the White Sox despite a large bet on Cincinnati (\$121,809 in today's dollars) is evidence Chicago's status as the favorite was strengthening at this time and place.

8. Rumors of 2 to 1 odds [-200, 66.67%] in Boston were reported in Cincinnati, but no local Boston newspaper reporting such odds could be located. See Jack Ryder, "Sallee and Cicotte May Open World Series in Cincinnati," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, September 30, 1919.

9. Bozeman Bulger, "Within Hour After Brooklyn Had Clinched the National League Pennant \$3,500 Was Deposited at Doyle's to Be Wagered Against \$2,500 That Boston Wins Championship," *The (New York) Evening World*, October 4, 1916.

10. Sports Odds History, <https://www.sportsoddshistory.com/mlb-odds>. The strongest favorite to win the World Series since 1985 was the 1990 Oakland A's, who were 1 to 3 favorites [-300, 75.00%] to

► Continued on page 30

## ► DOPE

Continued from page 29

beat Cincinnati. However, as in 1919, the Reds confounded the “dope” and swept the A’s, a result that truly can be classified as shocking!

11. Eliot Asinof, *Eight Men Out: The Black Sox and the 1919 World Series* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1963), 42-43.

12. “Gothamites Dig Up Some Bets on Reds,” *New York Times*, October 1, 1919. Some observers began questioning Cicotte’s fitness as early as September 5, when he walked a season-high six batters in a win over Cleveland. See I.E. Sanborn, “Cicotte Puts Sox Within One Game of Clinching the Flag,” *Chicago Tribune*, September 20, 1919.

13. Christy Mathewson, “Matty Says Reds May Fool Experts,” *New York Times*, September 28, 1919.

14. In his last two 1919 regular-season appearances, Cicotte pitched 9 innings and posted a 6.00 ERA and 1.67 WHIP. It is generally accepted that sports betting is an environment where many inhabitants are prone to “recency bias,” where a person remembers or overvalues events that happened most recently at the expense of in disproportionate value to events that occurred at a point more remote in time.

15. Frederick, J. Lieb, “Broken Finger Kept Groh On The Sidelines,” *New York Herald*, September 30, 1919.

16. “Cicotte vs. Ruether, Say Rival Managers,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 1, 1919.

17. W.O. McGeehan, “Heinie Groh’s Sore Finger, Which Was the Cause of Some Worriment, Reported To Be Better and He Will Be in Trim for Battle in Big Series,” *New York Tribune*, September 30, 1919.

18. Ryder, op. cit.

19. Ibid. See also Dan Daniel, “High Lights And Shadows In All Spheres Of Sport,” *New York Tribune*, September 29, 1919; James O’Leary, “New England Fans Head For Redland,” *Boston Globe*, September 29, 1919; Dan Daniel, “Cincinnati Fans Unwilling to Back Talk With Wagers,” *New York Herald*, September 30, 1919; James O’Leary, “Reds Confident, White Sox Also — Odds 6 to 5 on Latter,” *Boston Globe*, September 30, 1919.

20. Woodruff, op. cit.

21. “Sox Rule 7 to 5 Choice In Cincy,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 1, 1919.

22. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, October 1, 1919.

23. “Nick the Greek’s \$6,500 Goes on Sox to Cop Series,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 2, 1919.

24. “Reds Fans Refuse To Give Big Odds,” *New York Times*, October 2, 1919; “Offer 9 to 5 on Reds,” *New York Times*, October 3, 1919.

25. “Scores Posted In Cincinnati Schools,” *New York Times*, October 3, 1919. The Woodland Bards was an informal gentlemen’s club organized by White Sox team owner Charles Comiskey in the early 1900s whose mem-

bership included most of Chicago’s political power brokers, top businessmen, sportswriters, and celebrities, as well as prominent ballplayers.

26. “Betting Now Favors Reds,” *Boston Globe*, October 3, 1919.

27. “New York Betting Favors Reds to Win by 7 to 10,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 2, 1919.

28. “Betting Now Favors Reds,” *Boston Globe*, October 3, 1919.

29. “Nick the Greek’s \$6,500 Goes on Sox to Cop Series,” op. cit.

