

THE National Pastime

FROM SWAMPOODLE TO SOUTH PHILLY

Baseball in Philadelphia & the Delaware Valley

1915
PHILADELPHIA CLUBS AT HOME

NATIONAL LEAGUE. AMERICAN LEAGUE.

Team	Month	Game Dates
BOSTON	April	22-23-24-26
BROOKLYN	April	27-28-29-30
NEW YORK	May	1-3-4-5
PITTSBURG	May	11-12-13-14
ST. LOUIS	May	15-17-18-19
CINCINNATI	May	20-21-22-24
CHICAGO	May	25-26-27
BROOKLYN	June	25-26-28-29
BOSTON	June	28-29-30
BOSTON	July	1-2-3
NEW YORK	July	5-6-7
PITTSBURG	July	8-9-10-11
ST. LOUIS	July	13-14-15-16
CHICAGO	July	17-19-20-21
CINCINNATI	July	22-23-24
BOSTON	August	13-14-16
CINCINNATI	August	17
PITTSBURG	August	18-19-20
CHICAGO	August	23-24-25-26
CINCINNATI	August	25-26-27
ST. LOUIS	September	18-30-31
N. YORK	September	8-9-10
BROOKLYN	October	4-5-7

Team	Month	Game Dates
BOSTON	April	14-15-16
NEW YORK	April	17-19-20-21
WASH'GTON	May	6-7-8
BOSTON	May	28-29-31-1
WASHINGTON	June	1-2-3
ST. LOUIS	June	4-5-7-8
CLEVELAND	June	9-10-11
DETROIT	June	12-14-15-16
CHICAGO	June	17-18-19
NEW YORK	June	21-22-23-24
ST. LOUIS	June	27-28-29
CLEVELAND	June	30-1
CLEVELAND	August	2-3
DETROIT	August	4-5-6-7
CHICAGO	August	9-10-11-12
BOSTON	September	1-2-3-4
WASHINGTON	September	6-6-7
ST. LOUIS	September	11-13-14-15
CLEVELAND	September	16-17-18-20
DETROIT	September	21-22-23
CHICAGO	September	24-25-27-28
WASHINGTON	October	29-30
N. YORK	October	1-2

BASE BALL SCHEDULE
THE NATIONAL & AMERICAN LEAGUE
CLUBS AT HOME

EDITED BY MORRIS LEVIN

THE
National  Pastime

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Published by
The Society for American Baseball Research



DEDICATION

"Time is an enormous, long river, and I'm standing in it, just as you're standing in it. My elders are the tributaries, and everything they thought and every struggle they went through and everything they gave their lives to, and every song they created, and every poem that they laid down flows down to me—and if I take the time to ask, and if I take the time to see, and if I take the time to reach out, I can build that bridge between my world and theirs. I can reach down into that river and take out what I need to get through this world."

– U. Utah Phillips

This book is dedicated to her majesty, the city of Philadelphia, and to her rivers, which flow with stories of Octavius Catto, Cap Anson, Ben Chapman, and Jackie Robinson. May we learn from those who came before us, and may we all merit to be judged on our abilities to bat, pitch, and field.

THE NATIONAL PASTIME

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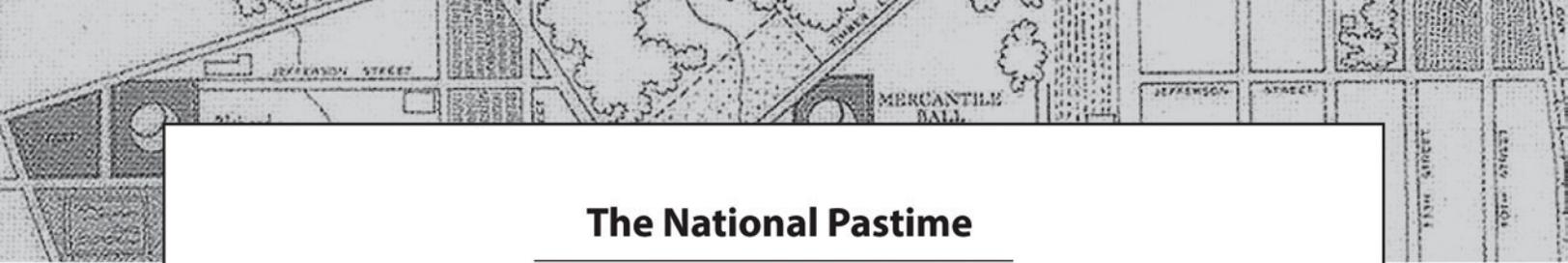
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Notes on Editions

SABR is publishing two editions of *The National Pastime* in 2013. This is the electronic edition supplement; there is also a print edition. The combined print and electronic edition is the complete journal; the print edition is an abridged presentation.

The combined editions tell a comprehensive story of baseball in Philadelphia and the Delaware Valley. SABR's Philadelphia chapter received well over 50 submissions in response to the call for papers, in addition to suggestions for reprints. The combined editions total over 160,000 words, reflecting the strength and scope of articles.

Thank You

Thank you to the Philadelphia Connie Mack Chapter. Thank you Seamus Kearney, Dick Rosen, and Peter Mancuso for their support of this specific publication, and in leading a local chapter of which this editor is glad to be a member.

This publication happened because of the readers and editors who volunteered and assisted. Thank you to Bob Barsotti, Seamus Kearney, Mitchell Nathanson, Dick Rosen, Andrew Milner, Samantha Mogil, Douglas Skipper, and Stephen Workman.

Thank you Cecilia Tan, Clifford Blau, and Lisa Hochstein for their professional guidance and stewardship.

Morris Levin
Philadelphia, July 2013

1915

PHILADELPHIA CLUBS AT HOME

NATIONAL LEAGUE.

AMERICAN LEAGUE.



BOSTON	April	22-23-24-26
BROOKLYN	"	27-28-29-30
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CHICAGO	"	21-21-23-24
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ST. LOUIS	"	28-30-31
N. YORK	Sept.	8-9-10
BROOKLYN	Oct.	4-5-7



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WASH'GT'N	"	29-30
N. YORK	Oct.	1-2



BASE-BALL SCHEDULE:
THE NATIONAL & AMERICAN LEAGUE
CLUBS AT HOME



Prelude to the Formation of the American Association

Brock Helander

Six of the eight most populous cities in the United States were not represented in the National League for the baseball season of 1881. New York, Philadelphia, Brooklyn, St. Louis, Baltimore, and Cincinnati were not members of the League, which included only two charter members (Chicago and Boston) and teams from the smaller cities of Cleveland, Buffalo, Detroit, Providence, Worcester, and Troy. Nonetheless, independent teams throughout the United States enjoyed both popularity and financial success and the need for a second major league became obvious. The prelude to the formation of the American Association in November 1881 is herein examined in the context of the September Western tours of the interregnum Atlantics and Athletics and the principals supposedly involved in a preliminary meeting in October.

The Atlantics of Brooklyn was a venerated name in the early history of baseball. The club, organized on August 14, 1855,¹ was a member of the National Association of Base Ball Players (NABBP) from 1858 to 1870, playing professionally in 1869 and 1870.² An Atlantic club was also a member of the National Association of Professional Base Ball Players (NAPBBP) from 1872 through September 1875 when it disbanded. An entirely new Atlantic nine formed to play on the Capitoline Grounds in April 1878, but in less than two weeks, most of the team, including Candy Cummings and Bill Barnie, were spirited away to New Haven by Ben Douglas for his International Association team.³ Another Atlantic team, initially attributed to Barnie, was organized in April 1879 by manager Jack Chapman, but by the end of May he had left to manage an International Association team in Holyoke.⁴ Eventually, Barnie, in April 1881, organized yet another Atlantic team to play at the Union Grounds, joining the short-lived Eastern Championship Association.⁵

The Athletics of Philadelphia originally formed as a town ball club on May 31, 1859, and reorganized as a base ball club on April 7, 1860.⁶ The Athletics were members of the NABBP from 1861 to 1870, playing professionally in 1869 and 1870, in the NAPBBP from 1871 to 1875, and in the National League of Profes-

sional Base Ball Clubs in 1876.⁷ After being expelled from the NL for failing to complete their final Western trip, an independent Athletics team organized in 1877 as a stock company under new president Charles H. Downing and joined the League Alliance in order to protect the club from player raids by National League clubs.⁸ The Athletics reorganized for 1878 under manager Alfred H. Wright, utilizing 40 players en route to a 45–16–1 record as an independent team.⁹ Yet another Athletic club formed in 1879 under William W. Hincken and reorganized for 1880 with William Sharsig as president.¹⁰ With Sharsig as nominal president through 1883, the 1881 Athletics joined the Eastern Championship Association under manager Horace Phillips.¹¹

THE WESTERNERS

O.P. Caylor and Justus Thorner: Oliver Perry Caylor, born in Dayton, Ohio, on December 14, 1849, was admitted to the bar in Cincinnati in 1872, but opted for a journalistic career with the *Cincinnati Enquirer* in November 1874. Ascending to the position of sports editor, Caylor garnered a reputation for his clever, humorous, and often acerbic reporting.¹²

Justus Thorner, a manager for local breweries, was president of the semi-professional Star Club of Cincinnati in 1879.¹³ After President J. Wayne Neff of the rival Cincinnati National League club announced that his players would be released on October 1, 1879, and forwarded the club's resignation from the League, Thorner met with National League president William Hulbert in Chicago, formally applying for membership in the League.¹⁴ At the annual meeting of the National League, held in December in Buffalo, New York, rather than Cincinnati, as originally scheduled, the organization's Board of Directors admitted the Star Club to membership and Thorner was elected to the Board of Directors.¹⁵ On December 22, the stockholders of the new Cincinnati club elected directors and officers, including Thorner as president.¹⁶ Thorner and Caylor represented the club at a special meeting of the National League on February 26, 1880, in Rochester, New York.¹⁷

In early July, the directors of the club requested and received the resignation of Thorner as president, and W.C. Kennett represented Cincinnati at the special meeting of the League on October 4 at Rochester, New York. Henry Root, president of the Providence club, proposed an amendment to the League constitution that would prohibit the sale of alcoholic beverages on club grounds and the use of such grounds for Sunday baseball, both of which the Cincinnati club depended on. All except Kennett pledged to vote in favor of the amendment at the League's December meeting.¹⁸ On October 6, the membership of Cincinnati in the League was declared vacant.¹⁹

By late April 1881, a new baseball club had been formed in Cincinnati. It began play in St. Louis May 28, with Caylor reporting on the games.²⁰ Only days earlier, the leasehold and grounds of the Cincinnati club had been sold to "four prominent Cincinnati gentlemen," later revealed to be Caylor, Thorner, Victor Long, and John Price.²¹ Caylor resigned his position with the *Cincinnati Enquirer* in August, ostensibly to return to the practice of law. Nonetheless, Caylor soon joined the staff of the *Cincinnati Commercial Gazette*.²²

Alfred Spink. Alfred Henry Spink was born on August 24, 1854, in Quebec, Canada. Moving with his family to Chicago after the Civil War, he moved in 1875 to St. Louis, Missouri, where his brother Billy was sports editor for the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*. Soon thereafter, Alfred began covering baseball for the *Missouri Republican*, subsequently becoming sporting editor for a number of St. Louis newspapers, including the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. Becoming acquainted with saloon owner Chris Von der Ahe, vice president of the Grand Avenue Base Ball Club in 1877, Alfred and Billy began organizing semi-professional baseball teams in 1878. Their 1879 team, called the Browns or Brown Stockings, won 20 of 21 games.²³

Because dates and sources conflict, the baseball situation in St. Louis becomes convoluted beginning in 1880. Most likely Al Spink, with veteran player Ned Cuthbert, organized the co-operative St. Louis Browns and, with a number of local men, organized the St. Louis Base Ball Association.²⁴ In May, another team using the Brown Stockings name was organized under the presidency of Chris Von der Ahe.²⁵ By the end of May, the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* was referring to Cuthbert's club as the Reds or Red Stockings and Von der Ahe's club as the Browns or Brown Stockings.²⁶

In October, Von der Ahe and others formed the Sportsman's Park and Club Association, with Spink as secretary, and secured the lease on Grand Avenue Park, which was to be enlarged and improved and

would be known as Sportsman's Park.²⁷ In March 1881 the Sportsman's Park and Club Association incorporated.²⁸ The Brown Stockings were organized in April, formally opening Sportsman's Park on May 22 with a defeat of the rival St. Louis Red Stockings before at least 2,500 people.²⁹ Five of the Browns players had been members of the Reds in 1880, most significantly Bill and Jack Gleason.

THE EASTERNERS

Horace B. Phillips. Horace B. Phillips was born in Salem, Ohio, most likely on May 14, 1853, yet earlier reported as May 20, 1856.³⁰ Growing up in Philadelphia, he began his baseball playing career with local amateur teams in 1870. Securing his first professional engagement with the Philadelphia club in 1877, Phillips soon succeeded Fergy Malone as manager. A baseball vagabond in his early career, he subsequently played for and managed clubs in Hornellsville and Syracuse, New York, before managing clubs in Troy and Baltimore in 1879 and Baltimore and Rochester, New York in 1880. Returning to Philadelphia in 1881, Phillips was reported managing the independent professional Athletics team by the end of May.³¹

Billy Barnie. William Harrison Barnie, born in New York City on January 26, 1853, began playing for amateur baseball clubs in Brooklyn at an early age, manning the Nassau club for three years beginning in 1870 and the Atlantics of Brooklyn in 1873. He initiated his professional career with Hartford in 1874, playing with the Buckeye club of Columbus, Ohio, in 1876 and managing it in 1877. Barnie played for and managed the Buffalo club later in 1877 and was a member of the Atlantics team that moved to New Haven, then Hartford, in 1878. After playing for the Knickerbocker club of San Francisco in 1879 and 1880, he returned to Brooklyn and organized an independent professional Atlantics club in April 1881, becoming its secretary.³²

THE PITTSBURGHERS

Al Pratt. Albert G. Pratt was born on November 19, 1848, in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, and joined the Union Army at the age of 15, serving in the infantry. He helped form the Enterprise Base Ball Club of Pittsburgh in 1866 and later joined the Allegheny Club. After a season with the Riverside Club of Portsmouth, Ohio, Pratt pitched for the famous Forest City Club of Cleveland from 1869 to 1872. He returned to Pittsburgh and pitched for the Enterprise club from 1873 to 1875 and played with the Xantha club from 1876 to 1879.³³ Pratt then served as a National League umpire in 1879 and substitute umpire in 1880.³⁴

H.D. "Denny" McKnight. Harmar Denny McKnight was born in 1847 in Pittsburgh and graduated from Lafayette College in 1869. Pursuing a business career, he became director of an iron manufacturing company in 1876. That year he helped organize the independent Allegheny baseball club, serving as one of its directors. The following year McKnight was instrumental in the formation of the International Association of Professional Base Ball Players and served as its president after Candy Cummings resigned. However, the Allegheny club disbanded in June 1878.³⁵

OUT WEST

As Alfred Spink stated in his book *The National Game*: "I wrote to O.P. Caylor, then the sporting editor of the *Cincinnati Enquirer* and I suggested to him the idea of picking up all that was left in Cincinnati of the old professional players, forming them into a nine, christening them the Cincinnati Reds and bringing them here to play three games on a Saturday, Sunday and Monday with my reconstructed St Louis Browns." Spink continued: "Mr. Caylor, accepting my suggestion, quickly got together a team of semi-professionals, called it the Cincinnati Reds and brought it here to help open the reconstructed St. Louis baseball grounds, which my brother William had named Sportsman's Park."³⁶ Their Sunday, May 29 game, won by the Browns 16-2, drew an estimated four thousand spectators, making it a substantial success.³⁷

More Spink: "The Dubuques, the Cincinnati Reds and the Chicago prairie teams came to St. Louis and the games drew such crowds, especially on Sundays, that soon news of the prosperity wave reached the East."³⁸ Among the well-attended Sunday games in St. Louis were the July 3 game against the Eckfords of Chicago (4,000), the July 17 game against Dubuque

(nearly 5,000), and the August 14 game against the Buckeyes of Cincinnati (over 5,000).³⁹

Spink: "Later I wrote to Horace B. Phillips, then managing the Athletics of Philadelphia, and to William Barnie, then operating the Atlantics of Brooklyn. Both the Athletics and the Atlantics were free lances outside the pale of the National League and were willing to come all the way to St. Louis to meet the St. Louis Browns for a division of the gate receipts."⁴⁰ Barnie later reminisced: "Horace Phillips of the Athletics and myself then formed the idea of organizing a big league. We learned through the papers that large audiences were being attracted by base ball teams in Cincinnati, Louisville and St. Louis and began negotiating for a trip to those cities. The Western clubs guaranteed us more than enough to pay our expenses on the round trip. We accepted and both the Atlantics and Athletics took the journey."⁴¹

In late July, Cincinnati applied for admission to the National League for 1882.⁴² In mid-August Phillips was reported to be in Chicago, meeting with National League President William Hulbert to request admission for the Athletics, who withdrew the application within two weeks and released Phillips only days before the October meeting.⁴³

THE TOURS

The Athletics were the first to embark on a Western tour. On September 2 in Louisville the Athletics defeated the Eclipse of Louisville, with manager Phillips playing in center field. The next day in St. Louis, the St. Louis Browns beat the Athletics. On Sunday, September 4, before an astounding 7,000 fans, the Browns proved victorious. The final game in St. Louis September 5 was won by the Athletics. Returning to Louisville, the Athletics on September 8 lost to the Eclipse morning and

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



The Atlantics of Brooklyn and the Athletics of Philadelphia formed one of the most intense rivalries during baseball's pioneer era. This graphic depicts a match between the clubs at Philadelphia from 1865.



One of the most enigmatic figures of nineteenth-century baseball, president Chris Von der Ahe led the St. Louis Browns to four consecutive pennants during the ten-year existence of the American Association.

afternoon games. On September 9 the Athletics defeated an ad hoc team in Cincinnati.⁴⁴ According to one source, Thorner found out about the game and joined the crowd of 200 in the eighth inning.⁴⁵ Later, in a letter to the *Cincinnati Commercial Gazette*, Phillips stated that he did indeed consult Caylor on this occasion.⁴⁶ The next day on their way home, the Athletics lost to the Detroit National League club in Allegheny (near Pittsburgh) before 2,000 fans, with Al Pratt serving as umpire.⁴⁷

After defeating the Athletics in Philadelphia on September 14 and 15, the Atlantics arrived in Louisville on September 17 and bested the Eclipse. The next day the Eclipse prevailed and again on September 19. On September 22 the Eclipse again won. Heading to St. Louis, the Atlantics prevailed over the Browns on September 24, scoring the winning run in the top of the ninth. On Sunday, September 25, the Browns were victorious. The game scheduled for September 26 was canceled due to the death of President Garfield. The third game, postponed due to rain, was played September 28, but was suspended due to darkness with the score Atlantics 13, Browns 12. The following day, the Atlantics beat the St. Louis Reds by the identical score. As the St. Louis Browns devolved into chaos at the beginning of October, the Atlantics defeated one of the clubs claiming the Browns' name on October 9. On their way home to Brooklyn, the Atlantics stopped over in Philadelphia and defeated the Athletics.⁴⁸

Phillips, upon his return to Philadelphia, stated that "the movement [to form a new league] was meeting with great favor in St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Louisville, and Cincinnati...."⁴⁹ *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, probably Frank Wright, agreed: "The outlook is very promising. (A) scheme is on foot to organize a new association, to include St. Louis, Louisville, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, and New

York. Already the proposition has been entertained in St. Louis and Louisville, and a meeting will be held in Pittsburgh, October 10, to perfect arrangements."⁵⁰ *The Clipper* reported: "THE NEW ASSOCIATION will hold a meeting Oct. 10 in Pittsburgh. Clubs who intend sending representatives will please communicate with H.B. Phillips, Great Western Hotel, Philadelphia Pa."⁵¹

THE MEETINGS

Who was actually at the meeting is a matter of conjecture. Justus Thorner's 1889 account of the meeting erroneously stated that Phillips was there. Later, Caylor stated: "The Association was christened at the Pittsburgh meeting, and neither Mr. Phillips nor Mr. Von der Ahe was present."⁵² Nonetheless Thorner recalled: "We called another meeting at the St. Clair Hotel, Pittsburgh and I brought on with me O.P. Caylor from Cincinnati and another reporter named Wright. These two, Mr. Phillips and myself were all the people who showed up.... Phillips and I took a stroll into Diamond Street and there learned that a baseball crank named Al Pratt was working in one of the mills and we found him. He told us of Denny McKnight and he was also secured. [W]e organized for all practical purposes, and I suggested that we have baseball representatives at Louisville, Washington, Philadelphia, New York, and St. Louis to send me their proxy as to where the next meeting should be held. We led everyone wired to believe that he was the only one absent from the meeting, and that caused an immediate reply."⁵³ In another account by Thorner from 1894, he stated: "It was during the latter part of 1881 that I read in some paper of a call for a meeting, at a Pittsburg hotel, of all those favoring a new baseball organization. In company with O.P. Caylor I took a run down to Pittsburg and...found the call to be on the order of a hoax, as no one showed up outside Caylor and myself. I inquired of the hotel keeper whether any one in town was fond of baseball, and was referred to Denny McKnight and Al Pratt. We called on these gentlemen.... We then declared the meeting adjourned to Cincinnati, November 2, and Caylor and I returned home."⁵⁴

The day after the meeting, numerous newspapers published virtually identical accounts. Possibly authored by Frank Wright of the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, the report was replete with misspellings and name-dropping, perhaps in an effort to impress prospective league members. It stated, with the correct names in parentheses, that temporary officers chosen were M.F. Day (John B. Day), of the Metropolitan club, Christ Van Derahe (Von der Ahe), James J. Williams (James A. Williams), and H.D. McKnight. Justus

This 1865 photograph of the Atlantics of Brooklyn by Charles H. Williamson depicts the “Champion Nine” of 1864 and was given to opposing teams who played The Atlantic Club. In September and October of 1882 the club undertook a tour, making stops for multiple games in Philadelphia, Louisville, and St. Louis, with a second stop in Philadelphia on the way home. Such tours were part of the basis of formation of the league known as the American Association.



Thorner and Charles Fulmer were appointed to a committee to draft a constitution and by-laws.⁵⁵ John B. Day was owner of the highly-successful independent professional New York-based Metropolitan club and James A. Williams was a former pitcher and the secretary, treasurer, and main driving force behind the recently defunct (Inter)National Association.⁵⁶ Charles Fulmer was a prominent Philadelphia baseball player who accompanied the Athletics on their Western tour.⁵⁷ Despite the supposed selection of officers, none of the accounts specifically stated who was actually present at the meeting.

The *New York Clipper* was more circumspect: “An informal meeting was held Oct. 10 in Pittsburg in the place of the proposed convention of clubs to organize a new Association, at which there were but two or three of the representatives of the clubs present who were to have sent delegates. After some talk together it was resolved to hold a meeting for permanent organization at the Gibson House, Cincinnati, Nov. 2.”⁵⁸

Despite numerous unanswered questions, conventional wisdom holds to Harold Seymour’s account. That is, that Phillips instigated the meeting but dropped out; that Justus Thorner, Caylor, and Frank Wright went to Pittsburgh and met with Al Pratt and Denny McKnight; and that they sent to prominent non-National League clubs telegrams worded so as to give the impression that each absentee was the only one not present at the meeting.⁵⁹

The American Association of Professional Base Ball Clubs formed on November 2, 1881, at the Gibson House in Cincinnati, Ohio, with six charter members;

the Athletics of Philadelphia, the Atlantics of Brooklyn, St. Louis, Cincinnati, the Alleghenys of Pittsburgh, and the Eclipse of Louisville. Delegates to the convention included O.P. Caylor and Justus Thorner, Chris Von der Ahe, Billy Barnie, and Denny McKnight. Charles Fulmer represented the Athletics, and Horace Phillips represented the Philadelphia club of Al Reach. After some talk of consolidation, Fulmer was admitted as the representative of the Athletics, and Phillips was excluded. McKnight was made temporary chairman and Jimmy Williams was chosen temporary secretary.⁶⁰ At the March 1882 meeting of the American Association, the Atlantic Club of Brooklyn resigned, to be replaced by a club from Baltimore.⁶¹

AFTERWORD

Who should receive credit for the formation of the American Association? Alfred Spink and O.P. Caylor had been reporting baseball since 1875. Justus Thorner had been involved in Cincinnati baseball since 1879. Veterans Billy Barnie and Horace Phillips had faced each other on the field for years, including 1881, when their teams were members of the Eastern Championship Association. Spink helped form an independent team in St. Louis and encouraged Caylor to do the same in Cincinnati. Spink wrote to Phillips and Barnie, inviting their teams west. Barnie and Phillips noted the success of teams in St. Louis, Cincinnati and Louisville. Caylor and Phillips met in September. Soon thereafter, Phillips issued the call for the first meeting. All these men deserve a measure of credit in this enterprise. ■

Notes

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2. Marshall D. Wright, *The National Association of Base Ball Players, 1857–1870* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., Inc., 2000).
3. *New York Clipper*; April 27, 1878; *New York Clipper*, May 4, 1878
4. *New York Clipper*; April 12, 1879, *Brooklyn Eagle*; April 13, 1879, 4; *New York Clipper*, May 31, 1879.
5. *Brooklyn Eagle*, March 25, 1881, 1; *New York Clipper*, April 2, 1881; *New York Times*, April 12, 1881 8.
6. *New York Clipper*, October 13, 1883.
7. Wright.
8. *New York Clipper*, January 6, 1877; *Chicago Tribune*, March 4, 1877, 7; *New York Clipper*, March 10, 1877.
9. *New York Clipper*, April 6, 1878; *New York Clipper*, November 23, 1878.
10. *New York Clipper*, May 10, 1879; *New York Clipper*, May 8, 1880; *New York Clipper*, March 24, 1883.
11. *New York Clipper*, March 19, 1881; *Brooklyn Eagle*, April 17, 1881, 6; (Philadelphia) *North American*, May 16, 1881.
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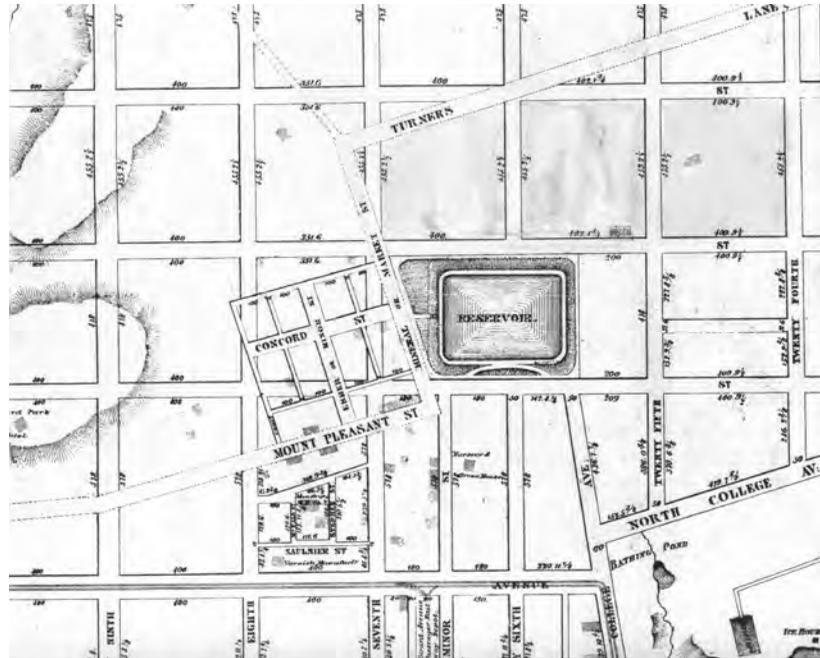
The Jefferson Street Ball Parks (1864–91)

Jerrold Casway

The Philadelphia ballparks situated at Jefferson and Master Streets, between 27th and 25th Streets, have a significant historic importance for our national pastime. Originally, this plot of land was known as the Jefferson Parade Grounds. It was used as a bivouac and training site in the years leading up to the Civil War.¹

In the antebellum era, the major Philadelphia teams, the Athletics, Olympics, Mercantiles, and Keystones, found it difficult to secure suitable playing grounds in the city. Because of the community's opposition to recreational sports, Philadelphia ball clubs were forced to play in Camden, New Jersey or across the Schuylkill River above the Fairmount Avenue Bridge near Harding's Inn and Tavern. With baseball's growing popularity, playing grounds soon encroached the outskirts of the city at 32nd and Hamilton and 11th and Wharton. It was not until the early war years that playing fields appeared at more accessible sites such as 10th and Camac Lane and 18th and Master Street. Eventually residential pressures compelled the Olympic and Mercantile ball clubs in 1864 to lease from the city "a handsome piece of ground at the north side of the Spring Garden Market" at 25th and Jefferson.²

Each club had two days a week for their practice. For a cost of about \$1,500, the Olympics immediately built a clubhouse along Master Street and made substantial improvements by leveling and re-sodding the playing surface. The first game was played on Wednesday, May 24, 1864, between picked nines from Pennsylvania and New Jersey for the benefit of the United States Sanitary Commission. Without an enclosing fence, two thousand spectators, paying 25 cents for admission, established the field's boundaries. The only field-sitting was for ladies who sat behind the players' bench.³ This ballpark was marked



The Jefferson Street Neighborhood in 1860. From 24th Street to where Turner's Lane ends is the ballpark site.

by certain features. Along the third base/Master Street side was the grass embankment of the old Spring Garden Reservoir. Trees also disrupted the playing site, and until the grounds were enclosed, neighborhood animals wandered onto the field of play. Parking for horse carriages was in the left field foul territory, and no elevated reporters' seating box existed until 1871.⁴ Visible behind the 27th and Master home plate intersection on the Girard College campus was the towering Greek-styled Founders Hall with its Corinthian columns.⁵

The Jefferson Grounds experienced a significant overhaul when the city's best team, the Athletics, relocated there for the inaugural 1871 National Association of Professional Base Ball Players season. The Athletics had previously prospered at a popular site at 17th Street between Columbia and Montgomery Avenues before a housing development forced them to move to the Jefferson Grounds. Almost immediately, the Athletics tore down the old wooden grandstand



The playing field in 1865 looking southeast toward the reservoir at the corner of 24th and Master streets. On the left is Founders Hall of Girard College.

and the encircling fence that had been erected in 1866. The new tenants re-sodded and leveled the playing surface, erected a ten-foot vertical slatted fence, and built a pair of tiered pavilions that abutted near the original home plate area on the corner of 25th and Master. Bleacher benches extended along the outfield lines. This rebuilt ball field held over 5,000 fans. This figure doubled during major ball games, when spectators lined up in front of the outfield fences and stood on wooden boxes that supported unstable raised wood planks. Those attendees who could not gain admission purchased 25-cent roof-top seats on neighboring houses, or sat on the branches of overhanging trees. These fans were termed “tree frogs,” and were likened to “living fruit.”⁶

Initially, the ball park was popular with women, but they eventually were turned off by the cursing, drinking and the tobacco juice splashes on their dresses. Management tried to curb this rowdy behavior and attempted to attract fans with a music bandstand.⁷ There was even talk in the off-season about having football games at Jefferson Grounds.⁸ For the 1872 season, the champion Athletics resurfaced the infield, particularly the irregularly graded short-stop area. If these modifications were not completed in time for the new season the Athletics intended to schedule early season games across the Delaware River in Gloucester, New Jersey.⁹

During the Athletics’ third season at the Jefferson Grounds, alarms were raised over the possibility that the site would be sold to housing developers. The Ath-

letics’ directors were upset because they claimed to have invested over \$7,000 on the ball field. After much debate and lobbying the politicians relented and the sale did not go through.¹⁰ A subsequent concern was the building of additional cheap seats in the outfield. In 1874 this need intensified when the grounds welcomed a new tenant, the Philadelphia Centennials (also known as the Quakers or Fillies). The new club had the field every Monday and Thursday. The Athletics took the site on Wednesdays and Saturdays.¹¹ Prints of the playing grounds from a home plate perspective portrayed a wooden porched-styled construction.¹² In spite of the clubs’ successes the ball park was losing money. The tenant teams compensated by raising ticket prices and erecting a new interior fence that could be plastered with paid advertisements. But the prevalence of

gambling and drinking at the ball field kept people away.¹³ Eventually, the expenses of park maintenance and renovation exceeded revenues. They could not even afford a tarpaulin to cover the infield.¹⁴ It was hoped that the Athletics’ affiliation with the new National League in 1876 might save the old ball field. But the well-worn Jefferson Park did not appeal to fans and with low income and poor attendance the Athletics could not afford to remain in the new League. The unaffiliated and homeless Centennials now shifted their games to Recreation Park at 24th Street and Ridge Avenue, and the expelled Athletics’ rump team in 1877 played unsanctioned games wherever they could find a ball field. It was obvious that more revenue could be made by turning part of the Jefferson Grounds over to residential developers. It took the creation of the American Association in 1882 to revive the Athletics and the old Jefferson Park ball field.

The Athletics initially played their inaugural Association season at Oakdale Park at 11th and Cumberland. This leisure recreation site had a large lake and an adjoining playing field, used earlier for cricket. Some distance from the Jefferson/Columbia ball-playing corridor, the Oakdale grounds had been in use since 1866.¹⁵ After nearly a decade the ball field became downtrodden until the displaced Olympics revived the grounds [1877–1881]. It was thus an ideal place for the revitalized Athletics to re-establish themselves.

Once the contracts had been signed, the Athletics razed the “old and unsightly” existing structure and replaced it with an upgraded wooden grandstand that

held 2,000 spectators. The grounds were re-sodded and enlarged and open outfield benches were rebuilt for another 2,000 fans. A new fence was also erected for the start of the 1882 season.¹⁶ Despite these renovations the ball field could not accommodate the large crowds that embraced the new Athletics. As a result, the Athletics decided to relocate back to the Jefferson Street ball field. Unfortunately, the original two-block 25th Street square site no longer existed. The city had committed the eastern portion to a new high school and 26th Street was cut through the original ball grounds. But the Athletics, recognizing the transportation convenience of the site, negotiated an initial lease for \$1,000 for the remaining 27th Street remnant. As a result, the former centerfield space became the new home plate area for the Association's Jefferson Street ball field.¹⁷

On the corner of 27th and Jefferson, the Athletics constructed "the handsomest ball grounds in the country."¹⁸ The corner was backed up by a semi-circular two-tiered grandstand. Painted white and adorned in "ornamental...fancy cornice work," the pavilion featured arm-chair seating behind a wire-mesh screen. The structure eventually was topped by 32 private season boxes, each holding five people, and a 22-person press box. The grandstand sat 2,200 people and open benches bordering the outfield held more than 3,000 fans.¹⁹

After a successful 1883 championship season, the ballpark's capacity was increased to 15,000. Special features abounded. The Oakdale flagstaff was planted at the 27th and Master Street corner, a private external staircase for box ticket holders was erected, a ladies room, with a female attendant, was set up, and a bandstand, linking the third base pavilion and outfield seats, was erected.²⁰ The outfield benches were fronted by a horizontal slatted barrier and the left field fence held a scoreboard and advertisements. Towering over the left field benches was the Jefferson Street Mission Church. In the distance, beyond center field, was the still-visible Founders Hall on the Girard College campus.²¹

The new Athletics and their renovated ball field were overseen by a popular local triumvirate, Charles "Pop" Mason, Lew Simmons, and Billy Sharsig. They raised funds to finance the franchise and redesigned the grounds to suit their needs and limited budget. Each served a term as team manager, but Sharsig managed the ball club for five out of the eight years at Jefferson Street. The Athletics' record for these years



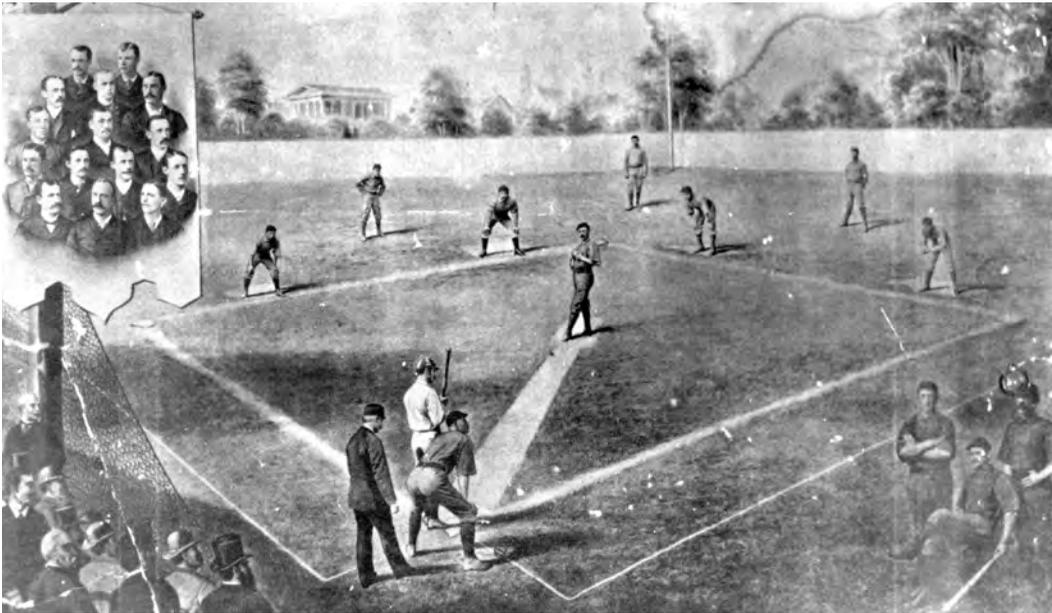
Olympic Clubhouse near the 24th and Masters intersection, circa 1865–1866. Behind the clubhouse is the reservoir.

COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

was 519–464 for a .528 percentage. For most of their tenure at Jefferson Street the team was competitive and held their own attendance-wise against the National League Phillies. Their popularity was due to ballplayers like Bobby Matthews, Henry Larkin, Harry Stovey, and Louis Bierbauer. But Mason and Simmons recognized that the financial well-being of the franchise would be enhanced by Sunday ball playing. Unfortunately, Pennsylvania "Blue laws" forbade games on the Christian Sabbath. To counter this restriction Mason and his partners revived an old practice of scheduling games in Gloucester, New Jersey. Fans would assemble early on a Sunday morning at the South Street ferry and take a 45-minute crossing to Gloucester. Games were contested at a site next to the centrally-located race track that was served by horse trolleys. Radiating from this sporting juncture were saloons, betting parlors, fishcake stands, and other hostleries. One editorial called Gloucester "a nineteenth-century Sodom."²²

The Athletics began the 1886 season with an advertisement claiming to be the "oldest playing organization in the United States." They asserted that they gave the Jefferson Street patrons "honest ball playing" when they posted the opening season schedule of games. These contests began at 4:00 PM and admission remained at 25 cents. Even the train schedule from Broad Street was publicized.²³ Despite this confidence, the ballfield was again threatened by city officials. These ambitious politicians were deterred when they were reminded that no one except the Athletics was willing to pay the \$2,000 lease for the grounds.²⁴ Once this issue was settled the Athletics re-dedicated their resources to repairing the grounds. They raised the infield, put in new cinder paths, and purchased "an immense canvas to cover the entire infield."²⁵ Two years later, Mason and Simmons, looking

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1873 ballgame looking north, towards Jefferson. First base pavilion is on 24th.

for revenue, changed the ticket prices. General admission became 50 cents, and for an extra quarter women and their escorts could sit on cushioned seats in parts of the grandstand.²⁶ This new revenue was intended to cover the expenses of erecting a new fence, replacing old floorboards, and re-painting the pavilions.²⁷ In spite of these changes, the growing threat of a players' strike put the Athletics and their ball park in jeopardy.

In 1890, the players' Brotherhood union brought a player strike team to Philadelphia. This anticipated rivalry moved the Pennsylvania Railroad to offer the Athletics a new ball field at a more competitive location with easy access from the Broad Street Station. It was rumored that the club was offered a five-year free lease if they moved to a site in West Philadelphia on the other side of the river below the 40th Street Bridge.²⁸ Rather than lose or alienate their existing fan base, the Athletics turned down this speculative offer. Instead the Athletics, in grounds which had not been updated in a number of seasons, prepared for the 1890 strike season, competing against two Philadelphia ball clubs in different leagues. The season, as expected, was a hardship for the American Association Athletics. Attendance waned and expenses mounted. By the end of the year the Athletics had new management and the Jefferson Street grounds were on the verge of being eclipsed.

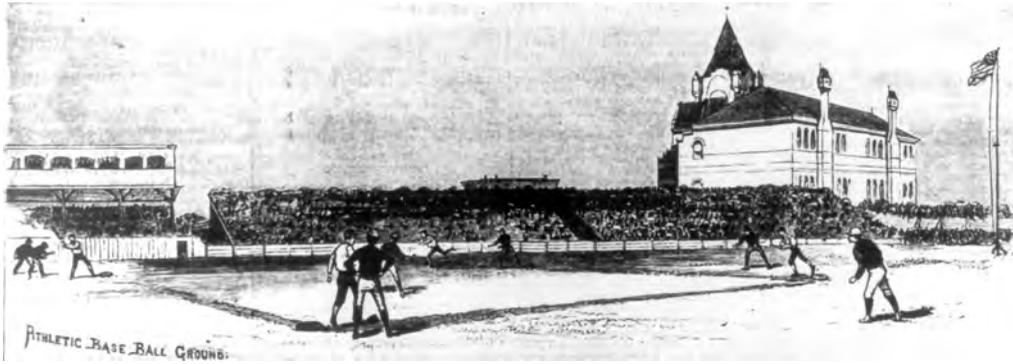
By the middle of the strike season the Athletics were plagued by pre-existing financial woes. In 1888, this condition moved Mason, Simmons, and Sharsig to seek new investors, like H.C. Pennypacker and his partner William Whitaker. But during the season of 1890 the club's problems mounted. In one instance, a suit for almost \$300 was brought against the franchise

in the Court of Common Pleas by carpenters who were not fully paid for their work on the pavilions.²⁹ The ball club also owed \$1,200 in back rent and \$1,435 for lumber purchases. To pay these outstanding debts the grandstand, inside fence, seats, flagstaff, ticket boxes, and office furniture, appraised at \$765, were sold at the end of the season for \$600.³⁰ Sometime during these dealings, the Wagner brothers, J. Earle and George, wholesale meat distributors, took over the defunct franchise. Previously, the Wagners were stockholders in the city's Players League team. After the Jefferson Street field's sheriff sale, the Wagners shifted players from the three city ball clubs and set up their reconvened team at the Players League ball field, Forepaugh Park and Broad and Dauphin Streets.

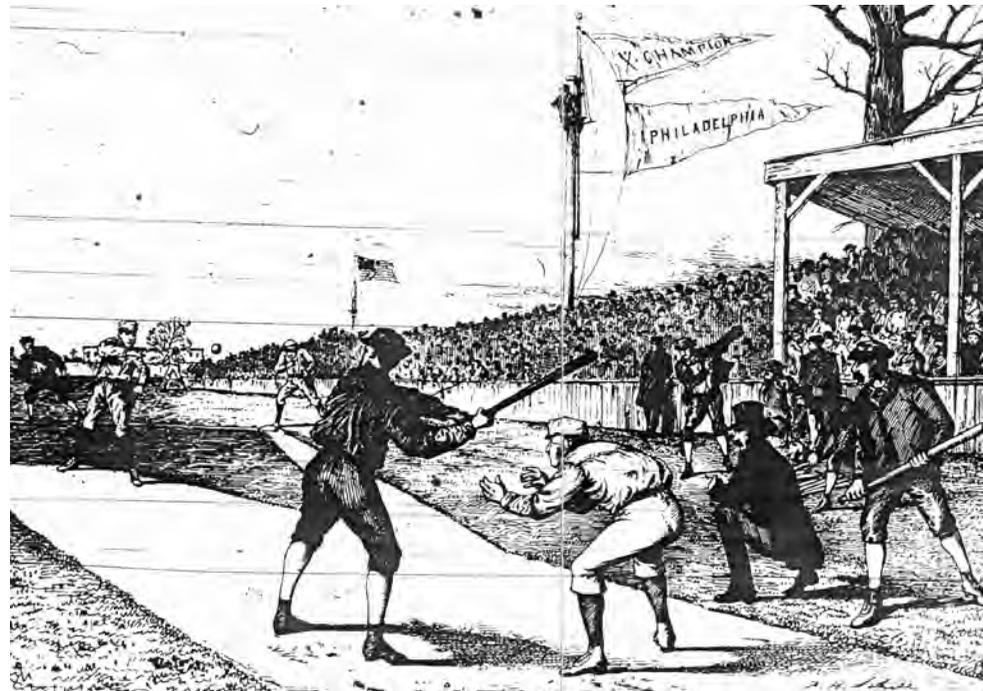
The Athletics played one more season in Philadelphia before merging with the new National League Washington ballclub. The Washington AA club joined the National League. It was a better end than what was in store for the Jefferson ball field. Vacant and partially denuded during the 1891 season, the ballpark was set ablaze by neighborhood youngsters in November. A good deal of lumber, stored for carpenters repairing the surviving outside fence, fed the flames.³¹ A month later the Wagners' offices on Vine Street burned down. Fortunately, the office safe, with the club's records, tickets and contracts, survived the fire.³² By the following summer the old Jefferson Street grounds, behind a new "substantial fence," were converted into an enclosed "pleasure park" and playground.³³

By the mid-1890s there was speculation that a new baseball association would take over the Jefferson Street site.³⁴

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1883 ballgame at the new 27th and Jefferson Street field, looking north towards Jefferson street. Home plate is at 27th Street. The big building on the right is the Mission Church at 26th and Jefferson.



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1884 ballgame looking southeast from the corner of 27th street and Jefferson. Founders Hall is at the top left of the picture.

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Contemporary picture of the playground and softball field at the corner of 27th and Jefferson.