30. Even with a 2-0 lead in the World Series, it appears a few unreasonably stubborn Cincinnati backers were demanding even money odds before Game Three. Jack Casey, a writer with the *Pittsburgh Chronicle Telegraph*, said, “The series so far has had more surprises in it than a Kentuckian has liquor. Cincinnati is the birthplace of the hard-boiled egg. Think of a gang of fans wanting even money on a team that has won two games. They were yelling at first that they wanted odds of eight to five before the series started, and now when the Reds have the jump they demand even money.” See “American League Scribes Waver in Hopes For White Sox,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, October 3, 1919.

31. Walter Eckersall, “Sharps Are Laying 5 To 3 That Cincinnati Will Be Champions of World; Better Find Plenty of Queen City Cash,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, October 3, 1919.

32. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, October 4, 1919.

33. “Chicago Fans Not Betting; New York Supporters of White Sox Refuse 4 ½ to 1 Odds,” *New York Times*, October 3, 1919.

34. Bozeman Bulger, “Backers of the White Sox Refused to Hedge Bets Even With Reds in Front,” *The (New York) Evening World*, October 4, 1919. Like those 1919 betting commissioners, the author is confused as to whom Bulger was identifying as the favorite. Given the context of the paragraph in which the odds appear, it appears Chicago again had become the favorite. But it would also be reasonable to interpret that Cincinnati remained the favorite, albeit a weaker one. For purposes of this analysis, it is of little matter which team actually was the favorite after Game Three. The odds and narrative reporting clearly demonstrate that the bettors again considered the matchup as still “up for grabs.”

35. “Local Odds Are 6 To 1,” *New York Times*, October 5, 1919.

36. “Reds Favored At 7 To 2; Chicago Fans Complain Odds Are Too Short and Refuse to Bet,” *New York Times*, October 5, 1919.

37. “Moran Beams with Joy,” *New York Times*, October 6, 1919.

38. “Series Betting Ends,” *New York Times*, October 6, 1919; “No Sox Rooters Left In Gotham,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 6, 1919.