In 1900 the future owners of the American League Athletics, Ben Shibe and Connie Mack, pondered the advantages of revisiting the old 27th Street ball field.³⁵ Mack's Athletics offered to lease the grounds for \$1,000 a year and signed a \$30,000 lease to upgrade it. But neighboring residents and the new 25th Street School opposed the new ballpark and its anticipated crowds.³⁶ As a result, the inaugural American League Athletics located themselves at 29th and Columbia while the Jefferson Street site hosted leisure activities and an occasional Buffalo Bill Wild West Show.³⁷

Today a memorial plaque to Billy Sharsig is mounted at the 26th Street recreation center and kids play on a softball field set on the grass and dirt of one of Philadelphia's oldest and most important ball playing sites. ■

Notes

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2. *Sunday Mercury*, May 16, 1866; *Sunday Dispatch*, March 3, 1872.
3. *Ibid.*, May 22, 1864; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 25, 1864. Olympics club house, c. 1866. Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Olympics Folder, B 13.55.
4. *Evening City Item*, May 15, 1871.
5. Painting by A. Kollner, 1865 in Logan Library, Philadelphia, PA. See also T. Eakins painting, 1875, "Baseball Players," at Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island.
6. *Sunday Dispatch*, September 15, 1872; 11 June 1871; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 11, 1871.
7. *Sunday Dispatch*, April 7, 1873.
8. *Ibid.*, November 21, 1871.
9. *Ibid.*, April 7, 1872; April 28, 1872.
10. *All Day City Item*, May 23, 1873.
11. *Sunday Dispatch*, January 25, 1874.
12. *The Daily Graphic*, April 30, 1873; April 18, 1874.
13. *All Day City Item*, February 10, 1875; February 28, 1875; May 3, 1875.
14. *Ibid.*, July 30, 1875.
15. *Sunday Mercury*, November 4, 1866.
16. *Sunday Item*, March 26, 1882.
17. By the end of the first year the Committee on City Property gave the Athletics a three-year renewable lease at \$2,000 a year. This agreement stood unless the new high school was built. In that case the city had to give the ball club a three month notice of the forfeiture. *Sunday Dispatch*, December 9, 1883. *Philadelphia Press*, January 17, 1883; *Sunday Dispatch*, February 4, 1883.
18. *Sunday Item*, April 8, 1883; April 1, 1883.
19. *Ibid.*, April 8, 1883; *Sunday Dispatch*, January 14, 1883; *Philadelphia Record*, April 1, 1883.
20. *Ibid.*, March 29, 1883.
21. *Frank Leslie Illustrated Newspaper*, October 6, 1883 and Gilbert & Bacon picture, 1884, Baseball Hall of Fame, B. 164.65. *Philadelphia Record*, March 29, 1883; March 31, 1883. The late Larry Zuckerman calculated that the ball park's dimensions were 288–440–352. Zuckerman to J. Casway, August 7, 1999.
22. *North American*, August 28, 1899; May 5, 1893. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 10, 1898.
23. *Sporting Life*, March 31, 1886.
24. *Ibid.*, May 5, 1886.
25. *Ibid.*, November 17, 1886.
26. *Ibid.*, April 25, 1888.
27. *Ibid.*, February 20, 1889.
28. *Ibid.*, October 16, 1889; *Sporting News*, October 19, 1889.
29. *North American*, June 26, 1890; *Sporting Life*, June 28, 1890.
30. *Ibid.*, October 18, 1890; *The Sporting News*, October 18, 1890; *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 15, 1890.
31. *Sporting Life*, November 28, 1891.
32. *Ibid.*, December 12, 1891.
33. *Ibid.*, June 18, 1892; *Sunday Item*, June 19, 1892; *The Sporting News*, October 27, 1894.
34. *Sporting Life*, October 27, 1894.
35. *The Sporting News*, September 23, 1900; November 24, 1900.
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37. *Ibid.*, May 13, 1901; *Sunday Item*, May 11, 1902.



Philadelphia—October 1866

The Center of the Baseball Universe

Jeff Laing

In the late nineteenth century, Philadelphia was a hotbed of baseball activity, and specifically of idiosyncratic match-ups. For three weeks in October 1866, Philadelphia was the scene of two “world” championship series that helped determine the future course of baseball in the areas of professionalism and race.

The 1860s were a decade of rapid social change and radical perceptions of what it meant to be an American. The growth of the railroads and affordable train travel; the development of communication services, such as the telegraph and the typewriter; and the end of the Civil War all aided in the growth and development of baseball into a shared national experience. The game was simple to understand, inexpensive, relatively easy to play, and, according to its most vocal proponents, American in origin and nature. With little competition from other team sports, baseball in the 1860s stepped into a nation searching for a means of reunification and dedication to American ideals.

Baseball was also ubiquitous in this era as a part of many school physical education programs because it was cheap to fund—a ball and a bat—with many possible participants. The US Military used the game to develop physical strength and dexterity, mental agility, and team cohesion while sharpening the soldiers’ competitive skills. Local baseball associations developed personal camaraderie and civic devotion to town teams. The notion of baseball as a patriotic activity began in this decade and the flag was often presented by local groups to visiting clubs.

The 1866 Championship Match, a best of three affair scheduled for early October, between the six-time eastern champion Athletics of Brooklyn and the up-and-coming Athletics of Philadelphia who arranged the competition, was a major event in the evolution of baseball into a professional sport: “The October 1866 series...was, to that point, the culmination of enticing players, arranging tours, promoting matches between top clubs and charging the public, all to maximize profit.”¹ The first game was scheduled for October 1 at the Columbia Avenue and 15th Street grounds. Though there had been an advance sale of 8,000 tickets at

25 cents, Philadelphia was not prepared for the crowds that showed up for the ball game. The estimated attendance was in excess of thirty thousand spectators, many of whom were herded to the outfield. When the police force proved insufficient to the task of removing the fans from the playing field, the game was called in the second inning.² The Philadelphia papers went into a paroxysm of excess about the possibility that a fervid devotion to baseball by half-crazed cranks would lead to the eventual demise of the sport:

Yesterday the base-ball fever culminated in a scene disgraceful to Philadelphia. The much-talked of game between the Athletics and Atlantics was prevented by the ignorant conduct of the vast crowd assembled to witness the sport. We do not overestimate when we say there were 30,000 people present, and of those 30,000 a large proportion lacked common sense. In their eager desire to secure advantageous positions, they sacrificed all propriety, and overreaching themselves, prevented the game which they all had come miles to see. It is a matter of extremely slight importance whether the game in question occurs or not, but an instructive lesson can be drawn from the conduct of those present on the occasion, We stated yesterday that the admiration felt for baseball as for all physical sports, was a natural one; that it should be popular is proper. But at the same time we warned all lovers of the game that the excess to which it was being carried would prove its ruin.

The reporter discussed in depth the twin dangers that threatened baseball’s growing popularity: gambling and drinking. The article concluded with an appeal for moderation among all elements of fandom:

We like the game of base-ball. We think it calculated to strengthen the muscles, invigorate the system, and counteract the evils of the sedentary life lead [sic] by some many of our young men.

But at the same time it would be better to have no game than what we fear it will become. Let the nuisance be abated, for nuisance it has become. Let us have it in moderation; for as long as the fever does not cool, the whole sport will be ruined, and base-ball and cricket rank among the things that were.³

On October 15 in clear weather conditions, the return match at the Atlantics' Capitoline Grounds in Bedford, New York, was played with the home team winning, 27–17, after a close match through the first four innings. Equally important, the Brooklyn ownership organized the game effectively by decorating the 4,000-seat stadium in patriotic colors, selling no tickets in advance but insisting that all spectators that entered the grounds pay a quarter by exact change, providing dignitaries with special seating, and having a small army of police to ensure order with the crowd estimated to be in the neighborhood of 20,000.⁴

With the revenues from the first two meetings—the aborted game on October 1 (\$2,000) and the Atlantics victory on October 15 (\$1,000)—totaling \$3,000,⁵ the 1866 series was turning out to be a financial if not artistic success. The third (and what turned out to be the final) game of the series took place back in Philadelphia on October 22. The Athletics were much better prepared for the anticipated fan interest with a stronger police presence and a new fence built around their field to limit the attendance to 4,000 paying spectators. To increase profits, the Athletics charged a dollar a ticket, an exorbitant, previously unheard-of fee to attend a baseball game.⁶ The actual game followed the same pattern as the October 15 match with a close game becoming a blowout for the home team in the later innings. Philadelphia outscored Brooklyn, 22–3 in the last three frames, before a downpour ended the game in the eighth inning with the Athletics leading 31–12.

A final deciding game was never played in this series due to a money dispute: The Athletics wanted to take the cost of their newly erected fence off the top of the revenues while Brooklyn wanted to share in the total gross profits.⁷

While the 1866 Match series was inconclusive in declaring an eastern champion, it did prove that there was enormous fan interest in championship level baseball and that a great deal of money could be made from such games, suggesting that baseball in the near future was a potentially solid business investment and profit-maker.

During the same week that the Atlantics were facing off against the Athletics, the African American



PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Civil rights activist Octavius C. Catto founded the Philadelphia Pythians in 1866.

Albany (New York) Bachelors came to Philadelphia and laid claim to the first (unofficial) black baseball championship

Early in October the Albany Bachelor Base Ball Club headed the 260 miles south to Philadelphia to challenge the newly established black Excelsior and Pythian clubs. Eager to spread the gospel of baseball to African American organizations and communities, the Bachelors paid their own expenses and had a successful first-ever road trip for a black ball club. On October 3, 1866, the Bachelors met the Pythians at the Parade Grounds at 11th and Wharton Streets near the Moyamensing Prison.⁸

The Philadelphia Pythian Base Ball Club was founded in 1866 by civil rights activist and base ball star infielder Octavius V. Catto who recruited 50 percent of his middle class team from the Banner Institute (a literary and debating society that shared rooms with the ball club).⁹ Catto's vision for the club was always larger than the won-loss column. He desired "equal participation and recognition" for African Americans in American society. He himself was instrumental in desegregating the city trolley cars. He believed base ball "built community ties, pushed racial boundaries, and established local and national networks of support."¹⁰ (The Bachelors were led by a similarly motivated leader, James C. Matthews, who became the New York State Recorder on the Democratic ticket in



This 1874 photo depicts Weston Fisler, who joined the Athletic Club of Philadelphia in 1866.

1895, and saw the national pastime as a means for African Americans to strive for equality.¹¹

The result of the October 3, 1866, match game was a rout in favor of the Upstate New York visitors. The *Albany Evening Journal* was quick to reprint the results of the game: “Oct. 3—Philadelphia: A match game of base ball was played this P.M. between the Bachelors of Albany and the Pythians of this city, which resulted in a victory for the former by a score of 70 to 15.” The *Syracuse Daily Standard* (October 4, 1866) published the fact of the Bachelors’ victory and added that “this game attracted a large crowd of spectators.” Word of the Albanians’ resounding defeat of the Pythians was also reported in the *Nashville Daily Union and American* (October 4, 1866): “Philadelphia, Oct. 3—A match was also played between two negro [sic] clubs, the Bachelors of Albany, and the Pythians of this city [Philadelphia]. This game attracted a large number of spectators.”

On the following day, the *Albany Evening Journal* reported another solid diamond victory for the Bachelors: “Philadelphia, Oct. 4—Another match was played this P.M. between the Bachelors of Albany and Excelsiors of this city, which resulted in another victory for the Bachelors, by a score of 44 to 28.”

In 1867, the Pythians baseball club went 9–1. Trying to follow up on their on-field success, Catto’s

club unsuccessfully attempted to participate in the Pennsylvania Convention of Baseball in Harrisburg on October 16 and, despite the support of Athletics of Philadelphia vice-president and president of the nominating committee E. Hicks Hayhurst, the Pythians were the only one of 266 clubs denied entry into the association. Later in the fall, the National Association of Base Ball Players (NABBP) upheld the Pennsylvania decision.¹²

In spite of their failure to enter organized baseball, Catto’s Pythians were a major force in the attempted integration of the national pastime. The high visibility and political astuteness of its founder and the integrity and skill of its club members provided the Pythians a place of prominence in early black baseball’s fight against racial bias. Yet, by the fall of 1867, less than two years after the conclusion of Civil War, baseball had officially established a color line that was not to be lifted on a full-scale basis for 80 years.

Within a few weeks of each other in 1866, two major baseball competitions were held in Philadelphia that would lead to radical changes. Baseball was becoming America’s national pastime and a viable profession for talented players; the game was also doing so without the inclusion of African Americans. Money matters and racial prejudice, national issues that remain unresolved to this day, thus dominated the earliest years of our national pastime. ■

Notes

1. Preston D. Orem, *Baseball 1845–1881 from Newspaper Accounts*, 54–55, cited in Eric Miklich’s “Money Ball: 1866 Championship Match—Athletics vs. Atlantics” *The Base Ball Players Chronicle*: 1–13. <http://vbba.org/newsletter/?p=36>. (Accessed 10/20/2012).
2. *Ibid.*, 2–3.
3. *Philadelphia Evening Telegraph* (PET), October 2, 1866, 4.
4. Miklich, 4.
5. *Ibid.*, 5.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. Jerrold Casway, “Octavius Catto and the Pythians of Philadelphia,” *Historical Society of Pennsylvania*: www.hsp.org/print/node/2931.
9. George B. Kirsch, *Baseball in Blue and Gray: The National Pastime during the Civil War* (Princeton University Press, 2003), 128.
10. “Playing for Keeps: The Pythian Base Ball Club of Philadelphia,” *Historical Society of Pennsylvania*. www.hsp.org/node/2937.
11. *The Hamilton* (Marion County, AL) *News-Press* (HNP), November 14, 1895.
12. For a comprehensive discussion of the life and untimely political murder of Octavius Catto and his Pythian Club SEE the following articles: Daniel R. Biddle and Murray Dubin, “An Early Quest for Equality on the Diamond,” *philly.com*: 1–6. www.printthis.clickability.com/pt/cpt?action=cpt&title (Accessed 9/16/3010); Jerrold Casway, “Philadelphia’s Pythians,” *The National Pastime*, 120–123; “On the field, the Pythian Club...,” *Philadelphia Baseball Review*: 1–2. www.philadelphiabaseballreview.com/pythian2.html. (Accessed August 20, 2011).



Did New York Steal the Championship of 1867 from Philadelphia?

Richard Hershberger

Baseball was booming in the years immediately following the Civil War. New clubs were forming in cities and towns across the country as established clubs created more excitement than ever. Major matches attracted unprecedented crowds. Competitive rivalries grew more heated.

This environment led inevitably to controversies. One of the greatest was the claim that the New York clubs colluded in 1867 to steal the championship from the Athletic Club of Philadelphia, to keep the pennant in New York. This charge was made in Pennsylvania, and some writers accept it to this day. But is it true? This article will assess the claim in the context of how baseball was organized at the time.

The story of this dispute centers on two institutions of the amateur era: the judiciary committee and the championship.

ORGANIZED BASEBALL AND THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

The National Association of Base Ball Players (NABBP) was the governing body of baseball in the 1860s. In 1857 a group of clubs in and around New York City held a convention for the purpose of promoting the game, primarily through the adoption of revised set of rules for inter-club play. The convention reconvened the following year and established itself as a permanent organization, the NABBP.

From the start, the rules included an administrative element in addition to playing rules. The 1857 rules required that “Any player holding membership in more than one club, at the same time, shall not be permitted to play in the matches of either club.” The previous September, the Knickerbocker Club had arrived at their grounds in Hoboken for a match game against the Gotham Club. They found one Mr. Pinckney among the Gotham players, much to their surprise, as they knew perfectly well he was a member of the Union Club. Their protest was forestalled by the Gothams, who informed them that he had joined the club the previous Tuesday, though without resigning from the Unions. “The presumption prevailed that he entered the Gothams for the purpose of this match” but the game

went on. The Unions held a special meeting to condemn this, and Pinckney resigned from the Gothams the Tuesday following the match, “expressing his conviction of the impropriety of a person belonging to or playing matches in more than one club.”¹ The practice had the double disadvantage of threatening the social structure of clubs and leading to the best players monopolizing match play. Thus, it was abolished.

There was obvious potential for a crafty player to get around this by resigning from his old club and rejoining it after the match. The following year this loophole was closed with the requirement that all players “must have been regular members of the club which they represent, and of no other club, for thirty days prior to the match.” This would remain the standard throughout the amateur era.

There remained potential for disputes. Suppose a club showed up on the appointed day for a match and found the opposing club fielding an ineligible player. Its only recourse, should the opposing club refuse to withdraw the player, was to refuse to play or to play under protest. In fact, this happened on July 20, 1862, when the Mutual Club fielded two such players in a match with the Empire Club. The Empires played, losing 24–12, and protested to the NABBP convention the following December. A committee was formed to investigate the matter, and a year later reported in favor of the Empires, nullifying the match. Justice delayed is justice denied, and a year and a half was obviously too long for a satisfactory result. At its December 1863 meeting the NABBP also created a standing judiciary committee to investigate and report on any future disputes in a timelier manner.²

This judiciary committee was to be the body that ruled in that Athletics’ dispute in 1867. It could not, however, overtly rule on the championship question.

THE AMATEUR CHAMPIONSHIP

The defining characteristic of the baseball championship in the amateur era was that officially there was no such thing. The NABBP declined to sponsor one, in the entirely reasonable fear that “matches, except

with the club holding the champion ball, would sink into insignificance, and the popularity of the game would therefore decline.”³ However, an unofficial, but widely recognized, championship system arose.

This unofficial system copied the existing model of boxing championships, grafting it onto baseball. As with boxing, aspirants would challenge the champion for the prize, with the initial champion determined through a combination of self-promotion and popular acclaim. This was combined with the existing custom of a best-of-three series. Usually the first game would be played on the challenger’s home ground (with the challenge likened to a social invitation), the second on the recipient’s home ground, with the third game, if necessary, played on a neutral ground.

This system was rife with potential confusion. The championships were conventionally stated in terms of the pennant for the season, but series were sometimes played over the course of two seasons, it not being entirely clear whether a championship could be won based on a series partly played the previous season. Also, a club might win the championship while it had partially completed other series. However, there was no clarity whether these would then transform into a championship series. There also was a widely held opinion that a club was ineligible for the championship if it had lost a series against some other club: “...it is one of the customary rules governing the championship matches that the loss of a match—best two out of three—throws a club out of the ring for the season, as a champion club, in order to have the right to “fly the whip,” must win every series of match games they play. They may lose a single game without invalidating their title, but two defeats out of three games with a club places them hors de combat for the season.”⁴

Only through good luck did most of these problems fail to arise. There were numerous games which, had victory gone the other way, could have put the whole system in confusion. The requirement that the challenging club itself lose no series did, as we shall see, arise in 1867. But as every contender for the championship had lost a series, all parties conveniently forgot the requirement. Indeed, it likely was an attempt at artificially generating interest in matches involving potential challengers for the championship.

The championship system itself coexisted uncomfortably with the ideology of amateur baseball. The archetypal baseball club was a social organization formed as a vehicle for young men of sedentary occupations to take their exercise together in a congenial setting. The vast majority of ball games were intramural affairs. Match games, in which two clubs tested

their mettle against one another, were comparatively rare and were as much social affairs as they were competitive. Rivalry was not the goal. Clubs often played each other year after year if they were socially compatible, even if they were completely mismatched competitively. On the other hand, clubs might also refuse to play if they found the experience disagreeable, even if they were well matched on the field.

Championship matches were the logical outgrowth of match games, but they still operated within the assumptions of social norms. This began to change in the postwar baseball boom. Spectators, it was learned, were willing to pay for the privilege of watching ball clubs compete. Clubs needed the revenue as they sought to attract top players by paying them (surreptitiously, as the practice was prohibited by the NABBP). Arrangements for matches grew less like social engagements and more like business contracts with penalty clauses for default. These gradual changes lead to confusion and dissension as they were sorted out.

THE ATLANTICS AND THE ATHLETICS

There were perhaps a half dozen serious championship contenders, but only two concern us here: the Atlantic Club of Brooklyn and the Athletic Club of Philadelphia.

The Atlantics were the powerhouse organization of the amateur era. They had held the championship every year since but two its inception. They were also notorious for pushing the limits of gentlemanly competition. As a modest example, the first known use of the hidden ball trick was by an Atlantic player.⁵ More serious was the history of Atlantics supporters verbally abusing their opponents and, in an era when the spectators were not physically separated from the players, interfering with the course of play. While the Atlantic players could claim innocence on the grounds that they could not control their supporters, this did not stop them from accepting the advantage.⁶

Their reputation improved in the postwar years. Their continued success stifled criticism, while general standards within the fraternity lowered. In fairness, the Atlantics’ behavior also improved, as did crowd control in a fully enclosed ball ground. In any case, they were the team to beat for clubs striving for the championship.

The Athletics of Philadelphia were the only serious contender for this outside of the New York region. The baseball craze came to Philadelphia in 1860. The Athletics were one of the first baseball clubs there. In the early years they were merely one of several pretty good clubs in Philadelphia, none of whom stood a chance against the best New York clubs. They pulled ahead

of the pack in 1865 through aggressive recruiting, collecting the best Philadelphia players, making the club essentially a regional all-star team. They supplemented this with out-of-town talent in the person of Al Reach, formerly of the Eckford Club of Brooklyn. Professionalism was outlawed by the NABBP, so was exercised secretly. Reach holds the distinction of being the first undoubted professional, though almost certainly not the first actual one. He semi-openly marketed his services, with the Athletics placing the winning bid. He opened a cigar shop in Philadelphia and went on to become a baseball equipment manufacturer. The Athletics built on this, and by 1867 were said to have four professionals.⁷

That Athletics and the Athletics already had a contentious history going into the 1867 season. They first competed in 1863, with relations amicable through 1864. They soured in 1865. The two clubs had scheduled a series, the first game for October 30 in Philadelphia and the second for November 6 in Brooklyn.⁸ Then Matty O'Brien, a long-time member of the Atlantic Club, unexpectedly died. The Athletics published a resolution of condolence, including a cancellation of all further play by the club for the season, in his memory. The Athletics followed with their own resolution of condolence.⁹ A rumor then spread that the Athletics were planning on appearing at their grounds on the day appointed for the match and declare the Athletics forfeit. The Athletics responded to this by sending a telegram the afternoon of the 29th stating their intention to play the next day. This forced the Athletics to scramble to prepare for the match, which they had understood to have been cancelled. Both sides felt aggrieved. There is no knowing if there was anything behind the rumor, but it seems likely that this was a breakdown in communication.¹⁰ The Athletics went on to win both games, keeping their championship secure from Philadelphia's first serious challenge.

The interest—and potential income from gate receipts—was too high for them to not meet again the following year. But where 1865 saw miscommunication and hard feelings, 1866 saw farce. The first game was scheduled for October 1 in Philadelphia. A contemporary account vividly describes the excitement:

In the meantime, as the hour approaches for the contest to commence, the steady tide begins to flow Columbia avenueward, until towards 1PM, when the mob of people, the crowd of vehicles, and extraordinary numbers of men, women and boys en route for the scene of action, is only equaled by the exodus from London on the great



NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, NY

London-born Al Reach played for the Eckford club of Brooklyn in the early 1860s before joining the Athletics of Philadelphia in 1865.

Derby day. The ground reached, what a sight is presented! No such scene of the kind was ever before presented to the public eye in this country, and probably will not again for some time, certainly not this season. Within a radius of a quarter of a mile from the centre of the circle were collected nearly 40,000 people, it is thought. Every window of every house within sight of the field was crowded. The house tops were peopled to an extent endangering the roofs. Trees were loaded with human fruit, and vehicles of every description surrounded the field, filled with all who could get a foothold on them. Inside the enclosure, the pressure was immense, and by the hour appointed for commencing play standing room within fifty feet of the base lines was at a premium, and, as a consequence, there was no space for the players for field operations, at least to an extent admitting of an equal contest. At last, out of patience with the delay, an effort was made to begin...¹¹

The pressure of bodies was too much. They pressed onto the field, and play had to be halted after one inning. As the crowd spilled onto the field “the whole affair broke up in a row and a number of heads had been smashed by the police, amidst the cries and screams of the ladies and children, the breaking down of fences, the throwing of stones...”¹² This left only the pointing of fingers. The Athletics claimed that ruffian

Atlantics supporters had started the trouble, pushing their way to the front of the crowd. The Athletics in turn were charged with allowing too many people within the enclosure in the quest for maximum gate receipts. The bottom line, though, was that the Athletics had failed their obligation as hosts to provide a clear field. They had allowed too many people into the enclosure and not hired enough police to control the crowd.¹³

The economics still called for the series to be salvaged, so the two clubs quickly negotiated a solution. The game scheduled for October 15 in Brooklyn went on, with extra precautions for crowd control including the presence of 100 policemen.¹⁴ The Philadelphia game was rescheduled for October 22. This gave the Athletics time to repair the ground, constructing a new, stronger fence. Ordinarily the home club retained all the gate receipts, but agreement was reached to compensate the Atlantics for the failed game by splitting the October 22 gate with them equally, after expenses.

The games went off beautifully. The Brooklyn game saw a huge crowd: "the estimate of a veteran of the Potomac army, well versed in numbering large bodies of men, was that there was not less than from twelve to fifteen thousand people within the enclosure" with the Atlantics winning 27–17.¹⁵ The Philadelphia game was thinly attended within the enclosure, as the Athletics experimented with a one dollar admission: a great leap from the usual twenty-five cents. They still attracted about two thousand paying spectators, as well as a large crowd gathered outside the fence. Best of all, the Athletics finally beat the Atlantics, 31–12.¹⁶

This would ordinarily have led to a third, and lucrative, game. But again some combination of miscommunication and bad faith intervened. The Atlantics understood their share from the Philadelphia game to be minus ordinary expenses, while the Athletics understood it to be minus all expenses, including the cost of the new fence, which ran to over half the gate receipts. The Atlantics refused their reduced share, regarding it as a swindle, while the Athletics saw the Atlantics renege on a straightforward agreement. No third game was played in 1866.¹⁷

THE CAMPAIGN OF 1867

Once again financial demands overcame all obstacles. The two clubs in 1867 agreed to complete the previous season's series, followed by a new best-of-three series. Ordinarily the clubs would split three ways the receipts from the third game of a series, with the proprietor of the neutral ground taking a share. The Athletics agreed to compensate the Atlantics with their share from the belated final game. This game was played in Brooklyn

on September 16, with the Atlantics winning 28–16. The critics of the Athletics were only too happy to point to the large crowd, and that the Atlantics came out ahead from where they would have, had they been paid in the first place.¹⁸ The Atlantic victory also had the fortunate effect of avoiding any immediate claim by the Athletics to the championship pennant.

The first game of the new series came off successfully on September 23 in Philadelphia, the Athletics winning soundly by 28–8. The second game was scheduled for the following Monday, September 30, in Brooklyn. The Friday before, they requested the game be postponed, on the grounds that four of their first nine were injured. The Athletics refused to accept the postponement, and showed up in Brooklyn at the appointed time. A fiasco ensued. The Atlantics refused to play their first nine. After much discussion, they instead presented a "muffin" nine: the most inept amateurs on their club. There was a tradition of "muffin matches" which were considered the source of great hilarity. To play a muffin nine in a championship match was a mockery. There are two interpretations of this action. The more usual is that the Atlantics were shaming the Athletics to keep them from playing. There is also a claim that the muffin nine would play so incompetently that they would be incapable of getting the Athletics out (keeping in mind the requirement that the catcher hold a third strike for an out), and therefore of playing five innings before the game would be called on account of darkness. This claim is entirely plausible. Games in theory started at two o'clock, but this one obviously would start much later, and this being late September the sun would set around half past five. There also was ample precedent for clubs stalling, usually to force the score to revert to the last completed inning. So there was a reasonable argument that the Atlantics were not merely shaming the Athletics, but using an underhanded stratagem to avoid a complete game. In the end, the Athletics refused to play, claimed a forfeit, and thereby claimed the championship.¹⁹ (There also was a later assertion that the Atlantics had offered a ball, i.e. a forfeit, which the Athletics refused. This is not credible, as it only arose later, and no one seemed to take it seriously.)

Claiming the championship was one thing, but getting the rest of the baseball fraternity to acknowledge it was quite another. The Athletics filed a complaint with the judiciary committee, demanding a ruling that they had won forfeit. The committee considered the question on October 30 and ruled that the Atlantics had indeed failed in their obligation, and ordered the game to be played within 15 days. The committee admitted that there was no rule granting them such authority, but

foreshadowed the much later powers of the Commissioner of Baseball with the argument that “their powers should be liberally construed when a palpable injury may result to the interests of the game.”²⁰

This solution might seem as Solomonic. It was actually a repudiation of the Athletics, for the situation had changed. A forfeit as of September 30 would have given the championship to the Athletics. A victory by the Athletics in November would not. To everyone’s surprise the Unions of Morrisania defeated the Atlantics for the second time on October 10, making them the champions. Morrisania was then a village in what is now the Bronx. The Unions played not far from the modern site of Yankee Stadium. The Unions were an old established club that had for years hovered just below the top level. Their winning the championship was not quite scandalous, but it was widely regarded as something of a lucky fluke. It also rendered any future game between the Atlantics and the Athletics irrelevant, so far as the championship went.

The New York clubs, it is claimed, colluded to steal the championship from Philadelphia. The judiciary committee was dominated by New Yorkers. The ruling was apparently equitable, but not made in a vacuum. The championship had no official standing with the NABBP, but the ruling was made with the full understanding of the championship implications. If the Athletics’ complaint to the committee was justified, they should have been awarded the forfeit. If not, then there was no need to order the game be played. The ruling was crafted, it is charged, to ensure that the championship pennant stayed within the metropolis.

THE RECORD OF THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

The charge of collusion is plausible on its face because the ruling of the judiciary committee seems implausible. This presupposes, however, that the committee would have acted differently had it been a New York club making the charge. Quite the contrary, this would have been very much out of character.

The committee had an inglorious history from its inception, marked mostly by inactivity. In 1867 it had a sizeable docket of eleven cases, both large and small. Most were charges of a club using an ineligible player, usually on the grounds of a violation of the 30-day rule.²¹ Its decisions show an unmistakable pattern. If the defending club was an unimportant one, the ruling might or might not go against it. If the defending club was an important one, some grounds would be found to acquit it, even if the accusing club was also important. So, for example, the minor Chestnut Street Theater Club played a match using two members of the Alert

Club, and this game was declared null and void. On the other hand, the charge against the important Excelsior Club of using four players claimed to belong to the Star Club was overturned, with the individuals declared “regular members of the Excelsior Club, within the meaning of the Rules.” It is possible that the evidence in each case supported the conclusion, but it is remarkable how well the conclusions correlate to the status of the defending club. Several cases with important defendants were also dismissed on technicalities, while those with minor defendants were uniformly free from such procedural defects.

The sole exception is a particularly illuminating case. The Unions of Morrisania charged the Mutual Club of New York—one of the top clubs—with playing one Tom Devyr. In 1865 Devyr had been expelled after confessing to accepting a bribe to throw a game with the Eckford Club. In 1867 he was reinstated with the Mutuels, contrary to the NABBP constitution. The committee ducked the issue once on procedural grounds, but when forced to make a decision, ruled against the Mutuels. Both the facts and the law were beyond question. Even at this early date the baseball community recognized the existential threat to the game of corruption by gamblers. This was a situation where the committee had to stand up to a powerful club.

What followed shows the realities of how the NABBP worked. For all that the committee acted like a judicial body, it was in fact a committee tasked to make a report to the convention. The convention as a whole would then accept or reject the report, in whole or in part. The Mutuels undertook a brazen lobbying campaign and used the convention to retry the case. The convention overturned the judiciary committee’s decision by a vote of 451–143, and then promptly passed a motion to reinstate Devyr “in the position he occupied previous to the playing of the Eckford and Mutual match in 1865.”²²

This repudiation clearly shows the limits of the judiciary committee’s power, and explains its reluctance to take a stand on any less vital issue. It also shows the NABBP devolving into a banana republic, with different de facto rules for powerful clubs than for weak ones.

In light of this reality, it is clear that the judiciary committee could not possibly have awarded a forfeit to the Athletics, and with it the championship. This would have outraged both the Atlantics and the Unions. It would also have offended the wider baseball fraternity by moving the championship contest from the playing field to the meeting room. None of this has anything to do with civic rivalry. It would have been the same had the dispute been between two New York clubs.

It is also clear that the committee believed that the Athletics had the law on their side, if not political realities. They had ample room to rule in the Athletics' favor, in that the Athletics had in fact presented nine players. The order that the game be played shows that the committee agreed that presenting a muffin nine did not fulfill the club's obligation. This order was the best outcome that the Athletics could realistically hope for. If they were cheated, it was by circumstances rather than any sort of conspiracy.

AND THE ATHLETICS FINALLY WIN THE CHAMPIONSHIP

The transformation of baseball from an amateur social exercise to a business took a decade to sort out. The story of the 1867 championship takes place early in the process. The business of baseball needed new rules for how clubs would interact. These new rules were not yet worked out, and no one really knew what the rules were.

The final game of 1867 was never played. Both clubs ignored the committee's order. The championship campaign of 1868 was even more convoluted. (An article could well be written titled "Did New York Steal the Championship of 1868 from Philadelphia?") The championship system was coming apart. The Cincinnati Red Stockings were clearly the best club in the country in 1869, but did not bother with the notional championship. That year the NABBP bowed to the inevitable and allowed open professionalism. The professional clubs in 1871 split from the NABBP to form the National Association of Professional Base Ball Players which established the first official national championship and the modern scheme of member clubs playing each other a fixed number of matches.²³

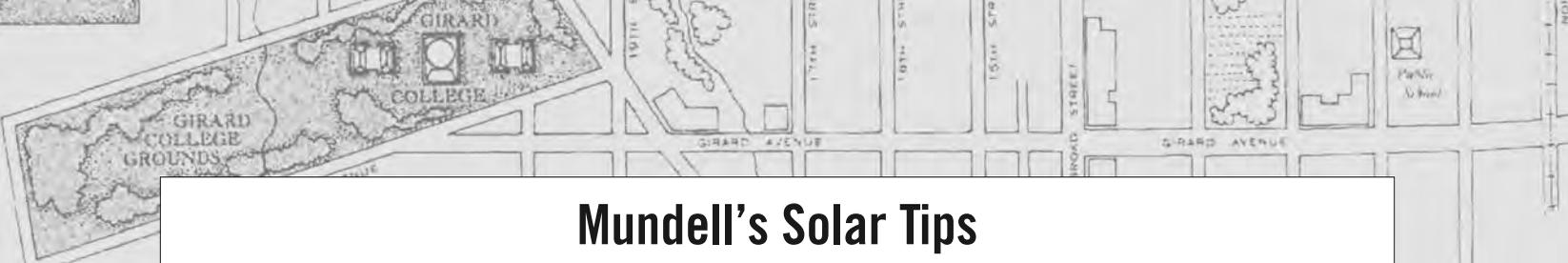
This was the final era for the old clubs. New clubs, founded as joint stock corporations, were taking over. The old social-turned-professional clubs tried to adapt, but had too much institutional inertia to keep up. None survived the 1870s. The Athletics faded fast, and stumbled through the 1875 season before disappearing.

The Athletics won their championship in 1871, making them the first official national champions of baseball. This was the high water mark for the club. They held out long enough to become a charter member when the National League formed in 1876, but they were on their last legs. They could not complete the season, and were expelled from the league. A derivative Athletics organization wheezed on a bit longer, but did not see the end of the decade. ■

Notes

1. *Porter's Spirit of the Times*, September 13, 1856; September 20, 1856.
2. *New York Sunday Mercury*, December 14, 1862; December 13, 1863.
3. *New York Sunday Mercury*, September 25, 1859.

4. *Ball Players Chronicle*, July 11, 1867.
5. *New York Sunday Mercury*, October 23, 1859.
6. The most famous example was a game in 1860 with the Excelsiors, which led to the Excelsiors refusing to ever again play the Athletics. A less known, but vividly egregious example occurred two years earlier. As reported in the *New York Evening Express* of October 26, 1858, in a game with the Gotham Club: "The Athletics won the game, the last two innings of the game being played under considerable difficulty on the part of the Gothams, who protested repeatedly—and justly, but without redress—at the unfair arrangements of the members of the Atlantic Club for keeping the field clear; while it was cleared most effectually to allow the fielders to follow the balls which were struck by the Gothams, and the openings in the fence in the left field were particularly left free and respected by the crowd of outsiders, yet no sooner was the Gotham side in the field and the Athletics at the bat, than the crowd was allowed to close in on the openings in the fence, and become an impassable barrier. This was so barefaced in one instance, that the Gothams' fielder, finding the crowd not disposed to give way, sat down in front of them until the batsman had run home." The Gothams did not play the Athletics again until 1864.
7. There is every reason to believe that other top clubs, including the Athletics, were doing the same thing. The Athletics differed only in that they also had a running feud with one Thomas Fitzgerald, the former president of the club, and Fitzgerald owned a newspaper, the *City Item*, which he used freely to air their dirty laundry.
8. This late in the season was typical of the era, when serious play didn't get started until late May and ran through November. The major championship matches usually were played late in the season.
9. *New York Leader*, October 28, 1865; *Fitzgerald's City Item*, October 28, 1865.
10. *New York Clipper*, November 4, 1865; *Fitzgerald's City Item*, November 4, 1865.
11. *New York Clipper*, October 13, 1866.
12. *Fitzgerald's City Item*, October 6, 1866.
13. The event was widely reported. In addition to those cited above, see the *Philadelphia Sunday Mercury*, October 7, 1866.
14. *Philadelphia Sunday Mercury*, October 14, 1866.
15. *New York Sunday Mercury*, October 21, 1866. This game is also notable by including the earliest known called third strike to end an inning. The account in the *Philadelphia Sunday Mercury* of October 21, 1866 also includes a description of something very like the modern wave: "Directly in front of the Philadelphia delegation a number of planks had been arranged as seats, the same being packed full of interested spectators. Said seats being too low for comfort, several of their occupants arose and indulged themselves in a good stretch, accompanying the action with the yawning sound peculiar under such circumstances. The cue was taken by the opposite side of the field, and soon the entire assemblage became infected, producing a scene ludicrous in the extreme. The satisfaction produced by this little by-play was heartily and good-humoredly manifested by the crowd on the left side of the field waving their handkerchiefs, which was promptly returned by their friends opposite, and soon thousands of pieces of white drapery were floating in the air, creating a sight probably never before witnessed on a similar occasion."
16. *Philadelphia City Item*, October 27, 1866; *Philadelphia Sunday Mercury*, October 28, 1866.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Philadelphia City Item*, September 14, 1867; *New York Sunday Mercury*, September 22, 1867.
19. *Philadelphia Sunday Mercury*, October 6, 1867; *New York Sunday Mercury*, October 6, 1867.
20. *New York Sunday Mercury*, November 3, 1867; *Ball Players Chronicle*, December 19, 1867.
21. *Ball Players Chronicle*, December 19, 1867.
22. *Ibid.*
23. This is still reflected in the official rules, which somewhat confusingly refer to "championship games" and the "championship series" in what is otherwise universally called the "regular season."



Mundell's Solar Tips

The Intersection of Amateur, Trade, Professional and Major League Baseball in Philadelphia

Paul Browne

In Philadelphia, Mundell's Solar Tips moved back and forth among the various levels of baseball during the 1880s and 1890s. Their history is illustrative of the more open and entrepreneurial baseball world that ended long ago.

John Mundell Jr. founded the Solar Tips baseball team in 1879. The first players were workers in the factory of John Mundell & Company, a shoe company founded by John Mundell, Sr. The Solar Tips were a company team established to promote the company's line of children's shoes with a patented tip to protect the shoes from the hard wear of children. One of the earliest mentions of Mundell's Solar Tips regards a game scheduled for Saturday August 11, 1883, at Recreation Park (a site also used by Philadelphia's new team in the National League) against a picked nine of striking telegraphers during a national telegraph operators strike. That a company team would play a strike team might seem unusual but John Mundell Sr. was a progressive business owner.

John Mundell Sr. was born in Ireland in 1829 of Scotch-Irish stock. He traveled from Belfast to New York as a stowaway at the age of 14 but became a cabin boy before the journey was over. He stayed at sea and became an able seaman, working at that job until 1847, when he arrived in Philadelphia. While working in the Quaker City fisheries he met a former apprentice of his father's who was a shoemaker, and learned that trade from him and opened his own shoe shop in 1848. In 1870 he opened the larger firm of John Mundell & Company, where he developed his patented shoe tip and became wealthy.

Mundell and his employees were exceptionally loyal to one another. He is quoted as saying, "(L)et all who employ people look into the grievances of his employees, for in a great many instances, to my knowledge, the employees are right, but instead of listening to their workmen's complaints many employers give them the cold shoulder, which they are apt to resent, and thus bring about strikes and lockouts."¹ Mundell's company was home to strikes and labor unrest from time to time despite his attitude towards

labor. In most cases, however, the problems occurred after Mundell and his employees had reached a frequently novel solution to a problem only to have the union's regional officers outside the company reject it.

In 1884, Mundell's employees formed the Solar Tip Mutual Improvement Land Association. Their plan was to purchase farmland a half-hour's trip by rail from the city, build affordable homes, and sell them to the members, who made periodic contributions to pay them off.² Mundell was an active member of the Republican Party when it was the party of "Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men" and was a member of the Electoral College that elected Benjamin Harrison in the 1888 presidential election.

John Mundell Jr. apparently did not have as good a relationship with labor. He was once arrested, tried, and convicted, along with an associate, for beating up a former employee after an argument ensued while the ex-employee was picking up his last check. He became a member of the joint arbitrators' board of the Philadelphia Shoe Manufacturers Association in 1885. This body's purpose was to arbitrate between management and labor.

The company team that promoted Mundell's "Solar Tip" children's shoes played two games on July 4, 1884, before crowds of over 2,000 people. The morning game was against Wanamaker's Grand Depot team and the afternoon against Hood, Bonbright & Co. The Solar Tips won both games.

Another important game that season occurred in September against the American Association Athletics. The American Association was the major league rival of the NL at that time and the Athletics had won the AA championship in 1883. The Athletics won the game 8-2 with both Tip runs coming in the fifth inning. The Athletics had most of their regulars on the field with their second regular battery of pitcher Billy Taylor and catcher Jack O'Brien. Harry Stovey led the victors with a double and shortstop Kelly led the Solar Tips with a triple.

Young Mundell and his friends had ambitious plans for 1885. Meeting "at the base ball headquarters, 139

North Eighth Street," Mundell, Fulmer of the Quaker City team, and Doyle of the Somerset team agreed to play nine games apiece against each other.³ The winner would receive \$250 plus the local championship of Philadelphia and would be expected to challenge the Athletics and Philadelphia National League club at the end of the season.

This corporately sponsored amateur team continued on its usual path into 1888. They started the season as a member of the Philadelphia area trades league, consisting of teams formed by the 12 largest manufacturers in Philadelphia, ostensibly from among each company's employees. The Tips' opening game was at Recreation Park against Laird, Schoner & Mitchell's team on April 28. The Solar Tips continued undefeated in this league into the end of May as did the McNeely Club. These two teams met on May 30 before a crowd of over 7,000 fans at Recreation Park, a site presently being called the Solar Tip grounds; the Philadelphia National League club had abandoned the field at the end of the 1886 season. Unfortunately for the Solar Tips, they lost their undefeated status and first place to McNeeley & Co., 4-3. The defensive play of the McNeeleys was credited for the victory.⁴ Other members of this league were Gumpert Brothers, Hastings & Co., American Sewing Machine, J.W. Cooper, the Allen Grays, and the Richmonds.

In this same period, John Mundell Jr. was exhibiting leadership in Philadelphia's amateur baseball world. He was elected president of the Amateur Base Ball Union of Philadelphia at their organizational meeting on May 29, 1888, at Industrial Hall. The organization consisted of 62 amateur clubs (whose players were over 17), and was intended to form leagues from among the clubs, secure and maintain a clubhouse for transaction of business among the clubs, arrange a series of games for the amateur championship of Philadelphia, and establish an annual amateur day at which a baseball parade was to be held.⁵

The amateur season moved very quickly and plans for the amateur day parade were finalized at a meeting at Earley's Hall, Arch Street, above 13th, on June 18. Fifty clubs had paid their dues and 19 more were in the application process. One hundred twenty-five clubs were signed up to participate in the parade, including junior clubs and visiting teams from other parts of Pennsylvania and New Jersey. The parade was to take place on Saturday, June 23. The parade was to begin formation at Industrial Hall at Broad and Vine Streets. The parade was then to proceed down Broad Street to Chestnut, turn on Fifth from Chestnut, up Fifth to Market, Market back to Broad, up Broad to

Columbia and from Columbia to 24th, at which point they would enter the old Recreation Park. Here a game for the championship of Philadelphia was to be played between the Solar Tips, champions of the Trades League, and the Young Americas, which had been considered the amateur champions for some years.⁶ By the date of the parade a large banquet at Industrial Hall had been added as an evening event.⁷

The Young Americas held onto their championship, beating the Solar Tips 10-5 (though the two teams would have a rematch on the following Wednesday). The Solar Tips continued to make a strong showing in the Trades League.

On July 5, the Solar Tips played Easton of the Central League. The Central League was one of the top minor leagues in the country that year. The amateur Solar Tips acquitted themselves well in this game against a higher-level club, losing by a single run, 9-8. Attendance was reported at 2,500.⁸ Four of Easton's players had brief major league careers. Buck Becannon had played for the AA Metropolitans in 1884 and '85 and the Giants in 1887. Thomas "Sandy" McDermott played with the AA Baltimore Orioles in 1885. John Deasley, who was also a member of the Solar Tips in 1888, had been with Washington and Kansas City in the 1884 Union Association. Jim McKeever had also played in the Union Association for the Boston Reds. The Solar Tips had future major league players on the field that day. William "Bad Bill" Eagan would play with the AA St. Louis Browns in 1891, Chicago of the NL in 1893 and Pittsburgh in 1898. John Riddle would play with the Washington Nationals of the NL in 1889 and the AA Athletics in 1890.

About this time Camden withdrew from the Inter-State League (now sometimes called the Philadelphia Region League). The Inter-State League, operating in and around Philadelphia, started as a semi-professional league in January 1888. When Harry Wright's Philadelphia Reserves announced their intention to join this league, the semi-pro status of the league began to look suspicious. The league's other teams began to make announcements of players signing contracts. The large number of contract signings that continued to be reported with some teams also brings the organization's status into question. The Philadelphia Reserves were all contract players; Frankford reported 14 players signed by late March, Somerset had 13, and Houston six. Camden and the Quaker City teams had also reported some paid players by this time.

James Farrington had been managing Camden when the Solar Tips brought him over to manage their team as it moved from an amateur league to—



“John Mundell & Co’s solar tip shoes Lead All in bright Dongola solar tip, pebble goat solar tip, pebble grain solar tip,” proclaims this 1889 advertisement.

in theory, at least—a semi-pro league.⁹ Young Mundell’s take on this change is not known. Farrington had been a player/manager for Camden in 1883 and managed the Wilmington/Atlantic City team in the Eastern League for part of 1885. He would manage several Pennsylvania state league teams over the rest of his career.

The Solar Tips continued to play trade league clubs during their time in the Inter-State League. On July 21 they played a doubleheader, facing the non-league Keystones at 1:30PM and the other new ISL team, the Kensingtons, at 4PM. In a quirk of the times, the Solar Tips would be listed in first place in late July with a 2-1 record, followed by Houston at 12-6, Camden at 10-6, Brandywine at 8-5, Frankford at 11-7, Kensington at 1-1, Norristown and Germantown, both at 9-11, Somerset at 8-11 and the Quaker City in last at 7-14. It was not unusual at this time for even recognized minor leagues to have teams with very different totals of league games throughout the season or for new teams to enter a league without being credited or charged with the records of teams they replaced.

On July 23 the Solar Tips played Frankford. Down 2-1 in the ninth, Eagan walked, Graham of Frankford muffed a double play attempt, Clark singled and Deasley, now back with the Tips, hit a triple and drove in the tying and winning runs.¹⁰ On July 24 it was announced that the Solar Tips would again be playing the Young America for the amateur championship of Philadelphia. The first game was to be Saturday, July 28.

By August 7, the Solar Tips withdrew from the

Inter-State League. They had compiled an impressive record of 10 wins and 2 losses (while their record is now sometimes listed as 8 and 2). They indicated their intention was to play all the leading amateur teams of the region. They also announced their plans to play the Cuban Giants on Thursday and Friday of that week. The teams were said to be evenly matched.¹¹

This was a strange choice for a team wishing to play with amateurs. The Cuban Giants were the first fully-salaried black professional team. That the Tips were thought to be evenly matched with the Giants, and that they had players on their roster (not just pitchers and catchers) who had played minor league ball before and/or during the 1888 season, makes one wonder how the term “amateur” was being defined in Philadelphia at this time.

The Cuban Giants were a frequent rival of ISL teams in 1888. The Solar Tips met the Cubans on August 9. The “colored champions” opened the scoring, jumping out to a two-run lead in the bottom of the first. The Tips responded with a single run in the top of the second, narrowing the gap. Pitchers Rittenhouse for the Solar Tips and Stovey for the Cuban Giants then held their opponents scoreless for the next three innings. Stovey would go his opponents one better, silencing the Tips bats in the top of the sixth. Rittenhouse then gave up two runs in the bottom of that inning, the final tallies of the game. Clarence Williams and Jack Frye each had doubles to lead the Cuban Giants. Koons led the Solar Tips with a triple. The fielding of both teams was said to be very good and the 4-1 victory was placed in the hands of Stovey’s pitching.¹²

The Solar Tips faced a very good team that day. Bob Davids (SABR’s founder) once ranked the best black players of the nineteenth century. The pitcher, Stovey, and seven of the eight other players on the field that day, were on this list.¹³

On the other hand, the Solar Tips’ two key players that day, pitcher Rittenhouse and catcher Koons, had less auspicious careers. Rittenhouse was a mainstay of Pennsylvania state leagues but would see no major league action. There is no link to this Mr. Koons and any team but the Solar Tips of 1888 at this time.