► Continued on page 31

## ► DOPE

Continued from page 30

39. "Celebrities Were There," *Dayton Daily News*, October 2, 1919.
40. Paul O'Neil, "Nick The Greek's Last Role," *Life Magazine*, January 6, 1967.
41. "Nick the Greek's \$6,500 Goes on Sox to Cop Series," *Chicago Tribune*, October 2, 1919.
42. "Celebrities Were There," op. cit.
43. "Stage Received Setback," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, September 27, 1919.
44. Jack Veiock, "Moran Will Again Send Left Hander Against White Sox," *Akron Beacon Journal*, October 2, 1919.
45. Asinof, 42.
46. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, September 27, 1919.
47. *Pittsburgh Daily Post*, October 2, 1919.
48. James M. Gould, "Cincinnati Fans Wild to See Ruether Again," *St. Louis Star and Times*, October 2, 1919.
49. "That Reminds Me," *The (Elmira, New York) Star-Gazette*, October 4, 1919.
50. "George Cohan To Try Out His Daughter As An Actress," *Boston Globe*, October 6, 1919.
51. James C. O'Leary, "Reds Now Favorites in Betting on Account of Win Yesterday," *Boston Globe*, October 2, 1919.
52. James C. O'Leary, "Reds Capture Second Game," *Boston Globe*, October 3, 1919.
53. James Crusinberry, "A Newsman's Biggest Story," *Sports Illustrated*, September 17, 1956. Accessed online at <https://www.si.com/vault/issue/42194/72> on June 2, 2019.
54. "Speaker, Gandil Pals Once More," *Chicago Tribune*, October 2, 1919.
55. James Crusinberry, "Defeat To Spur Gleason's Team To Real Fighting," *Chicago Tribune*, October 2, 1919.
56. J.W. Pegler, "Cincinnati Taken By 'Coal-Oil Kids,' Wahoo! Coin Flies," *Pittsburgh Daily Post*, October 3, 1919.
57. "Offer 9 to 5 on Reds," *New York Times*, October 3, 1919. Heavier betting at the Havlin Hotel than at the Sinton Hotel makes better historical sense. First, the members of the National Commission, including American League President Ban Johnson — who had been making anti-gambling noises for years — were staying at the Sinton Hotel, so open and notorious betting would have been right under the Commission's turned-up noses. Second, the Woodland Bards — the heavy-betting White Sox backers — rented an entire floor at the Havlin Hotel. See "Rooters Recall Days of Yore in Cincinnati, To Old-Timers," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, October 1, 1919. Third, perhaps the last well-known, open, and notorious illegal bookmaker to operate in downtown Cincinnati was a horseman and cigar dealer named Sam Hirsch, who reportedly did business in the Havlin Hotel. See "'Desist!' Cries Attorney Mueller; And Sleuths Stop Cracking Safe To Hold Palavar; Melodramatic Raid Made on Offices of Sam Hirsch; Alleged Bet Notations and Codes Are Found — Telephone Nestles Within a Vault," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, November 14, 1916.
58. "Abe Attell to Sue Buckley for \$20,000 for Charging He Tried to Fake," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 12, 1912; "Did Buckley Tell All He Knew of Puzzling Attell-Murphy Match?" *San Francisco Examiner*, March 13, 1912.
59. "Greatest Battle in Past Decade," *The (Davenport, Iowa) Daily Times*, September 3, 1906.
60. "New Gambling War Planned," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, October 26, 1916; "Sam Hirsch Punished," *The Labor Advocate*, November 18, 1916; "Burden Placed Upon Officials; Former Mayor Hunt Tells Newport Audience 'Tis Possible to Suppress Professional Gambling," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, November 20, 1916.
61. "Chair Hurlled By Raider," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, June 11, 1919.
62. Hugh Fullerton, "American Gambling and Gamblers: Preying Upon Wage Earners," *The American Magazine*, February 1914.
63. Asinof, 47.
64. See Hugh Fullerton, "Team Which Stuck Together Won Title, Declares Fullerton," *San Francisco Examiner*, October 10, 1919; "Is Big League Baseball Being Run For Gamblers, With Players In The Deal?" *The (New York) Evening World*, December 15, 1919; "Hugh S. Fullerton Vividly Describes the Full Details Of Great Baseball Scandal," *Atlanta Constitution*, October 3, 1920; and "Baseball On Trial," *New Republic*, October 20, 1920.
65. Hugh Fullerton, "I Recall," *The Sporting News*, October 17, 1935.
66. Hugh Fullerton, "1919 World's Series Difficult to Figure Declares Fullerton," *San Francisco Examiner*, September 18, 1919.
67. Ibid. Fullerton described his "system" as follows: "The full strength of a team is 100 percent. If the defensive value of all teams exactly equaled the attacking value no team ever would score a run. By taking figures for a dozen years, I discovered that the attacking strength of any team is 64 percent and the defensive strength is 36 percent. Those figures may not be exactly right, but they are approximately correct. I reached the figure by taking the number of bases advanced in comparison with outs and the proportion holds good year after year. That means that batting, base running, etc. all the elements of attack, are more valuable than the elements of defense." An analysis of Fullerton's system is beyond the scope of this paper.
68. Hugh Fullerton, "Dope On The World's Series," *Wichita Daily Eagle*, September 30, 1919.
69. Hugh Fullerton, "White Sox Roiled, No Doubt About It; But Fullerton Dopes A Victory For Them if It's Williams vs. Ruether; Ugly Talk and Suspicion," *The (Muncie, Indiana) Star Press*, October 6, 1919; Hugh Fullerton,

► Continued on page 32

## ► DOPE

Continued from page 31

“Chisox Should Beat Ruether Next Time Out, Says Fullerton,” *San Francisco Examiner*, October 6, 1919.

70. See, e.g. Lumen Learning, [Memory Distortions](#), accessed online on June 2, 2019.

71. It also seems incredible that Sleepy Bill Burns told Fullerton to “get wise and get yourself some money” the day before Game One. Again, Fullerton never made this claim in 1919 or 1920, but first made this claim as a witness in Shoeless Joe Jackson’s 1924 trial for back pay. It would have been reckless indeed for Burns to even hint of The Fix to Fullerton before Game One. By 1919, Fullerton had thoroughly published his distaste for gambling on baseball. Some writers, like Grantland Rice, who reportedly participated in a media pool tournament at Jack Doyle’s pool room in Times Square and golfed regularly with Babe Ruth, appear to have been comfortable with gambling on baseball. But Fullerton’s position on gambling was more nuanced. Fullerton distinguished between “gambling” and “sure thing play” and he considered New York gamblers to engage in only the latter. See Hugh Fullerton, “American Gambling and Gamblers: Preying Upon the Wage Earners,” *The American Magazine*, February 1914. Given Fullerton’s bias against New York gamblers and his enthusiasm for revealing objective truth, it does not seem possible that Fullerton could have cultivated a relationship with a person like Burns that would have put Burns at ease to tell him “get wise and get yourself some money.” If Burns in fact told Fullerton as much, then Burns was as reckless and stupid as Attell.