When the two teams met again the next day, the Solar Tips were minus a manager. Criticized by president Mundell after the loss to the Cuban Giants, Farrington immediately resigned.¹⁴ The change in management didn’t help and the Solar Tips fell to the

Cuban Giants 6–4 the next day. William Whyte and Clarence Thomas were the Cubans' battery that day. Whyte had the highest winning percentage of the best black pitchers of the nineteenth century and many feel that Thomas's exclusion from the Hall of Fame is an injustice.

The Solar Tips would continue to play, and frequently defeat, Philadelphia area teams for the rest of the 1888 season. The Interstate League was expected to fold shortly after the Solar Tips withdrew but certain teams continued to be referred to as members of that league until the end of the season. Frankford and Norristown of the ISL initiated efforts to form a new league for 1889. While Frankford would never play in this league, which became the mostly Pennsylvania-based Middle States League, the Cuban Giants, playing out of Trenton, becoming the first black team to play in a mostly white minor league. Before the 1889 season was over, they would be joined by another black team, the Gorhams, headquartered in Easton.

Many Solar Tip players would also make their way into the MSL. Catcher Rigby, first baseman O'Donnell, shortstop (and captain) Clark, and pitcher Rittenhouse would join Lancaster. Samuel Hoverter, another one-time Solar Tip, would play for York.¹⁵ It would also be reported that pitcher Smith of the Philadelphia Giants had played for the Tips the previous year.¹⁶

After the 1888 season the Solar Tips confined their activities to the Philadelphia regional circuit. They made no attempt to enter the MSL but Mundell Jr., along with N.B. Young, were at the head of an effort to form a semi-professional league. Former ISL teams Norristown, Brandywine, and Houston, and future MSL member Wilmington were targeted as potential members.¹⁷ Nothing appears to have come of this effort. The Solar Tips ceased play for a period after the 1890 season, a decision that was reportedly based on the Players' League's impact on the American Association.¹⁸

Coverage of the Solar Tips activities appears again in 1892. There are reports of losses to Camden and Burlington, New Jersey, and a victory over Rowlandville that year. In 1893 the Solar Tips reportedly lost to Trenton, Royersford, and Camden, and Camden would again beat the Solar Tips in 1894. The team lost its patron that year as John Mundell Sr. passed away on September 2. John Mundell Jr. continued to operate the company and sponsor a baseball team. There was a report of the Philadelphia-area Wyoming team defeating the Solar Tips in an 1899 game.

Young Mundell initially experienced success leading his father's company. In 1900 they won the Franklin

Institute ribbon and medal at the Export Exposition. On the day the prize was announced it was also reported that the company was expanding its plant on Market Street.¹⁹ In February 1901, Mundell had to make corporate and personal assignments to creditors, Charles F. Walton of England and Bryan & Co. leather merchants of Philadelphia. The cause of the failure was attributed to loss of government work which the company had become dependent on, its children's shoe business no longer its strength.²⁰

The Solar Tips team history exemplifies the fluid nature of baseball competition at this time. Major league teams frequently played teams from much lower level organizations. Teams formed as, or proclaiming to be, amateur sometimes included paid players, most often pitchers and catchers but the virus of professionalism often spread to additional position players quickly. Sometimes pay was in cash, other times it was hidden in a company payroll which carried players who supposedly had other jobs but whose real purpose was to promote the company by playing baseball. In the 1880s and 1890s the Solar Tips of Philadelphia began as a team of company employees, appear to have progressed to paying players and then returned to their amateur roots. They played against all levels of competition and showed well against all comers. No such team today could ever hope to test itself against the quality of competition the Solar Tips were able to face. ■

Notes

1. "John Mundell Has Passed Away," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 2, 1894.
2. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 23, 1884.
3. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 15, 1885.
4. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 31, 1888.
5. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 30, 1888.
6. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 19, 1888.
7. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 23, 1888.
8. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 6, 1888.
9. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 7, 1888.
10. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 24, 1888.
11. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 7, 1888.
12. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 10, 1888.
13. Sol White Introduction by Jerry Malloy, *Sol White's History of Colored Base Ball with other documents of the early Black game, 1886–1936*. (Lincoln, NB & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995) p 161.
14. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 10, 1888.
15. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 17, 1889.
16. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 20, 1889.
17. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 22, 1889.
18. James Hampton Moore, *History of the Five O'clock Club of Philadelphia*, (published for private circulation, 1891). 268.
19. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 30, 1900.
20. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 3, 1901



Tuck Turner's Magical 1894 Phillies Season

Or, Whatever Happen to Tuck?

Peter Mancuso

Bill James observed and commented, “At the age of 21, Tuck Turner hit .416 and scored 91 runs in 80 games, he also drove in 82 runs. His career degenerated quickly after that. I can’t remember that I ever read anything about him, and I have no idea what the story was.”¹

James was referring to George A. “Tuck” Turner a member of the National League and American Association for seven seasons (1893–98) and a utility outfielder for the Phillies for the first five of those big league seasons.

Turner was born on Staten Island on Cherry Lane, the same street his father George, a laborer, and mother, Caroline, a house keeper, had both been born.² Cherry Lane is in the West New Brighton community on the Island’s north shore. According to every baseball reference until recent times, Tuck Turner was born there on February 13, 1873.

How Tuck Turner became a major leaguer and a member of the Philadelphia Phillies is an unusual story. Before joining the Phillies and appearing in his major league debut on August 18, 1893, Turner never played organized professional baseball, but he had played on some of the best amateur teams on Staten Island, and we know that he was on the island’s best semi-pro team of his day, the West New Brighton Corinthians, and several other highly respected semi-pro clubs in the greater New York City area.

In 1892, and for the start of the 1893 season, Turner played on one of the very best of these semi-professional teams, the New York State Asylum team in Middletown, New York. Some of the players worked at the asylum and others came to play on the team; patients did not play. The Asylum team would also be a stopping off place in 1894 for pitching great Jack Chesbro en route to his hall-of-fame, major league career.

Before Turner’s mid-August major league debut with the Phillies in 1893, he played for another excellent semi-pro team, the Plainfields of New Jersey.³ Like the New York Asylum team, this team played against top competitors, including exhibition games with major and minor league teams, top college clubs and other semi-

pro organizations, including racially segregated African American teams like the great Cuban Giants.

In 1893, two other Staten Islanders were playing for the Philadelphia Phillies; both were from Turner’s West New Brighton neighborhood. The first was right hand pitcher John “Brewery Jack” Taylor, who was in his first full season with the club, and who would, in just another year, become the Phillies’ top ace for several seasons. Taylor would be traded from the Phillies to St. Louis after the conclusion of the 1897 season and then on to Cincinnati for one season before a tragically young death at age 26 in February 1900.

The other was former New York Giants pitcher, then Phillies utility player, Jack Sharrott. Sharrott had come to the attention of New York Giants’ manager Jim Mutrie in early 1890 as Mutrie was in desperate straits to field a team as a result of the players’ rebellion that particularly decimated the New York roster. Mutrie’s “discovery” of Sharrott, who turned out to be a surprisingly good pitcher, is a story in itself, involving a mugging, a police intervention, a cop whose son was a pitcher, a tryout with the Giants, and a degree of entertaining speculation.

Sharrott had a brief, sometimes headline-grabbing, career as a Giants hurler before a base-sliding injury to his shoulder ended his days as a pitcher. He was a skilled enough athlete and hitter, however, to remain a Giant for another season before he was sent to the Phillies in 1893 in a high profile trade which included Giants future Hall of Famer Roger Connor.

It was in that season (1893) when Sharrott called to the attention of Phillies’ manager Harry Wright the presence of a young guy from his neighborhood back on Staten Island. This young man, Tuck Turner, now had a chance to show his skills. Playing only semi-pro ball at the time, Turner was free to try out for the Phillies. Harry Wright liked what he saw and immediately signed Turner and inserted him into the Phillies line-up every chance he had for the remaining six weeks of the 1893 season. Turner played in 36 games with 155 at-bats, which resulted in a very impressive .323 batting average; not too shabby for a 20-year-old rookie.

In one of those ironies of baseball and life, it was Jack Sharrott's fate to be replaced on the Phillies' roster by the person he scouted, his old friend, Tuck Turner. Sharrott was cut from the team's roster shortly before opening day of the 1894 season, ending his four-year major league career. His departure, however, did not take place until the end of spring training and not before the taking of a team photo showing Turner and Sharrott (along with fellow Staten Islander Jack Taylor), causing endless confusion for modern researchers who do not understand how an 1894 Phillies team photo depicts all three players, while team records show Sharrott was not on the Phillies that year.

Although his major league career was over, Sharrott was an enterprising young man and remained attached to baseball for another two decades, mostly in the New England minor leagues. He even served on occasion as a baseball scout and signed a couple of players for the Detroit Tigers in the early twentieth century.

Not unnoticed by baseball historians, in 1893 (Turner's debut season) the pitching distance was moved back. The pitching rubber was set 60 feet, six inches from home plate, instead of the forward line of the old pitcher's box, 50 feet away. The new rule mandating that the pitcher keep a rear foot on this rubber slab resulted in a net difference of approximately four and a third feet further from the pitcher's new release point to the plate.

Today's observer might be shocked by the style of play in Tuck Turner's era. Legendary baseball analyst Bill James describes baseball of the 1890s as:

Dirty. Very, very dirty. The tactics of the eighties were aggressive; the tactics of the nineties were violent. The game of the eighties was crude; the game of the nineties was criminal.... Players spiked each other. A first baseman would grab the belt of a base-runner to hold him back a half-

second after the ball was hit. Occasionally, players tripped one another as they rounded the bases. Fights broke out from day to day. Players shoved umpires, spat on them, and abused them in every manner short of assault. Fans hurled insults and beer bottles at the players of opposing teams.⁴

Imagine Tuck Turner, at five feet, six-and-one-half inches and 155 pounds out there in the rough and tumble baseball world of the 1890s, competing with the best of them. And, compete he did!

After his August 1893 debut, he appeared in 36 games with 155 at bats. In addition to his .323 BA, he hit four doubles, three triples, and one home run. He stole seven bases and struck out only 19 times, while driving in 13 runs and scoring 32. Not bad for a short season rookie.

There remained a problem for manager Wright: Turner was an outfielder, and not a very impressive defensive one but adequate enough given his lively bat. Wright had arguably the finest starting outfield in all of major league history: "Big Ed" Delahanty in left field, "Sliding Billy" Hamilton in center field, and "Big Sam" Thompson in right field. All three would eventually be inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame and all three were at the prime of their careers in Philadelphia in the early and mid 1890s. Utilizing Turner as a Phillie, particularly as an outfielder, would be a challenge, but the opportunity would unexpectedly present itself the very next season.

After spring training in 1894, the Phillies were about to embark on the finest offensive season in major league history. The team's record-breaking collective season batting average of .350 has never been surpassed.⁵ Leading the way in 1894, of course was that incredible Hall of Fame outfield: Delahanty, .404; Hamilton, .403 and Thompson, .415. Amazingly, however, Tuck Turner outdid all three of them, hitting .418.

In 1894, the Phillies would set the record for collective team batting average for a season at .350. Tuck Turner hit (back row, far right) .418, better than all three members of the "Hall of Fame" outfield, Ed Delahanty (.404), "Sliding Billy" Hamilton (.403), and "Big Sam" Thompson (.415).



COURTESY OF BOB MAYER

Turner's .418 was not just a pinch hitter's batting average. Due to injuries suffered by two of his outfield teammates, particularly Thompson (102 games) and Delahanty (116 games), Turner managed to play in 82 games and had 347 at bats.

From 1876 through 1920 the accepted standard for a player to qualify for the batting title was that a player had to appear in at least 60 percent of his team's scheduled games.⁶ Tuck Turner met that standard in 1894. In that same season, however, Boston's Hugh Duffy of that city's National League team hit for the highest single season batting average in major league history, .440. This effectively gave Tuck Turner the first of his three major league records, the highest single season batting average not to win the league batting title.⁷

Unlike a streak, when a player grows hot for a few weeks or even a few months and attains an exceptionally high batting average over that one portion of the season, Turner's ability to hit at such a high level was sustained throughout the entire season, giving some savvy baseball observers reason to suspect that "park effect" might explain his level of sustained performance. That would be a reasonable speculation given that at the start of the 1895 season the Phillies moved into their new home field, Philadelphia Park (later known as Baker Bowl and the team's home field through 1938). However, SABR researcher Trent McCotter's paper, "The .400 Club," which is a comparative analysis of all .400+ season batting averages, puts the "park effect" theory to rest. One of McCotter's findings is that Turner achieved the highest on-road single season batting average in major league history, a sizzling .443.⁸ This is the second of Turner's two records. As it turns out, there was no "park effect" in Philadelphia; it was all Turner, hitting at a record pace across 11 other major league cities.

Although outpaced by Duffy's .440, Turner ended up ninth on the all-time highest single season batting averages list.⁹ He set a third record which is likely to remain unbroken. Turner's .418 season average is the highest single season average ever recorded by a switch hitter.¹⁰

In 2010 the Staten Island Sports Hall of Fame inducted Turner posthumously and installed a plaque honoring this native son. In considering the six inscriptions on that plaque, two of these career accomplishments deserve further comment:

"Hit .323, .416, .386 in first three seasons with 1890s Philadelphia Phillies" and "Had 11 straight multiple-hit games, third best all time."

Had there been a bigger plaque, two more inscriptions might have been included; one to give credit to his highest season average for a switch hitter and the

other for Turner's 12 consecutive games with at least one RBI, tying him with ten other players for eighth overall among all major leaguers.¹¹ There are only seven players above him on that RBI list.¹²

Although we may never know the full story of Tuck Turner's obviously short career, there is something we do know today about Tuck Turner that Bill James and everyone else before him didn't know; that is, when Tuck Turner hit .418 and scored and drove in all those runs in 1894 he was not a 21-year-old kid in his second big league season. He was actually 27 years old.

Turner had been practicing one of baseball's oldest traditions, lying about one's age. To all in the baseball world, Turner was born in 1873, when in reality he was born in 1867 making him a slightly less impressive 26-year-old freshman whose image was featured on the front page of *The Sporting News*.¹³ Naturally, Turner's West New Brighton teammates knew he was considerably older than they were, but this was baseball, and the practice of presenting one's self as younger was so much a part of the game it was almost expected.

This tongue-in-cheek approach to lying about one's age, however, didn't keep Turner from giving up the charade after baseball. When he died on July 16, 1945, at his son's home in Staten Island it was even recorded on his death certificate that he was born on February 13, 1873, which would have made him 72.¹⁴ His obituary in the local newspaper was even more lenient about his age, it was headlined "New Brighton Ex-Ballplayer Dies at 70."

Turner, however, was not going to mess with the US government. When the census taker visited the Turner household in 1900, 1910, 1920, and 1930, Turner told Uncle Sam his true age, which was always six years older than his baseball age. In addition, George Turner Sr., Tuck's father, not knowing in 1870 and 1880 that his son would be trying out for the Phillies in the future, reported in those years' censuses that his son George's ages were three and 13 respectively. Finally, we arrive at the Turner family plot in Oceanview (formerly Valhalla) Cemetery in Staten Island where he was laid to rest beside his wife Louise (Kiley) Turner, who predeceased him in 1942 (they had been married for 52 years). The family headstone is inscribed, "George Turner 1867-1945", making him 78 years old at the time of his death, which matches the census data.

Age was probably only part of the explanation of Turner's major league decline. Part of the story seems to be playing time. His outfield teammates were three future Hall of Famers. He was not going to replace any of those stars. And, even though the Phillies completed one of the worst trades in baseball history in 1896,

sending Billy Hamilton to Boston, they did acquire (in a different deal) another future Hall of Famer, second baseman, Napoleon Lajoie, who as a rookie they used mostly at first base.

The final blow for Turner might have been his transfer to St. Louis, which in 1896 was “baseball hell.” The National League and American Association Browns (later to be known as the Cardinals) were at the mercy of their megalomaniac owner, German beer baron Chris von der Ahe. Von der Ahe, who made, spent, and lost a fortune was, by 1896, the most erratic owner in all of baseball. His wife was suing him for divorce, his mistress was suing him for false promises, he had been “kidnapped” by agents of Pittsburgh Pirates owner Barney Dreyfus to stand trial for “kidnapping” Pirates pitcher Mark Baldwin, whom he tried to drag into State Court for breach of contract.

Von der Ahe, now cash strapped, was wheeling and dealing players like Monopoly properties. When Turner arrived in St. Louis, before he could put on a Browns' uniform, he immediately found himself in St. Paul, Minnesota, as a minor leaguer, another Von der Ahe deal.¹⁵ He returned to St. Louis in time to play in 51 games, where he hit only .246. He followed up nicely, however, in 1897 with a .291 average, playing in 103 games. But, after a slow start in 1898, he was released after 35 games. He was now 31 years old, not very old, but not young by baseball standards.

Turner continued to play baseball in the minor leagues for another eight seasons, but never returned to the major leagues. His first year in the minors was in 1899 with Kansas City, of the top minor circuit Western League, which in 1900 would become the American League. From 1900 through 1906 Turner played in the competitive Eastern League, Connecticut State League, and New England League.

On July 16, 1905, Turner played in one of the finest displays of baseball in the era of racial segregation. Playing for his old Hoboken club, Turner accepted a challenge from the African American Philadelphia Giants and their great pitcher “Rube” Foster. Foster, a legendary pitcher in the early twentieth-century, later founded the Negro National League but on that July day in 1905, 38-year-old Tuck Turner had one of the only four hits that Foster allowed in a 2–1 Hoboken victory.¹⁶

With his playing career behind him in the first decade of the twentieth-century, Turner worked as a laborer in various locations throughout New York City. He and Louise and their two sons, who were separated by 22 years (Harry, born in 1892 and Wilfred [a.k.a. Charles] born in 1914), lived both in Manhattan and Brooklyn. In the early 1930s, due to Louise's declining

health they returned to Staten Island and lived an almost invisible but idyllic life on a houseboat in a tidal estuary known as Lemon Creek on the island's eastern shore. By World War II, Tuck and Louise were living not far from his old neighborhood on Staten Island's north shore in the house of his now married younger son, Wilfred. With Louise's passing in 1942, Turner remained at his son's home where he died on July 16, 1945.

At the time of his death, Turner had not only survived his two Phillies Staten Island teammates, Jack Taylor (d. 1900) and Jack Sharrott (d. 1927) but he also survived all of Staten Island's 19th-century major leaguers: Dude Esterbrook (d. 1901), George Sharrott (d. 1932), Jack Cronin (d. 1929) and major league manager Jim Mutrie (d. 1938). Only Esterbrook and Mutrie were born before Turner. ■

Notes

1. James, Bill, *The New Bill James Historical Baseball Abstract*, New York, The Free Press, 2001; 62.
2. Obituary of George A. Turner, *Staten Island Advance*, Staten Island, NY, July 17, 1945.
3. Mayer, Robert, email, Turner's minor league teams; unpublished; January 9, 2007. In 1893 Turner played for the Plainfield Club in the New Jersey League (*The Sporting News*, August 25, 1894) which was most likely the Central New Jersey League. On July 13 and August 16, the team traveled to Middletown where the Asylums defeated the club 10–7 and 17–8 with Turner playing in the first game against the Asylums. The Middletown newspaper report referred to the team as the Crescents of Plainfield. Turner also played in several games for the Asylum team that year. In 1904 and 1905, Turner played for Hoboken, and on September 29 played with the Asylum BBC in their reunion game against the Cuban X Giants with Chesbro pitching against Frank Grant and Clarence Williams. (Phil Dixon, *Phil Dixon's American Baseball Chronicles Great Teams: The 1905 Philadelphia Giants*, Vol. 3, (Charleston, SC: BookSurge, LLC 2006), 83, and Robert Mayer; email; unpublished, March 24, 2013).
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Columbia Park II

Philadelphia American League: 1901–08

Ron Selter

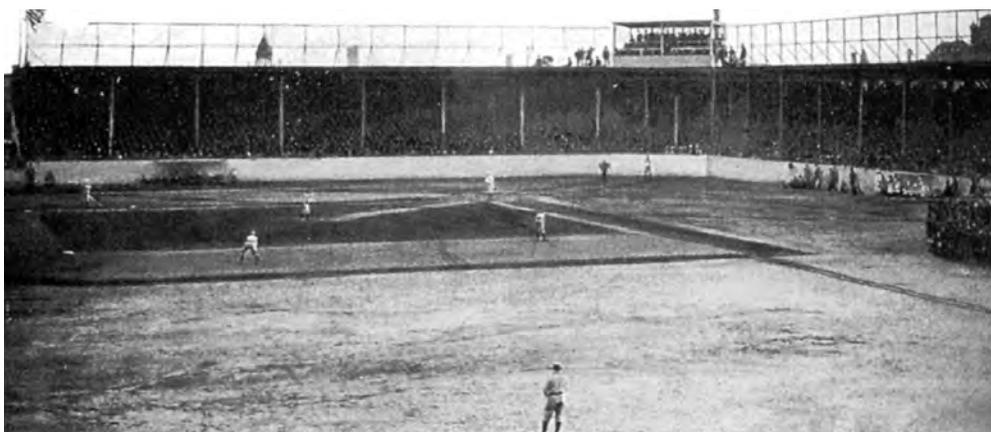
Columbia Park was the second ballpark in Philadelphia to carry the name. The first Columbia Park had been used by the National Association Philadelphia Centennials for all of two months in 1875. Columbia Park II opened for baseball on April 26, 1901, as the first home park of the American League Philadelphia Athletics. The wooden ballpark had been quickly built before the start of the season on a vacant lot that had been leased for 10 years by the A’s manager and part-owner Connie Mack. Columbia Park was built almost entirely of wood—only the front or street side of the main entrance was brick. Unlike many of the other Deadball Era wooden ballparks, this one never burned.

The park site consisted of an entire rectangular-shaped city block located in North Philadelphia. The ballpark site was bounded on the north by Columbia Avenue, on the south by Oxford Street, on the west by 30th Street, and on the east by 29th Street. The location of the ballpark was not far from downtown Philadelphia. The grandstand and home plate were located in the southwest corner of the park site. This park site, although consisting of the entirety of one city block, was not large: 400 (east-west) by 455 feet (north-south) and amounted to 4.2 acres. By comparison, other wooden Deadball Era major league ballparks occupied sites ranging from 3.9 acres (League Park III in Cleveland) to 9.6 acres (American League Park in New

York). The 400 foot (east-west) dimension, along Oxford Street on the south and Columbia Avenue on the north, limited the extent of the ballpark’s right field dimension.

For Opening Day 1901, the ballpark’s seating areas consisted of a single-deck covered grandstand that extended from first base to third base, and sets of bleachers down both foul lines. Behind home plate, there was a short diagonal section of the grandstand that formed the backstop. On the roof of the grandstand were both a small press box and a wire screen on each side of the press box to try to keep foul balls from leaving the ballpark. There were short gaps between the grandstand and both sets of foul line bleachers. Both the first base and third base bleachers ran parallel to the foul lines—thus creating an ample amount of foul territory. The first base bleachers reached nearly to the right field corner, and the third base bleachers extended all the way to the left field perimeter fence on Columbia Avenue and then hooked around as far as the left field foul line to face home plate. There was a wire screen erected on top of the right field perimeter wall that was intended to keep home runs and foul balls from hitting vehicles in and possible pedestrians along 29th Street. As home plate was in the southwest corner of the park site, the left field line ran due north-south, and right field was thus the sun field for afternoon games. There was a modest-

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View of Columbia Park from Deep Left Field

sized scoreboard in right-center field that was set into the right field-center field fence. There was one small clubhouse (for the use of only the home team), but no dugouts—the players sat on benches in front of the grandstand. On Opening Day 1901, Columbia Park had seating for 5,000 in the grandstand, and 4,500 in the bleachers, for a total of 9,500. Capacity was expanded by a small amount in 1903 by adding seats to the foul area first base bleachers.¹ Additional unspecified foul area expansion raised the seating capacity to 13,600 for the 1905 season. In the Deadball Era, capacity was an elastic concept. The all-time record attendance at Columbia Park—for a crucial game against the White Sox late in the 1905 season when 25,187 were in attendance—was far in excess of the park's seating capacity of 13,600.

The A's won two American League pennants playing at Columbia Park, but hosted only one World Series, in 1905 against the New York Giants. The A's other pennant was in 1902, a year before the American and National Leagues agreed to a post-season series. Columbia Park was also used by the National League Phillies for 16 games in 1903 while the Phillies home park (National League Park, later known as Baker Bowl) was temporarily under repairs after a portion of the stands tragically collapsed.

Columbia Park was abandoned after the 1908 season when the A's moved into the first of the Classic ballparks—Shibe Park. When the A's left, the park was used by a circus and for other events for several years before being demolished. The site is now a mixed commercial and residential area.

THE BASIS OF COLUMBIA PARK'S CONFIGURATIONS AND DIMENSIONS

No listed dimensions for Columbia Park were found in any of the usual ballpark reference books.^{2,3} The 1901 dimensions: LF 340, CF 396, RF 280 (all dimensions are in feet), were derived entirely from a finely-detailed 1907 Philadelphia City Atlas.⁴ This atlas provided the size of the park site, and the location and extent of the grandstand and bleachers. The foul lines were not shown. A diagram of the park and the dimensions of the park site were copied from the 1907 atlas. The details that were copied from the atlas included the location of the grandstand, bleachers, and the main entrance to the ballpark (located at the corner of 30th Street and Oxford Street). The location of home plate was based on photos of the park, and was estimated to have been 72 feet from the diagonal section of the grandstand that formed the backstop. Given the location of home plate, all of the outfield dimen-

sions were then calculated from the park diagram. Because the shape of the land plat was a rectangle and the foul lines were parallel to 29th Street, the outfield fences were aligned at 90 degrees to the foul lines in both left field and right field. Based on research into home runs at Columbia Park, it was found that there had been home runs hit over an interior fence in right field and right-center.⁵ From the 1901 Opening Day photo in the Philadelphia Inquirer, this interior fence was quite close to the perimeter right-field wall and screen and included a modest sized scoreboard in right-center.⁶ The right field screen was constructed of chicken wire and was an estimated 25 feet in height. The screen was mounted on top of the perimeter right-field wall. This screen, as it was erected on the exterior wall, located behind the interior fence, was out-of-play and extended all the way to the center-field corner.

In summary, all of the Columbia Park dimensions were estimated from the 1907 Philadelphia City Atlas. As neither the foul lines nor the home plate locations were shown in the atlas, these dimensions contain a small amount of uncertainty. All dimensions were checked against, and are consistent with, the available photographic evidence and the home run data. Park data and dimensions for Columbia Park are shown in Table 1.

THE IMPACT OF THE PARK'S CONFIGURATION AND DIMENSIONS ON BATTING

Columbia Park, in its limited lifetime of eight American League seasons (1901–08), was the smallest ballpark in the American League. Over the ballpark's eight major league seasons, Columbia Park was above average for batting average, on-base percentage, slugging percentage, and doubles. (See table below of Batting Park Factors.) In the 1902 season, the A's compiled a .322 home batting average (highest in the American League) at Columbia Park, while hitting only .249 on the road. This 73-point difference was the largest home/road differential in batting average for any team in the Deadball Era.

As the smallest American League ballpark, Columbia Park was a poor park for triples and inside-the-park home runs (IPHRs). There were only 4.25 IPHRs per season at Columbia Park while the average American League ballpark had more than twice that number per year in the 1901–08 seasons. At Columbia Park, the large majority of IPHRs were hit to CF, as that was the only deep part of the ballpark. Bounce home runs were rare—less than one per season because (1) the stands were not close to the foul lines (except in deep left field), and (2) the outfield fences were a minimum of

Table 1. Dimensions, Fence Heights, and Outfield Distances

Dimensions (All Calculated from Park Diagram)

Years	LF	SLF	LC	CF	RC	SRF	RF
1901–08	340	352	392	396*	323	290	280

LF: Left Field
 SLF: Straightaway Left Field
 LC: Left Center
 CF: Center Field
 RC: Right Center
 SRF: Straightaway Right Field
 RF: Right Field

* Deepest point in the ballpark was 440 at the CF corner located to the left of dead CF.

Fence Heights (Estimated from Photos)

Years	LF	CF	RF
1901–08	8	8–11*	8

* The 11 foot height was only the scoreboard in right-center field.

Average Outfield Distances

Years	LF	CF	RF
1901–08	358	385	295

Capacity: 9,500 (1901–02), 10,000 (1903–04 Est.), 13,600 (1905–08)
 Park Size-Composite Average Outfield Distance: 346
 Park Site Area: 4.2 acres
 Deadball Era Run Factor: 108 (Rank: AL 5)

Table 2. Home Run Data and Batting Park Factors

Home Runs by Type at Columbia Park

Years	Total	OTF	Bounce	IP
1901–08	197*	163	5	34

Bounce: Bounce Home Runs
 IP: Inside-the Park
 OTF: Over-The-Fence (Includes Bounce)

* Includes four National League home runs in 1903.

Revised Data

OTF Home Runs by Field at Columbia Park (Excluding Bounce)

Years	Total	LF	CF	RF	Unknown
1901–08	158	47	21	80	2

Inside-the-Park Home Runs by Field at Columbia Park

Years	Total	LF	LC	CF	RC	RF	Unknown
1901–08	34	2	3	26	2	1	0

Batting Park Factors at Columbia Park

Years	BA	OBP	SLUG	2B*	3B*	HR*	BB**
1901–08	104	103	104	125	79	108	99

* Per AB

** Per Total Plate Appearance (AB+BB+HP)

eight feet in height. Of the five bounce home runs hit at Columbia Park, four were into the foul area third-base bleachers and one bounced over the interior fence in fair right field. The distribution of over-the-fence (OTF) home runs reflected the outfield dimensions. Left field (340 feet) had 47 OTF home runs, while right field (280 feet) had 80 OTF home runs. The batting Park Factor for home runs during the eight-year life of Columbia Park was only 108, a surprisingly modest value for the smallest ballpark in the American League and one with a composite average outfield distance of only 346 feet. This result occurred because while OTF home runs were relatively numerous with this small park size, there

were not many IPHRs. Throughout the Deadball Era, and especially before the introduction of the cork-center ball, there was no relationship between park size and home runs. ■

Notes

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4. *Philadelphia City Atlas 20th and 29th Wards*, (Philadelphia PA, Elving Smith, 1907), Plate 1.
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The Long Way to Philadelphia

The Strange Route Leading Rube Waddell To Join The Philadelphia Athletics

Joe Niese

George Edward “Rube” Waddell was an original oddball lefty, who could endear himself to fans, provide fodder for sportswriters, and alienate his teammates and manager. He was also immensely talented. Hijinks notwithstanding, he was the premier power pitcher in the opening decade of the 1900s. The enigmatic Waddell struggled during the first few years of his professional career though, and was lucky just to be a .500 pitcher. It was not until Connie Mack coerced him into coming to the Philadelphia Athletics in June 1902 that Waddell was finally able to harness his talents, becoming one of the first great left-handed pitchers the game had seen.

Born on a small farm on the outskirts of Bradford, Pennsylvania, Waddell’s journey to Philadelphia began in August 1901, when he went missing from the National League Chicago Orphans.¹ His absence came as no surprise to many in the Chicago organization. After all, he had been obtained from Pittsburgh in May for a cigar after Pirates manager Fred Clarke marched into owner Barney Dreyfuss’s office. “Sell him; release him, drop him off the Monongahela Bridge,” ranted Clarke. “Do anything you like, so long as you get him the hell off my ball team!”²

In the few months he was in Chicago, Waddell often argued with his manager (Tom Loftus) and teammates, was clawed in the (right) arm by a lion at a sideshow, frequently showed up to games intoxicated, and often skipped practice to go fishing. As the last place team’s only drawing card, Waddell’s eccentricities were initially overlooked, but his output began to drop. He seemed to be bored with the game. Rumors swirled as to Rube’s whereabouts. A lover of libations, it was said that he had quit to enter the saloon business. Some said that he would return to the team after tracking down a dog that had been shipped to him from St. Louis. Others sniffed a conspiracy, noting that Charles Comiskey was trying to lure him to Chicago’s South Side to the White Sox. To stoke the flames, Waddell was seen on the roof of South Side Park taking in a ball game, while the Orphans were playing across town.

It soon became known that Waddell hadn’t given

up baseball after all. He was making the rounds in the town ball circuit, playing for teams in northern Illinois and southeastern Wisconsin. Although he was playing under the assumed name of Brown, Waddell was anything but inconspicuous. In one game, it was reported “every time Brown, alias Rube, came up to bat, he was wagering he could make a hit. Sometimes he won and oftener he didn’t.”³ In another, Waddell ordered his infield to stand behind him at the mound. His teammates initially protested, but “Rube declared that if he did not have his way he would throw up the game right there as he was not accustomed to being disobeyed.”⁴ They finally conceded, watching Waddell strike out the next three batters. His bragging grew more audacious the next inning, when he ordered everyone but the catcher to sit on the bench. Once again, he struck out all three batters.

In early October, Waddell was in Kenosha, Wisconsin, playing for a team from nearby Burlington. He gave up four hits, but 13 errors led to an 11–5 Kenosha victory. Following the game, he decided he wanted to play for the Kenosha Athletics. All he had to do was play one more game for Burlington—against Kenosha. This time, Burlington prevailed with a 6–5 win, as Waddell “struck out seventeen batters and didn’t exert himself to any great degree.”⁵

It was apparent that Waddell had an affinity for Wisconsin. He first fell in love with the state in the summer of 1900, when he spent several weeks throwing for Connie Mack’s Milwaukee Brewers of the newly named American League. It was Mack who sought out the talented, yet erratic Waddell, traveling to Pittsburgh to obtain Pirates owner Barney Dreyfuss’s permission to pursue the lefty. Waddell was still under contract with the Pirates (whom he had pitched for earlier in the year), but was then playing for semipro teams in the Punxsutawney area. Waddell had been nothing but a headache for Dreyfuss and Pirates manager Fred Clarke. “Go ahead. We can’t do anything with him—maybe you can,” was the owner’s response.⁶

In their initial contact, made by phone, Mack made the crucial error of calling Waddell “Rube” (he preferred

to be called “Eddie”). The conversation was brief and ended with the pitcher saying he was staying put in Punxsutawney. For the next two weeks Mack sent Waddell daily telegrams and letters. Finally, Waddell wired Mack: “Come and get me.”⁷ The next morning Mack was in Punxsutawney. He woke Waddell and took him out to breakfast. They then went about town settling up Waddell’s debts. Before noon Mack had spent nearly \$100 on a bar tab, fishing gear, a dry goods store bill, a watch, and the shipping of a dog Rube had received. Finally, Mack began to worry that they were causing such a stir around town that someone might alert the local baseball club, so they retreated to a hotel. Finally, at 2:45, they headed for the train depot for the 3:00 train.

Mack and Waddell weren’t at the platform for more than five minutes when a large group of men converged on them. They motioned Waddell over for a brief talk and then a man, who turned out to be the head of the local ball club, approached Mack.

“You Connie Mack, manager of Milwaukee?” asked the man gruffly.

“Yes,” replied Mack. He was certain that they were there to talk Waddell out of leaving, and worried for his own safety.

“Well, I want to shake your hand,” said the man, extending his hand to Mack. “My friends and myself have come down here to thank you. You are doing us a favor. Waddell is a great pitcher, but we feel that Punxsutawney will be better off without him.”⁸

Mack was still trembling as they boarded the train.

Waddell immediately took to his surroundings in Wisconsin, especially the plentitude of fishing holes. Fishing was one of his favorite hobbies, and the one that he was least likely to injure himself doing, so he was encouraged to indulge. Indulge he did; spending every moment that he could doing so. He traveled all over the area, finding a favorite spot when he took the trolley to Pewaukee.

In just over a month’s time, Waddell went 10–3, including throwing 22 innings in a doubleheader against the Chicago White Sox. After throwing 17 innings in the opening game, Waddell turned handsprings when he struck out the final batter. In between games Mack and White Sox owner Charles Comiskey decided to play an abbreviated 5-inning affair for the second game. Seeing Waddell showing no signs of being worn down, Mack approached the lefty about pitching Game 2. “Rube, how would you like to go to Pewaukee for a few days instead of going to Kansas City?” asked Mack. “Pitch the second game and win it for us and you can have a few days off, and can rejoin in in

Indianapolis.”⁹ Waddell took the ball and won the second game 1–0, allowing just one Chicago hit.

During his brief hiatus from the Brewers, Waddell was also able to partake in another hobby—fighting fires. On his way back to Milwaukee, word spread that a barn had been hit by lightning and was engulfed in flames. Waddell jumped off the trolley and headed for the smoke. Upon arrival, he found farmers standing around watching the \$5,000 barn burn. Waddell snapped into action, rushing into the barn and hitching a piece of wire to a wagon. Salvaged from the fire were “forty head of stock, wagons, buggies, machinery and other things.”¹⁰ In the process Waddell badly burned his non-throwing hand.

When asked about what took place, Waddell responded nonchalantly. “I’m a peach at a fire. There is nothing I like better than to fight fires. I was a fireman for seven years at Pittsburgh. I’m glad I was able to help the old farmer out some.”¹¹

Shortly thereafter, Pirates owner Barney Dreyfuss heard about how well Waddell was performing, and recalled him to Pittsburgh. Despite finishing with an 8–13 record for the Pirates, his 2.37 ERA was tops in the National League.

With Waddell on the mound in 1901, the Kenosha Athletics made plans to play Appleton for the unofficial 1901 Wisconsin state title. The dream of a state championship was put on hold when the Appleton team asked to be released from their agreement to play. Their reason was that they were playing Racine in a three game series—for the state championship. Rube and the Athletics would have to wait two weeks before they would have their shot at a title.

In the meantime, Waddell immersed himself in happenings around Kenosha. He officiated boxing matches at the Kenosha Opera House and tended bar at the Grant Hotel (often in full uniform, including spikes). He had big plans for the future. Not only did he want to start a football team, but he was looking ahead to next year’s baseball season. He proclaimed that he “planned to remain here for a year and that he would like to have a team here next year.”¹²

While waiting for a shot at the Wisconsin state title, Waddell struck out 16 in a 7–2 defeat of the Chicago Spaldings, regarded as “the crack amateur team of the west.”¹³ Finally, after much back-and-forth, a date was set for the postponed game with Racine, which by then had defeated Appleton.

On the morning of October 20, Racine’s Athletic Park filled up fast. Kenosha sent a dozen train cars, and by game time an estimated 5,000 packed into the grandstands, bleachers, and along the foul lines. Waddell’s



Born on a small farm on the outskirts of Bradford, Pennsylvania, Waddell's journey to Philadelphia began in August 1901, when he went missing from the National League Chicago Orphans. (Pictured here during his time with the Los Angeles Looos.)

mound opposition was Addie Joss, a Woodland, Wisconsin native who had gone 25–18 for the Toledo Swamp Angels of the Western Association.

Addie Joss and Rube Waddell could not have been more different. The spindly Joss was a former schoolteacher. Waddell was broad-shouldered and uneducated. What they had in common was that few people could throw a baseball like them. The game in Racine was the start of a long professional rivalry.

Joss had helped Racine win the three-game series from Appleton, but in the top of the first, he showed some nerves. The first three Kenosha batters reached base. Aided by a double play, Joss and Racine escaped unscathed. Waddell then showed his all-around game. After striking out the first three Racine batters in the bottom of the first, he drove in the first two runs of the game in the top of the second when he launched a deep fly ball over a bicycle track in right field. He

could have had an easy inside-the-park home run, but loped into third base with a triple, giving Kenosha a 2–0 lead.

Neither team scored in the next two innings. Waddell struck out each of the batters he faced, giving him nine straight to start the game. Racine took advantage of Waddell's wildness (he walked five in the game) and four errors by Kenosha's second baseman. The result was four unearned runs—one each in the fourth, fifth, sixth and eighth.

After eight innings, Waddell had struck out 19, yet his team trailed 4–2. Still, he had a chance to win the game in the top of the ninth, when he came to the plate with two out and runners on first and second. He overswung at all three of Joss's offerings. According to Joss biographer Scott Longert, when the final out of the 4–2 Racine victory was recorded, "Delirious rooters dashed en masse out of the grandstand, hoisted Addie on their collective shoulders, and carried him around the park on a jubilant victory lap."¹⁴ Longert called it called it "probably the greatest semi-pro game ever staged in Wisconsin, and one of the greatest played anywhere."¹⁵ Joss called it, "One of the greatest games I ever pitched in my life."¹⁶

The next weekend found Waddell on the gridiron for the Kenosha Regulars football team. A bruising fullback, he scored the only touchdown of the game, an 80-yard scamper, in a 10–0 defeat of a team from Chicago.

A week later Waddell was found living in Racine and tending bar at Sugden's saloon and billiards room. He gave no reason for his move from Kenosha other than "Tisn't what it's cracked up to be down there."¹⁷ Once again, Waddell had long-term plans to settle in Racine. He went about forming a football team and talked about plans for the next summer's baseball team. A few weeks later it seemed his plans had changed. The football team he put together disbanded. By December, all that remained of Waddell in Racine were his clothes at the Drexel Hotel. He had headed to the warm weather of California to play baseball on a major league barnstorming tour set up by Joe Cantillon.

Cantillon, who had umpired in the American League during the 1901 season, got the idea to take two teams made up of players from each league (All-Americans and All-Nationals) on an ambitious 76-game schedule. They started "in Chicago on October 12 and soon moved across the country—meeting, for example in Louisville, Denver, Albuquerque, and Las Vegas—before arriving on the West Coast."¹⁸ There was even talk of playing games in Honolulu.

Problems arose for Cantillon when the Boston Americans' Cy Young, their primary pitcher, dropped



It was not until Connie Mack coerced him into coming to the Philadelphia Athletics in June 1902 that Waddell was finally able to harness his talents, becoming one of the first great left-handed pitchers the game had seen.

out before the team headed west. The promoter scrambled to find a replacement, before cajoling Waddell, who was more than happy to see himself out of the situation he had created in Wisconsin. It didn't take Waddell long to make an impression. As in most places he went, Waddell wowed locals with his baseball prowess. At Recreation Park in San Francisco, he won a game for the All-Americans with a long home run to center field.

Waddell did little wrong during the trip and was courted by all four teams in the California League. When the rest of the barnstormers returned east, Waddell stayed in the Bay Area. Unable to make up his mind, he agreed to terms with three of the league's four teams: the Oakland Mud Hens, the Sacramento Mosquitos, the San Francisco Has Beens, and the Los Angeles Looos. All three wanted him in camp immediately, so Waddell "told the three club owners to shake the dice for him."¹⁹ Los Angeles won, so he headed south.

Waddell was an instant fan favorite for the Looos. Barely a month into the season, he established the league's single-season strikeout record. He loved batting and was ecstatic to play the outfield or first base when he wasn't pitching. In Oakland, he was rewarded for hitting the first home run of the season at Freeman's Park with "several prizes in the way of shoes, clothes, and many other articles donated by charitable shopkeepers, who like to see the ball-tossers dress like members of the swagger set."²⁰

Of course, it wasn't all baseball for Waddell. Beyond frequenting the local taverns and fishing holes, he was able to partake in another of his endless hobbies, boxing. Before a game in Oakland, he sparred with heavyweight champion Jim Jeffries. As with most everything, Waddell was good at it. He was described as having a "stiff punch and a block that is said to be a wonder."²¹

Waddell was also able to show his firefighting prowess. During another game in Oakland, a mattress that was being used as a backstop caught fire. The fans and players scattered, and Freeman Park's wooden bleachers looked as if they would burn to the ground. Waddell swooped into action. "He ran over and tore the burning mattress from its moorings and plopped it on the field, where it burned harmlessly."²²

Word of Waddell's on-field success reached the east. One day, Connie Mack, now manager of the Philadelphia Athletics, was lamenting the state of his pitching staff to umpire Jack Sheridan.

"Why don't you get Waddell back?" replied Sheridan. "He's pitching in San Francisco."²³

Mack tracked down Waddell and invited him to join the Athletics, then in their second year of existence. The two worked out an agreement. Mack sent Waddell \$100 and a train ticket, but the pitcher never arrived. The Philadelphia manager wasn't alone in being stood up. The same thing happened to Fred Clarke, the manager of the Pittsburgh Pirates, who also tried to woo Waddell.

While in Chicago, Mack was approached by a man who had some firsthand information about Waddell.

"I saw him get on the train at Los Angeles. Some men got on after him and talked to him for about ten minutes. He started to cry and I heard him say 'I never did want to leave you, you have been so good to me,' and he got off the train."²⁴

Immediately, Mack went to Ban Johnson, American League president, whose office was in Chicago. After hearing the story, Johnson took Mack to the nearby Pinkerton Detective Agency. There, a plan was hatched for detectives to track down Waddell in San

Francisco, where the Looloos were playing, advance him \$200, and bring him to Kansas City. From there, Mack would personally escort Waddell to Baltimore, where Philadelphia was scheduled to play next. Things didn't go as planned.

The Pinkerton detectives found Waddell in his hotel room in San Francisco, despondent over a loss earlier that day. He gave little resistance. They traveled without incident to Kansas City, where the detectives ran into a problem. It was there Waddell met boxer William Rothwell, known as Young Corbett II. Rothwell had just defeated Terry McGovern for the featherweight title. Waddell became enamored with the newly crowned champion. He wanted to impress Rothwell, so Waddell decided to seek out one of the two Kansas City teams to pitch for in the coming days. Both would have gladly snatched up a talent like Waddell. The detectives called Mack and told him to come to Kansas City immediately.

When Mack arrived in Kansas City, Waddell refused to come with him, insisting on going to the park.

"I agreed to take him to the park and he came along with his \$1 suitcase and \$40 fishing outfit," recalled Mack. "I don't know how I did it, but I talked Rube out of pitching that day and got him on the train for Baltimore before anyone could grab him."²⁵

Mack and Waddell arrived in Baltimore on the morning of June 26. Waddell implored Mack to let him pitch later that day. Initially, Mack refused, wanting Waddell to become acclimated, but finally, he gave in.

John McGraw was player/manger for the Baltimore Orioles. Having faced Waddell previously, he knew one of the few ways to beat him was to be in his head. From the Baltimore bench, McGraw jockeyed him relentlessly, agitating the big lefty. In addition, Philadelphia catcher Mike "Doc" Powers had trouble catching Waddell's hard breaking pitches. Consequently, Baltimore won 7–3.

That same year, McGraw played a role in the Athletics franchise. In mid-season, he left the Orioles and the American League to manage the National League's New York Giants. Speaking to a reporter about how much money the Athletics were losing, he said that Ben Shibe had "a big white elephant on [his] hands." Mack, who had a good sense of humor, immediately ordered a white elephant to appear on all Athletics' gear and apparel.²⁶ To this day, it remains emblematic of the team, now based in Oakland.

The magic of Rube Waddell in an Athletics uniform began on July 1 at Philadelphia's Columbia Park against Baltimore. Mack inserted catcher Ossee Schrecongost, whom he had recently signed as a free agent from the

Cleveland Bronchos.²⁷ The pitcher and catcher tandem became instant friends—not an easy thing for Waddell to manage. "They were roommates, drinking buddies, hunting and fishing pals, general partners in crime."²⁸

Waddell and "Schreck's" first game together was near perfection. In the second inning, Orioles right fielder Cy Seymour dribbled one past third baseman Lave Cross. On the next pitch, Seymour bluffed a steal. Still in his crouch, Schreck fired a perfect throw to first baseman Harry Davis, who slapped on a tag for the out. In the next inning Waddell set down the Orioles batters on nine pitches, his first documented "perfect inning."