72. Asinof, 42. According to the *New York Times*, the bet Doyle covered was “\$5,000 to \$7,000 on the Reds.” In other words, the bettor appears to have risked \$5,000 to win \$7,000, which is equivalent to odds of 7 to 5 [+140, 41.67%]. This would have been approximately consistent with the odds reported in Chicago the day before (September 29) on the White Sox [13 to 20, -153.85, 60.61%] and exactly the odds that Harvey T. Woodruff of the *Chicago Tribune* opined the odds should be.

73. “Gothamites Dig Up Some Bets On Reds,” op. cit.

74. “Doyle, Betting Chief, Dies,” *New York Daily News*, December 10, 1942.

75. Jimmy Powers, “The Powerhouse,” *New York Daily News*, December 7, 1937.

76. “Oyez! Pool Sharks! Jack Doyle Calls; Tourney for Newspaper Men Will Open on Monday,” *New York Tribune*, November 25, 1915.

77. Donald Dewey and Nicholas Acocella, *The Black Prince of Baseball: Hal Chase and the Mythology of the Game* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 56.

78. “Hal Chase Dies In California,” *Tucson Daily Citizen*, May 19, 1947: “‘Sure, I knew about [The Fix],’ Chase said not long ago, ‘But I was no squealer.’”

79. “Gothamites Dig Up Some Bets On Reds,” op. cit.; “Times Sq. Crowd Grows; More Thousands of ‘Standees’ See Second Scoreboard Game,” *New York Times*, October 3, 1919.

80. Harvey T. Woodruff, “Lucky Fans To Get Tickets Tomorrow; Many To Shed Tears,” *Chicago Tribune*, September 28, 1919; “Forty Federal Sleuths After Ticket Scalpers; Collect 50 Per Cent Tax from Speculators, Who Hold Few Ducats,” *Chicago Tribune*, September 30, 1919.

81. Associated Press, “Rhode Island sportsbooks took massive hit when the Patriots won the Super Bowl,” *Boston Globe*, April 2, 2019.

82. “Red Money Appears,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 1, 1919. Only this single report on O’Leary’s operations provides any evidence of how bookmakers in 1919 set “margins.” Because O’Leary’s odds on the White Sox and the Reds sum to 98.99%, he was creating a market with a 1% margin. The existence of such a small margin at O’Leary’s suggests he was behaving almost like “just another gambler” rather than a bookmaker. Margins in baseball tend to be quite low and typically not greater than 5%. But it is still rare to offer near zero-margin bets on baseball; doing so is essentially forfeiting the inherent edge of being the bookmaker — which is establishing odds that favor the bookmaker. For an explanation on how bookmakers calculate betting margins to both attract business and profit, see [“How to calculate betting margins.”](#) Pinnacle.com, August 15, 2016, accessed online on June 2, 2019.

83. Woodruff, “If Your Money Goes on Sox The Odds Are 13-20.”

84. “Offer 9 to 5 On Reds,” *New York Times*, October 3, 1919.

85. Walter Eckersall, “Plenty of Queen City Money Shows Up,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, October 2, 1919.

86. Perhaps the most delicious fact about the 1919 World Series for Cincinnati Reds fans (like the author) is that so many purportedly “square” Reds’ backers bet like “sharps” and the so-called “sharp” White Sox backer, James O’Leary, bet like a “square.” After Cincinnati grabbed the early 2-0 lead in the World Series, the *New York Times* observed, “Apparently, the majority of Cincinnati fans of the cooler type, men who never allow partisanship or prejudice to sway reason in matters where money is concerned, are not really eager to lay two to one that the Reds will prove masters of the situation.” See “Offer 9 To 5 On Reds,” *New York Times*, October 3, 1919. Alas, not all Cincinnati backers were of the “cooler type” who made a killing. For example, an October 8, 1919 headline in the *New York Times* blared “Seven Redland Fans Lose \$60,000 on Game” [\$913,574.55 in today’s dollars], and the Times reported “[t]hey wagered \$15,000 at odds on the first game. They doubled on the second and third game. Losing on the third game they dropped their betting to \$15,000, won, and then bet \$30,000 on the fifth game, which they also won. They then bet the \$60,000 on the sixth game.”