In the fifth inning, Baltimore's Wilbert Robinson singled with one out. Trailing 1–0, McGraw, desperate to put a runner in scoring position, sent the 38-year-old catcher on a steal. It wasn't even close at second base.

In the sixth and eighth innings, Waddell struck out the side. In the bottom of the seventh, he had added an insurance run with a booming double. When he took the mound in the top of the ninth, Waddell gave the crowd a playful wave, yelling "It's all over, go on home."²⁹ He struck out the final three batters, giving him 13 for the game, in facing the minimum 27 batters. Many of the 2,500 in attendance rushed the field and hoisted him onto their shoulders, parading him around the ballpark.

In just over three months with Philadelphia, Waddell amassed a 24–7 record. His 2.05 ERA and league-leading 210 strikeouts helped Mack's Athletics to an 83–53 record, and the 1902 American League pennant (the World Series was one year away from being re-established).

Over the years, the line between fact and fiction has blurred. Waddell's bizarre antics overshadowed his abundant skills. Waddell's tenure in Philadelphia was mind-boggling. In six seasons he amassed 131 wins, including four straight 20-win seasons (24, 21, 25, and 27). He led the American League in strikeouts in all six years, and the major leagues in the last five (including an astonishing 349 in 1904, still an American League record).

Befittingly, Waddell was never the same after he suffered a serious shoulder injury when trying to punch a hole through a teammate's straw hat in September 1905.³⁰ He won 15 and 19 games over the next two years (and his last two strikeout titles), before being purchased by the St. Louis Browns in February 1908. He won 19, 11, and three over the next 2½ years in St. Louis, before spending parts of the next four seasons in the minor leagues.³¹ In early 1913, he contracted pneumonia after spending hours stacking

sandbags in icy waters in flood-ravaged Hickman, Kentucky, where he was living with Joe Cantillon. The pneumonia proved to be a symptom of tuberculosis which led to his death on April 1, 1914, in a San Antonio sanitarium. ■

Notes

1. The franchise became the Chicago Cubs in 1902.
2. Alan H. Levy. *Rube Waddell: the Zany, Brilliant Life of a Strikeout Artist* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, Inc. Publishers, 2000), 77.
3. *The Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, WI), September 6, 1901, 8.
4. *The Decatur Review* (Decatur, IA), September 20, 1901, 5.
5. *Kenosha Evening News* (Kenosha, WI), October 7, 1901, 1.
6. *The Sporting News* (St. Louis, MO), November 19, 1942, 4.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. Fred Lieb. *The Pittsburgh Pirates* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003), 71.
10. *Milwaukee Sentinel* (Milwaukee, WI), August 22, 1900, 7.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Kenosha Evening News* (Kenosha, WI), October 4, 1901, 1.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Scott Longert. *Addie Joss: King of the Pitchers* (Cleveland, OH: The Society for American Baseball Research, 1998), 33.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *The Toledo News-Bee* (Toledo, OH), August 22, 1905, 7.
17. *The Racine Daily Journal* (Racine, WI), November 8, 1901, 8.
18. Thomas Barthel. *Baseball Barnstorming and Exhibition Games, 1901–1962* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, Inc. Publishers, 2007), 27.
19. Levy, 95.
20. *The San Francisco Call* (San Francisco, CA), June 19, 1902, 4.
21. *The San Francisco Call* (San Francisco, CA), May 10, 1902, 4.
22. Levy, 96-97.
23. *The Sporting News* (St. Louis, MO), November 19, 1942, 4.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *The Sporting News* (St. Louis, MO), November 19, 1942, 10.
26. Charles C. Alexander. *John McGraw* (New York, NY: The Viking Press, 1988), 91.
27. The Cleveland American League franchise has used the nicknames Blues (1901), Bronchos (1902–1904), and Naps (1905–1914).
28. Levy, 104.
29. *Ibid.*
30. It was ritual for any ballplayer that saw a teammate wearing a straw hat after Labor Day to nab it off the offender's head and break it. When Waddell saw fellow pitcher Andy Coakley show up at the train station with one, Rube saw an opportunity to have some fun. Coakley tried to conceal the hat, but Waddell would not let that stand in the way. Trying to avoid the charging Waddell, Coakley tossed his bag at Waddell. In the bag was Coakley's spikes, which hit Waddell in the chin. Waddell's jovial mood turned to anger. It took several teammates to restrain Waddell from pulverizing the shocked Coakley. In the process, the peacekeeping scrum stumbled over a suitcase, with all the weight coming down on Waddell's left shoulder. That night, he rode the train with his left arm hanging out the window, taking in a stiff breeze. A few days later he could not raise it above his shoulder. The zip never returned to his fastball, or the snap to his curve.

Sources—Newspapers

The Daily Northwestern (Oshkosh, WI)
The Decatur Review (Decatur, IA)
Kenosha Evening News (Kenosha, WI)
Milwaukee Sentinel (Milwaukee, WI)



The Strangest Month in the Strange Career of Rube Waddell

Steven A. King

Hugh Fullerton has a theory regarding left-handed pitchers that their left arms affect their hearts and that affects their brain which is why they're all eccentric. Waddell is, of course, the synonym for eccentricity in baseball.

— *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 21, 1906

One controversial aspect of Rube Waddell's career, while he was still playing and a century later, is what happened during the last month of the 1905 season that resulted in his missing the World Series. This was the first played by Philadelphia and would be his one opportunity to pitch on the grand stage.

A story has been told about a bit of horseplay when Waddell tried to destroy the straw hat worn by Philadelphia Athletics teammate Andy Coakley at the train station in Providence, Rhode Island, on September 8, 1905, resulting in Rube injuring his shoulder, causing him to miss most of the last month of the regular season, and the whole World Series versus the New York Giants.

Whether Waddell was actually injured as he claimed, or was bribed to fake an injury, has remained at the core of the controversy. Biographies of Waddell and Connie Mack, his manager, have described it, and it has even been the subject of a mock trial staged at the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 2008.¹ A majority of those who voted on the verdict in this trial acquitted Waddell of the charge of bribery and faking the injury and most writers on the subject have generally taken a similarly sympathetic view.

However, by returning to the newspapers of the period, it is apparent that important evidence has been overlooked that may offer a different view of Waddell and what occurred in 1905. This may burst many of the widely held myths about what is supposed to have happened.

RUBE WADDELL BEFORE SEPTEMBER 8, 1905

Before discussing the final month of the 1905 season, it is useful to review his career.

By 1905 Waddell had established himself as one of the finest pitchers in baseball in the eyes of most observers, second only to Christy Mathewson in terms of greatness. From the time he made his debut with

the Athletics at the end of June 1902, he dominated American League hitters. He led the league in strikeouts in 1902 and 1903 and in 1904 he struck out 349 hitters, a post-1900 major league record that lasted until broken by Sandy Koufax 61 years later.²

Although his strikeout total declined to a league-leading 287 in 1905, that season is generally considered the greatest of his career. He won the AL pitching triple crown. Along with Eddie Plank, he was one of the Athletics' two most important starting pitchers and also the team's top relief pitcher.³

Although Waddell's pitching skills were apparent from the time he reached the major leagues, he was always a difficult person to handle. First the Louisville-Pittsburgh combination, and then the Chicago team of the National League gave up on him because of his behavior and undependability. Connie Mack, for whom Waddell had pitched in the then minor league American League in 1900, was willing to take another chance on him in 1902 and, for at least a few seasons, was able to tame Waddell's behavior to a certain degree.

Mack was willing to put up with Waddell's antics that he would not have tolerated in any other player because of his pitching greatness and his ability to bring fans to ball parks. In 1911 Alfred Spink, the founder of *The Sporting News*, described Waddell as the greatest crowd draw in baseball history.⁴

However, even Mack could not always control Waddell. In 1903, Mack suspended him for the last month of the season for missing practice and pitching for semi-pro teams. Mack would attribute the Athletics' failure to win the AL pennant that year and missing the chance to play in the World Series to Waddell's absence.⁵

Throughout most of the 1905 season, Waddell generally behaved himself. He had an incentive to do so because that season he was under indictment for assault with a deadly weapon.

During the winter of 1904–1905, Waddell lived

with his wife's parents in Peabody, Massachusetts (although, curiously, his wife was living with friends in nearby Lynn). Waddell did little work during that period, preferring to spend his time telling stories about his baseball feats to the locals at a general store. He did receive adulation for putting out a potentially dangerous fire.⁶

One night in February, Waddell returned to his in-laws' home and announced he was leaving. Newspaper stories of the time indicate that he had been drinking heavily during the previous few days and suggest that he was drunk that night. When his father-in-law inquired about the money for board that he felt Rube owed him, Waddell took a flat iron and beat the man about the head, knocking out several of his teeth. When his mother-in-law tried to intervene, he beat her over the head with a chair. The only family member who managed any blows against him was his in-laws' Newfoundland dog who sunk his teeth into Rube's pitching arm before he punched the animal, causing it to release him from its grasp. Waddell realized that he was in trouble, and almost immediately grabbed a train out of town before a warrant could be issued for his arrest. He did not stop running until he made it back to Philadelphia.⁷

Initially, there was concern that if he tried to play in Boston once the season began he would be arrested, but it appears that some arrangement was made whereby any legal proceedings would be held in abeyance until the end of the season, and he pitched there several times in 1905 without hindrance from the law.⁸

Although most descriptions of the 1905 season indicate that Waddell's trouble began on the train platform on September 8, there were earlier signs that his behavior was again problematic.

In St. Louis in late August, Waddell, after spending the night at an amusement park, showed up at 1AM, knocking on Connie Mack's hotel door. When the manager opened it, he found Rube standing there offering him what was called a "pazzazza" sandwich, consisting of limburger cheese and stale onions. Not surprisingly, Mack turned down the offer and went back to bed.⁹ Stories of the incident either implied or stated that Waddell had been drinking.¹⁰

From then on, Mack kept a close eye on Waddell, taking the berth below Rube's on the Pullman car when they were traveling, and the adjacent room at hotels.¹¹ Mack also appointed the team's trainer, Frank Newhouse, to be what the newspapers described as Rube's "keeper."¹² Newhouse had been appointed as trainer on the recommendation of Waddell, whom he

had befriended when they met on the train when Rube came east from California to join the Athletics in 1902.¹³ Newhouse's job to keep Waddell out of trouble meant keeping him from drinking and thwarting attempts to keep him from pitching.

For the rest of the season, Mack gave Newhouse Waddell's per diem travel money, requiring Rube to ask Newhouse to pay for anything Rube wished to purchase. Waddell made attempts to ditch Newhouse. While the Athletics were playing in Detroit, Mack gave Waddell time off to go fishing, which according to the manager was (along with drinking) the thing he loved most.¹⁴ Waddell tried to take off without Newhouse knowing it. However Newhouse tracked him down and visited as many places as he could in the area that served alcohol to warn them that Waddell had no money and therefore not to serve him. One hotel did serve Rube beer. When Newhouse found him there, Waddell told the owner to obtain the 30 cents he owed from Newhouse, who refused to pay, resulting in a fist fight that Newhouse, a former fighter, won.¹⁵

Mack may have also been sending a message to Waddell in his treatment of Waddell's friend, roommate, and favorite catcher, Ossee Schrecongost, whose last name was usually shortened in newspaper stories and box scores to "Schreck." When, at the end of August, Schreck was in no condition to catch after a drinking binge, Mack decided to suspend him. It was only when the other players, knowing that Waddell did his best work with Schreck, begged Mack to change his mind that Mack relented.¹⁶

Despite his problematic behavior, Waddell continued to pitch well. On September 5 in Boston, he threw one of the best games of his career. He extended his scoreless inning streak to 43 $\frac{2}{3}$, and carried a one-hitter into the ninth inning before giving up two runs to tie the score. He ended up losing 3-2 in 13 innings, giving up three hits and eight walks while recording 17 strikeouts. (Cy Young was scheduled to oppose him but sat out due to a sore arm.)

Waddell next pitched on the day he was supposed to have been injured in his scuffle with Andy Coakley, September 8. Coakley had pitched and won the day before. He had been given permission by Connie Mack to spend that night and the next day with his family in Providence, Rhode Island, and to join the team when its train stopped there on its return to Philadelphia after the game.

WHAT HAPPENED ON SEPTEMBER 8, 1905

Virtually all discussions of Waddell and September 8, 1905, have focused on the purported incident with

Coakley. However, another key event in the story, what occurred in the game against Boston that day, has largely been ignored. Biographies of Waddell and Connie Mack and most baseball histories either do not mention it at all, or note it only in passing.¹⁷

Waddell started opposite Cy Young, and set Boston down in order in the first inning. In the Boston second, Jimmy Collins led off with a double, followed by a home run by Kip Selbach that went over the head of center fielder Danny Hoffman and rolled to the fence. Waddell appeared to recover, striking out Moose Grimshaw. Hobe Ferris followed with a single that most newspapers attributed to miscommunication between second baseman Danny Murphy and right fielder Socks Seybold.¹⁸ Lou Criger then flied to center and Young struck out, ending the inning.

What happened next is a matter of controversy. It is certain that Waddell was pinch hit for in the top of the third, but why this occurred remains unclear. Most newspaper coverage of the game did not immediately offer any specific explanation for Waddell's removal, choosing to instead focus on Jimmy Dygert's excellent major league debut in relief. The next day, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* reported that Waddell had "demonstrated that he was not himself." Horace Fogel of the *Philadelphia Evening Telegraph* briefly discussed what had happened, reporting that Waddell "had one of those off days which all pitchers have occasionally. He felt good but for some inexplicable reason could not reach any speed in practice" and that catcher Schreck had noted the problem, but that Waddell thought once he warmed up, he would be all right.¹⁹

Several newspapers subsequently published stories that he was relieved in the September 8 game due to a sore arm.²⁰ Of course, this raises the question: if he already had a sore arm in that game, then how could he have developed it after the purported struggle with Coakley?

There was some difference of opinion as to whether Connie Mack took Rube out of the game or if Waddell removed himself. Newspapers did agree that after he left the game, instead of joining his teammates on the Philadelphia bench, or going to the clubhouse, Waddell sat in the bleachers. This behavior appeared curious even for Waddell. At least one newspaper attributed it to "being ashamed of being knocked out of the box," certainly a strange explanation considering that Waddell was never noted for either being introspective about or ashamed of any of his behavior, no matter how bizarre, at any time in his life.²¹

Some newspapers did comment that it was unusual for Waddell not to finish a game. The *Philadelphia*

Inquirer noted the following day, "That Waddell, the man who always stood by in the hour of distress ready and willing to step into the breach [sic] after others have failed, should himself feel the need of succor is one of the rare incidences of the national pastime."

It was certainly "rare" for Waddell to be taken out of a game he started in 1905. Until that game, he had finished all but five of his starts:

- Against Boston on July 7, he was struck in his pitching hand in the seventh by a ball off the bat of Freddy Parent. He completed the inning and started the eighth, but swelling in his hand prevented him from continuing and he was relieved.
- In his next start on July 13, he appeared to still suffer from the effects of this injury. Although he gave up four runs in the first inning, Connie Mack did not take him out until the fifth, when he gave up two hits and a walk.
- On August 11 against Cleveland, Mack relieved him in the middle of the sixth inning while losing 5–3.
- On August 20 against St. Louis, Waddell went to field a bunt by Tom Jones. As he bent down, Jones ran into him, hitting Rube behind the ear with his knee and knocking him out.

Even when Waddell appeared to be on the ropes early in a game, Connie Mack always gave him the chance to right himself as in the game on July 13. On August 2 against Chicago, Waddell gave up four walks and a hit and hit a batter in the first inning, resulting in three runs. He proceeded to strike out the next three batters and went on to a complete game victory to put the Athletics in first place.

The most famous example of Mack's patience with Waddell that year occurred in the second game of the July 4 doubleheader versus Boston when he gave up four hits and two runs in the first inning. Waddell settled down and pitched all 19 shutout innings, beating Cy Young, who also threw a complete game. Each would subsequently describe this as the greatest game of their careers.²²

If it was Mack's decision to remove Waddell from the September 8 game, he would seem to have been taking a risk. Chief Bender, who together with Waddell, handled most of the relief duties for the Athletics that season, was ill, leaving the manager limited options. Mack turned to Jimmy Dygert, a spitballer who had joined the team on August 31 from New Orleans of the Southern Association, and had yet to pitch in

the majors.²³ Dygert gave up one run against Boston the rest of the game, and beat Cy Young in what would be his only win for the Athletics that season.

THE FIGHT WITH COAKLEY: FACT OR FICTION?

The story of Waddell's fight with Andy Coakley over his straw hat has become widely accepted. There is much to suggest that it never happened.

Even before the alleged incident on September 8, there were suggestions that attempts might be made to keep Waddell from pitching in the World Series. An article in the September 2, 1905, issue of *The Sporting News* by a Philadelphia correspondent writing under the name "Veteran," reported a story from someone described as a gambler and friend of John McGraw, the manager of the New York Giants, that if the Athletics won the pennant, friends of McGraw would finance a fishing trip for Waddell that would last until the end of the series, causing Waddell to miss it.²⁴

Skepticism about the straw hat story is supported by the prominent identities of the reporters who expressed doubt about its veracity. Although Joseph Vila of the *New York Sun* is often credited as most vocal in doubting the story and raising the possibility that Waddell may have been bribed, in reality Horace Fogel of the *Philadelphia Evening Telegraph* and Charles Dryden of the *Philadelphia North American* were the most vociferous. Fogel and Dryden were traveling with the Athletics, and would have had first hand knowledge if a fight had occurred.²⁵

Dryden and Fogel were also the first to report the straw hat incident. Dryden, in the *Philadelphia North American* of September 10, in explaining why Waddell had been unable to relieve Bender in the second game of a double header when the Philadelphia fans had called for Rube, wrote: "In a straw hat smoking tournament on the way here from Boston the noble southpaw jammed his pitching shoulder." Fogel would fill in some details in the *Philadelphia Evening Telegraph* on September 13. In this initial telling, the event occurred on the platform at the Providence train station when Waddell tried to grab Coakley's hat and bumped his shoulder against the side of the train.

Both Fogel and Dryden began to express doubt about the story when they accompanied the Athletics to New York for a three-game series on September 19–20 and found its gambling and sporting circles awash with stories that arrangements had been made to ensure that Waddell would not pitch in the World Series. Bets were being taken on his not pitching.²⁶

In a September 20 article in the *Philadelphia Evening Telegraph*, Fogel wrote that Mack and most of

the Athletic players "are beginning to feel a bit dubious about there being much if anything the matter with Waddell's shoulder." The next day, devoting virtually his whole column to it, he stated that Mack had never believed the Coakley fight story. That New York men without any apparent inside knowledge of Waddell's health could be so certain that he would not be able to pitch in the World Series was especially unsettling to Fogel.

Waddell wrote a response to Fogel that was published in the *Evening Telegraph* on September 22, stating that his shoulder was injured, and emphatically denying that he had been bribed.²⁷ Fogel expressed appreciation for Waddell's willingness to address the rumors, but noted that Rube held the key to terminating them; all he had to do was to start pitching again. Mack did at least publicly defend Waddell and stated his belief in the straw hat fight story and that Waddell had perspired as a result of it and "caught a cold" in his shoulder.²⁸

What also troubled both Fogel and Dryden was that details of the incident with Coakley varied from telling to telling. In some, it was in the train station in Providence, in others, on the platform or on the train. Dryden even noted that some reports placed it in the station at New London, Connecticut rather than Providence.²⁹

Even more disconcerting was that they were unable to find any of the Athletics or apparently anyone else who reported witnessing a fight that supposedly had occurred in a public place. And, although Waddell stated that it had happened, there is no record of the one other person who could have verified it, Coakley himself, making any statement at the time. In fact he made no public comment at all about it until almost 40 years later when, in 1943, he did so in response to a letter from J.G. Taylor Spink, the publisher of *The Sporting News*, who was writing a series of articles on Rube Waddell, asking about the incident.³⁰

Spink could have saved the effort as Coakley's rendition of the event was essentially the same as that provided by Connie Mack in his syndicated memoir *My Fifty Years in Baseball*, published in 1930, and in an article he published on his relationship with Waddell in the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1936.³¹

Nowhere in contemporary accounts or in either of these remembrances did Mack explain why Waddell was removed from the game of September 8. Mack noted in the 1936 article that some reporters thought that he might have been behind creating a phony story so Waddell could sit out until the World Series to "throw the Giants off guard," but denied there was any

truth to this or to the rumors that gamblers had gotten to Waddell.

If Coakley lied in his response to Spink, he would certainly have had good reason. If he had given a significantly different story from Mack's, he would have appeared to be accusing his former manager, who by 1943, was already considered the grand old man of baseball, of either being unaware of what was going on with his team, or of participating in a cover-up of a possible bribe.

Also, if Coakley had admitted to knowledge of such a cover-up, he might have faced his own problems. Kennesaw Mountain Landis was still the commissioner of baseball at the time, and anyone closely associated with the game would have been well aware of his banning of Buck Weaver from organized ball for life for not reporting knowledge of the 1919 World Series game fixing, although there was no evidence Weaver had participated in it. When he replied to Spink, Coakley was already 60 years old and was not going to play again, but he was the baseball coach at Columbia University (where he coached for another nine years before retiring after 37 seasons), and had an insurance business that might have also suffered.³²

Perhaps the most suspicious of all events occurred at the end of September. By then, Mack had publicly stated that he had become disgusted with Waddell who, instead of taking care of himself, was spending most of his time drinking. Determining that Waddell was no longer of any benefit to the team that season, Mack informed him: "I won't need you anymore Rube. You can spend the rest of the season among the breweries or any where you want."³³

Within one to two days, Waddell suddenly announced that while he was shaving, he had heard something click in his left shoulder, and he was able to move it freely without any pain. He immediately rushed to the Athletics' ball park to convey the good news, bringing his wife with him so she could confirm that she had also heard the click.³⁴

Despite the reports that Waddell had regained his health, Mack remained skeptical. It appears that this may have less to do with how Rube was throwing the ball and more that his manager had lost trust in him. Waddell's teammates believed he was physically able to pitch in the World Series. Team captain Lave Cross, on the opening day of the series said: "I'd like to clock him [Waddell] on the head with a bat. His work out yesterday on the quiet had both speed and curves. There is no reason why he should not pitch. He's jeopardizing our chances of getting the bulk of the money, and is not there for the team."³⁵



Connie Mack, 1905 Philadelphia Athletics manager.

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One final factor suggests the straw hat story was false. In September 1920, in the wake of the indictment of the eight White Sox players for fixing the 1919 World Series, Horace Fogel filled in more details of his story about 1905. He told of how a New York politician with significant financial interests in the gambling business, "Little Tim" Sullivan, and two New York gamblers met Waddell in a Boston hotel during the September road trip and offered him \$17,000 to fake an injury and sit out the World Series.³⁶ Because the Athletics left Boston following the game of September 8, if such an episode had occurred, it would have had to take place before that game. Thus, if Waddell faked an injury to force his leaving the game that day, it would have fit in with the timeline provided by Fogel, and not the story involving Coakley and the straw hat.

That Fogel did not reveal these details until 1920 raises questions about the veracity of the claims. However we might understand this better in light of an account from 1908. The New York Giants and Chicago Cubs tied for the National League lead on October 7, 1908, at the end of the season. The teams met on October 8, 1908, in New York for a scheduled make-up game that would decide the pennant. It was later revealed that the game's umpires were approached and offered a bribe. Fogel reported in 1908 that he consciously had withheld details from 1905 stories to prevent him or his paper from being sued for libel. Fogel wrote in 1908, "Let's wait and see what the present investigation will show, and if I deem it necessary to take a hand in it for the good of base ball, I'll tell a few things I know, later."³⁷

It was not only the writers, Mack, and his teammates who grew skeptical that Waddell was in fact injured. Despite Waddell being the most popular of all the Athletic players, Philadelphia fans also began to voice disbelief about Waddell's injury. During the third game of the World Series in Philadelphia, one

fan mocked Waddell by throwing a straw hat onto the field.³⁸

TWO VEXING QUESTIONS

There are two questions that have troubled those who believe Waddell was bribed to sit out the World Series:

- (1) If he was bribed, why have him sit the last month of the season, before the Athletics had captured the AL pennant and were still engaged with the Chicago White Sox?
- (2) Gamblers benefit by keeping private inside information they have. If Waddell was on the take, what was gained by pretending he was injured which would have prevented him from pitching the Series as well?

While we can never know with any degree of certainty the motives of those who bribed Waddell, if there was a bribe, it is possible to speculate on several that would provide answers to both questions.

As it turned out, the Athletics did not need Waddell to win the American League championship. His sitting out the last month did not markedly imperil its chances. Even when Waddell was out of action, most observers still felt that the Athletics were going to win the pennant. The team was never out of first place during the rest of the season, although for one day, September 27, Philadelphia fell into a virtual tie with Chicago. Furthermore, in mid-September, there were some who thought that while both the Athletics and Giants were the betting favorites to win their respective league pennants, the latter might have had a tougher row to hoe as they faced an extended road trip. It was also noted that Pittsburgh, the Giants' chief competitor for the pennant, was playing better ball than the White Sox, who were chasing the Athletics.³⁹

As to the timing of a possible bribe, baseball historian Steve Steinberg has suggested that one possible explanation is that bets may have been placed on the Giants winning the World Series before the season and that gamblers were making sure that Waddell would not be available to pitch against them.⁴⁰ If this was all bribers cared about, obviously it would not have made any difference when Waddell stopped pitching. Furthermore, having several weeks to observe that he did so would have given them some degree of assurance that he intended to keep his agreement.

An alternative and not necessarily contradictory explanation regards the fact that for gamblers it is not only who wins that is important, but also the odds

gamblers will accept. Anyone who could manipulate these would clearly have a significant advantage.

It is important to remember that Waddell was not shut down completely after September 8 and did pitch in three more games that season. On September 27, he relieved Weldon Henley, but was taken out after having difficulty putting the ball over the plate and giving up a hit to the only Detroit hitter he faced. However, in his next appearance on October 6, when the Athletics captured the pennant due to a White Sox loss, he did better, pitching six innings in relief of Andy Coakley versus Washington, although he did give up six runs, while walking five and throwing two wild pitches.

On the surface, Waddell's performance in that game appeared to be quite poor, but observers actually felt that, apart from diminished control attributed to his being rusty, he pitched well. In its coverage of the game, the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* the next day noted "he demonstrated that he is the same wonderful mechanism of speed and curves that has gained him a reputation second to none as a pitching marvel. But his work clearly showed his absence from the diamond. He not only lacked confidence, but was as erratic as an unbroken yearling."

On October 7, the last day of the regular season, Mack started Waddell in the first game of a double header and relieved him after he gave up two runs in the first inning.

Until the World Series began, the public was uncertain whether Waddell would pitch at all. Some newspapers warned their readers against bets on the Series until they knew whether Waddell would be available. On October 9, the opening day of the series, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* warned, "To those who wish to wager money on the result of the series or on a single game this is good advice: wait until the teams are lined up before you bet. This is based on the admitted fact that the Athletics will be at least 20 percent stronger if Rube Waddell is able to pitch two or three of the games." The *Philadelphia North American* of October 7 would note that after the Athletics had won the pennant the day before, gamblers considering backing the team in the World Series were hesitant until they knew whether Waddell would be able to pitch.

There is also another possible sinister explanation for why Waddell might have been bribed to not only sit out the World Series, but also the final month of the season. If Waddell had pitched effectively in his regular spot in September, the Athletics most likely would have run away with the pennant. *Sporting Life* expressed an opinion after the season that if Waddell had not sat out during that time, the Athletics would

have clinched the pennant at least one to two weeks before the end of the season.⁴¹

The Giants had won the National League pennant a week before the season end and were rested for the Series. Even before he knew whether the Athletics or the White Sox would win the AL pennant, John McGraw noted that it did not matter. No matter the winner, the players would be worn by the pennant race and the Giants would “just walk in” to the world championship.⁴²

The details of the 1905 World Series are beyond the scope of this paper. Many observed at the time the poor play of the Athletics both in the field and at bat. There were undertones that things might not be on the level in the Series, although most observers attributed the poor performance to exhaustion from playing the next to last day of the season before clinching the American League pennant.

After the Series, Ban Johnson, the disappointed president of the American League, said, “It seems to me that the Athletics did not play up to the excellent form they showed toward the close of the American League season. They played with lightning speed then, but there was a noticeable diminution in the rapidity of play this week. Perhaps the defection of Rube Waddell discouraged the players.”⁴³

Suspensions that the World Series might not have been on the level were heightened when it was revealed later that the Athletic players and most of the Giants had agreed beforehand to split the players’ share of the receipts 50–50, instead of abiding by the official split of 75 percent for the winners and 25 percent for the losers. *The Sporting News* felt the need to publish an editorial denying that this should be interpreted as indicating that the players might have not done their best.⁴⁴

POSTSCRIPT: AFTER THE 1905 SEASON

Despite Waddell’s phenomenal pitching record in 1905, reports appeared during the off-season that Mack was trying to move him to another team. There were stories of him being traded or sold to the Boston Americans or to Cincinnati, but how plausible any such deal might have been is unknown.⁴⁵ Mack may have been unable to find anyone willing to give anything close to the value that a star pitcher would warrant if he was able to find any takers at all. Alluding to Waddell’s diminished reputation, Frank Navin, the then secretary and later owner of the Detroit club, stated after the series that he “wouldn’t give 30 cents for Waddell.”⁴⁶

After the season, there were reports that Ban Johnson was trying to have the National Commission, the then ruling body of organized baseball, initiate a formal

investigation of the bribery charge, perhaps scaring potential buyers or trading partners away.⁴⁷

In his defense of Waddell, Mack stated many times over the years that followed that Rube did not care about money, and that what was most important to him was winning. Many never believed this.⁴⁸ Even before the 1905 World Series, Charles Dryden wrote that “Rube Waddell does not care so much for the pennant but he would like to get one of the \$50 diamond studded buttons [that the National Commission had promised to members of the World Series winning team]. It can be soaked [a synonym for pawning].”⁴⁹ Throughout Waddell’s career there were stories of schemes he invented to wrangle money out of others. That he was chronically short of money is indicated by the fact that even though he received well over \$1,000 as his share of the money from the 1905 World Series, by December of that year, he was already asking Connie Mack for money.⁵⁰

In later writings, Connie Mack forgave Waddell for being unable to play in the World Series, but Mack’s response afterward was to punish him the only way he could without hurting himself. In 1906, after Waddell’s wife sued him for non-support and desertion, a court required that he show his contract for that season so the amount he had to provide to her could be decided. It showed that the Athletics were paying him a mere \$1,200, half of what he had earned in 1905.⁵¹

Despite the reduction in salary, Mack continued to use Waddell in 1906 much as he had the previous season. For most of the season, Waddell pitched well, starting 6–2 with four shutouts before injuring the thumb on his pitching hand in a carriage accident on May 22. He missed most of the next month, but returned to his pre-injury form until the last month of the season, when he again let his teammates down, going 2–6, a major factor in the Athletics’ failure to challenge for the pennant. He lasted one more season with the Athletics before Mack sold him to St. Louis before the 1908 season, explaining, “While I still consider Waddell a great pitcher, I figure my team has been considerably strengthened by his sale. There was not the best of feeling between Waddell and several of the players, and as harmony is the chief essential to success he was disposed of to St. Louis.”⁵²

CONCLUSION

It is unlikely we will ever know for certain whether Rube Waddell was bribed to sit out the last month of the 1905 season or that year’s World Series. However, there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that the whole story of his fight with Andy Coakley over a straw

hat, and an injury resulting from it, can itself be knocked into another type of hat, the proverbial cocked one. ■

Notes

- Roger I. Abrams and Alan Levy, "The Trial of Rube Waddell," *Seton Hall Journal of Sports and Entertainment Law* 19, (2009): 1–30.
- Except as noted, player statistics are from Baseball-Reference.com.
- Baseball-Reference.com names Jim Buchanan of St. Louis as the American League leader in saves in 1905 with two, and Waddell none. A review of the 1905 season indicates that Waddell had at least four. John Thorn, in his book *The Relief Pitcher* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1979) also credits Waddell with four and a tie for the league lead. The only other pitchers since 1900 who appear to have won this unofficial quadruple crown are Christy Mathewson of the New York Giants in 1908, and Lefty Grove for the Philadelphia Athletics in 1930.
- Alfred Spink, *The National Game* (St. Louis: The National Publishing Company, 1911), 160.
- Paul Proia, *Just a Big Kid: The Life and Times of Rube Waddell* (Baltimore: Publish America, 2007), 155.
- Boston Herald*, February 9, 1905.
- Ibid.
- It is possible that either Waddell or someone else eventually paid off his in-laws. When the case finally went to trial in January 1906, they did not appear to testify against him and it was dismissed. (*Wilkes-Barre Times*, January 12, 1906).
- Philadelphia North American*, August 21, 1905.
- Waddell's drinking habits were sufficiently known that in late August 1905, Charles Dryden of the Philadelphia North American, upon learning that Rube had been asked to write an advertisement endorsing Coca-Cola as his favorite drink, reported; "We marvel much because a bolt of lightning did not enter the window and strike Mr. Waddell dead in the midst of his mendacious testimonial." (*Philadelphia North American*, August 26, 1905.) The advertisement appeared in *The Sporting News* on September 16, 1905.
- Philadelphia North American*, August 23, 1905.
- Philadelphia North American*, August 25, 1905.
- Frank Newhouse is often described as the trainer of a boxer who fought under the name Young Corbett. In fact, he was more of a gofer. Corbett's actual trainer when he was the featherweight champion was Harry Tuthill, the New York Giants trainer in 1905. When Corbett was no longer able to make weight as a featherweight his title was claimed by the boxer Abe Attell who would come to have a more infamous association with baseball of any professional fighter.
- Connie Mack, "The One And Only Rube," *Saturday Evening Post*, March 14, 1936, 12–13, 106, 108–110.
- Philadelphia North American*, August 27, 1905.
- Philadelphia North American*, August 27, 1905. Schreck caught almost every inning Waddell pitched in 1905 and when Waddell was called on to relieve, Schreck would enter the game with him.
- See Proia, *Just a Big Kid*; Alan H. Levy, *Rube Waddell: The Zany Brilliant Life of a Strikeout Artist* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2000); Fred Lieb, *Connie Mack: Grand Old Man of Baseball* (New York: G.P. Putnam's, 1945); *Connie Mack, My 66 Years In the Big League* (Philadelphia: Winston, 1950); Norman Macht, *Connie Mack and the Early Years of Baseball* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2007). The SABR Baseball Biography Project biography of Waddell incorrectly states that Waddell defeated Cy Young in the game.
- Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 9, 1905.
- Philadelphia Evening Telegraph*, September 9, 1905.
- For example, see Associated Press report in the *Richmond Times Dispatch*, September 29, 1905.
- Pawtucket Times*, September 9, 1905.
- The Sporting News*, December 16, 1905.
- Mack wanted Dygert to join the Athletics by August 31 so he would be eligible to play in the World Series. This proved to be no easy task as New Orleans was under quarantine for a yellow fever epidemic, and Dygert reported he had to elude inspectors on the train en route to join the Athletics. (*Philadelphia North American*, September 7, 1905).
- The identity of "Veteran" remains a mystery. Other *Sporting News* correspondents at the time reported that it was unknown to them. I believe it was most likely Horace Fogel, who was noted to be its correspondent at various times during the first decade of the twentieth century, though I was unable to find specific evidence that he was "Veteran" in 1905. If it was Fogel, he was being disingenuous, for several times he praised Fogel's writings. I thank Norman Macht and Steve Steinberg for their opinions on Veteran's identity.
- Dryden, who only reported on baseball, had traveled with the team for most of the season, while Fogel only did so after September 1. Contrary to reports that it was Vila who initiated and spread the rumor about Waddell being bribed, in *The Sporting News* of October 7, 1905, he actually expressed skepticism about it, asking "does anybody believe the story that 'Rube' Waddell has been fixed to keep out of the world's [sic] series?"
- The Sporting News*, September 30, 1905.
- Philadelphia Evening Telegraph*, September 22, 1905.
- Cleveland Plain Dealer*, September 28, 1905.
- Philadelphia North American*, September 21, 1905.
- J.G. Taylor Spink, "Rube Waddell," *Baseball Register* (St. Louis, C.C. Spink & Son, 1944), 5–21.
- Connie Mack, "My Fifty Years in Baseball," *Albany Evening News*, October 5, 1930; Mack, "The One And Only Rube."
- If Coakley was willing to go along with Connie Mack on perpetuating a falsehood, it would not have been the first time he did so. In September 1902, a pitcher named McAllister made his debut with the Athletics. After the season, it was revealed that he was really Coakley, then one of the top collegiate pitchers in the country. When the college he was attending, Holy Cross, learned of his playing professional ball, it terminated his collegiate athletic eligibility. Mack admitted he had known McAllister's true identity all along and was trying to protect Coakley's eligibility through the use of the pseudonym. That Mack had no compunction about participating in future falsehoods is indicated by his similar willingness to have Columbia University student Eddie Collins play under the name Sullivan in 1906. For details on Coakley's post-major league career, see his obituary in *The New York Times*, September 28, 1963.
- Philadelphia North American*, October 1, 1905.
- Philadelphia North American*, October 1, 1905. Some newspaper stories reported that Waddell went to his doctor first.
- New York Evening World*, October 9, 1905.
- Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 30, 1920.
- The Sporting News*, December 17, 1908.
- New York Sun*, October 13, 1905.
- Cleveland Plain Dealer*, September 17, 1905.
- Steve Steinberg, "Horace Fogel: The Man Who Knew (and Talked) Too Much." *Base Ball: A Journal of the Early Game*, 6 (2012):33–50.
- Sporting Life*, October 21, 1905.
- Sporting Life*, October 7, 1905.
- Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 15, 1905.
- The Sporting News*, November 11, 1905.
- Baltimore American*, November 21, 1905; *Boston Daily Globe*, December 31, 1905.
- Grand Rapids Press*, October 27, 1905.
- Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 8, 1906. Johnson may have had suspicions about Waddell's honesty and tried to distance himself from Waddell even before September 8. In August 1905, at a meeting of the National Commission, he and National League president Harry Pulliam chose all-star teams of the best players at each position in their own leagues. At pitcher, Johnson chose Jack Chesbro over Waddell. Although Chesbro had gone 41–12 in 1904, it is doubtful that by August of the following year many knowledgeable people would have rated him as superior to Waddell. *New York Press*, September 3, 1905.
- Lieb, *Connie Mack*, 93.
- Philadelphia North American*, September, 17, 1905.
- Washington Post*, December 9, 1905.
- Trenton Times*, May 4, 1906. For Waddell's 1905 salary see Proia, *Just a Big Kid*, 147.
- Chicago Inter Ocean*, April 12, 1908.



Tim Hurst's Last Call

Rick Huhn

It was an unlikely time for a post-game riot, even in a baseball-crazy city like Philadelphia. Yet that is exactly what occurred at newly-minted Shibe Park on the afternoon of August 3, 1909. Moments earlier, the hometown Athletics had completed an exciting come-from-behind 10–4 victory to sweep a doubleheader from the Chicago White Sox. The pair of wins served as further notice that this team, fielding a number of young players, was becoming a force to be reckoned with in the American League. The wins that day lifted the record of manager Connie Mack's charges to 58–38, leaving them a mere two games behind the defending two-time AL champion Detroit Tigers. Not a bad day's work for a squad that finished in sixth place just one season before. Nonetheless, as the final White Sox out was recorded in the top of the ninth, several hundred Athletics fans, instead of celebrating, rushed the field as others, in the upper tier, threw seat cushions, bottles, and even their straw hats. The target of their anger was veteran umpire Tim Hurst. Only the intervention of several members of the Athletics, including Mr. Mack, and eventually the police, saved Hurst from serious physical harm. Hurst did not know it at the time, but as he was escorted from the field he had just umpired his last game in the major leagues.

The call that served to end Tim Hurst's storied career in baseball occurred late in the day's second game. When 23-year-old third baseman Frank Baker, batting with the bases full of Athletics and one out, lifted a fly ball to center field, it started a chain reaction of relay throws that eventually saw A's second sacker Eddie Collins attempt to advance from first to second. The action that unfolded at that point was described in one Philadelphia newspaper as follows:

It was in the [bottom of the] eighth inning when the White Sox were throwing the ball around in reckless fashion that Collins saw a chance to get to second and availed himself of it, though it were patent to all that he was only safe because [Sox second baseman Jake] Atz dropped the ball. To every one's surprise Umpire Hurst called

him out, claiming that he [Collins] knocked the ball from the Chicago fielder's hand. As a matter of fact, Atz dropped the ball before Collins reached the bag. What Collins said to Hurst is not known, but it is claimed that when he came over to where the umpire was standing the latter spat at him.¹

Hurst's actions, post call, were more colorfully portrayed by sports writer Jimmy Isaminger of the *Philadelphia North American*. He was uncertain if Hurst acted intentionally or not, but told readers "it is a fact that the umpire distributed a mouthful of moistened union-made tobacco in the direction of youthful Eddie, who immediately called Tim's attention to the Board of Health ordinance which prohibits expectorating in public places."²

Whether Hurst's actions violated any ordinances or not, it did violate the sensibilities of those locals who later rushed the field and threw Hurst's way any and all objects close at hand. Not long thereafter it caught the attention of one Byron Bancroft Johnson, the AL's president and baseball's major domo. Johnson took special pride in his umpires. He had a short fuse for any indiscretions. The next day, Johnson relieved Hurst from duty indefinitely pending a report of the incident.³ There can be little doubt Hurst was suspended for spitting on Collins and not for his call. The reason for Hurst's overt reaction to Collins's protest is of interest. A more intriguing and less analyzed question is: Why had Hurst made what almost everyone agreed was such an egregious call? The question begs a closer look at Mr. Hurst.

According to Ring Lardner, describing the day's activities for the "bugs" back in Chicago, the call, "[p]robably the worst decision Tim ever made in his life, and that means a pretty bad decision, stopped Philadelphia in the midst of a rally...."⁴ Lardner seems to be asserting that Hurst's miscall was just another of many made over the course of his career. The writer, even in these years prior to *You Know Me Al* and national repute as a writer of short stories and plays, seldom missed a chance to interject some dry wit into



Tim Hurst circa 1904. Said umpire Billy Evans of his colleague, “[Hurst] had the implicit confidence of every player in the majors.”

his work. This might have been just one more instance. On the other hand, if Lardner truly believed Hurst was a subpar arbiter, it was not an opinion generally shared by others. In fact, it was just the opposite.

Timothy Carroll Hurst was known far and wide for his fairness as a signal caller. He made a bad call every once in a while, but far fewer than most. Tim was born into a large Irish family in Ashland, Pennsylvania, on June 30, 1865. His father had been in the wholesale liquor business. In the 1870s the elder Hurst purchased a horse and wagon and eked out a meager living delivering coal from local mines to customers in the area. A childhood friend had this to say about Tim’s turbulent early years:

As youngsters, Timmie and I worked picking slate in a colliery in Ashland. When we knocked off for lunch, there was always a fight or two between employes [sic] to see who was the better man. That is where Tim learned to handle his fists and got a love for fighting. But Tim was too smart to stay in the mines. He saw there was no future there for him.⁵

This same friend introduced Hurst to a career in umpiring when the friend’s nose was broken as he umpired a local game. The friend quit on the spot. When no one stepped forward to take his place, Tim,

playing second base for one of the teams at the time, volunteered and finished the game as the ump. He received a dollar for his troubles and decided it might be an easy way to make more.⁶

In 1888, at age 22, Hurst began his professional umpiring career in the Central Pennsylvania League. A stint in the Southern League followed a year later. When that league broke up in mid-season 1889, he transferred his skills to the Western Association. Hurst, who was once described as a “bandy-legged, sorrel-topped, five-foot-nine-inch 175-pound bit of dynamite,” had the familiar combination of a keen Irish wit and the short, sharp temper to go with it.⁷ During his brief time in the Western Association, he impressed the owners of the Minneapolis Millers so much as an umpire that in June 1890 he was hired as their manager. Hurst’s Millers almost won the league championship, but Hurst fell out with team management and did not return as

manager in 1891. Instead, he was hired as an umpire by the National League. He was now in the big time.

Plying his craft at baseball’s top level, Hurst developed a reputation for his dim view of players who questioned his calls, preferring to use his fists to cut arguments short. According to baseball historian David Fleitz, “(t)hey called him ‘Sir Timothy’ for his bearing and ‘Terrible Tim’ for his temper, and few players elected to punch it out with him.”⁸ That probably cut down on arguments, but he garnered even more respect for his knowledge of the rules and the way he applied them.

Over the years, perhaps owing to his own attempts at a professional boxing career, Hurst developed a reputation for refereeing boxing matches. He was known for calling a fair fight. As his reputation as referee spread he began working some highly publicized fights, mostly during baseball’s off-season but a few in the summer. This opened the door to offers to officiate bike races, running races, and even marathons. The men in charge of baseball were not impressed. In 1895 the magnates rose up and ousted him from the league. However, high-quality umpires like Hurst were difficult to find. After a season in the Eastern League, he was back in the NL, but not for long. On August 4, 1897, Tim was under heavy verbal assault from the fans during a game he umpired in Cincinnati. All at once, what had been mere verbiage turned physical when a beer bottle was heaved

from the stands, striking Hurst in the back. He reacted quickly and violently, hurling the bottle back into the stands where it struck a city fireman over one eye and broke his skin. Fans immediately leaped from the stands onto the field and charged the fuming umpire. It took a police cordon to escort him safely from the field. Fortunately, the fireman's cut did not prove serious. Hurst was charged with assault and battery, paid a fine and served no time in jail. Although he was not dismissed at the time, at season's end he was quietly shuffled out of the league.

Hurst reappeared in 1898 as manager of the St. Louis Browns, a posting that did not survive a last-place finish. Interestingly, as a manager Hurst was a notorious umpire-baiter.⁹ His managerial career at an end, Hurst sat out a year then returned to umpire in the National League on a sporadic basis. In 1904 he umpired only one game.¹⁰

In 1905 Hurst resurfaced in the American League umpiring for Ban Johnson. The Irishman's return to baseball was facilitated by Johnson's desire to field a superior team of umpires who would lend reliability and credibility to the game. According to one writer, "Under Johnson the many-lived umpire was to be reborn again, and this time to a position of authority, dignity and secularity."¹¹ Hurst liked the sound of it. He enlisted and Johnson had an authority figure to add to a growing list of first-class signal callers, albeit one who carried the risk of an explosion every once in a while.

For the most part, Hurst toed the company line during his AL tenure, adding to his credibility and delighting fans with the spirited way he approached his trade. Nevertheless, there were those occasional bumps in the road. One such incident occurred in May 1906 in New York during a contest with the visiting Washington Nationals when Highlander manager Clark Griffith protested a Hurst call in a close play at first base. Griffith reportedly rushed toward Hurst waving his hands and flinging his cap into the air. Hurst ordered him away. Instead, Griffith moved closer and stepped on Hurst's shoe. Hurst reared back to strike Griffith, before several players intervened. When Hurst grabbed Griffith by his lapel, intending to lead him off the field, the latter pushed Hurst's hand aside. As Griffith's men took control and led him toward the dugout, Hurst again approached and drew his fist back ready to take a swing. Order was eventually restored and Griffith ejected from the game.¹² Spotted later with a swollen lip, Griffith denied it came from Hurst.¹³ Although various reports have Ban Johnson disciplining both men over the incident, Hurst umpired the

next day in a ballgame featuring the same teams.^{14,15}

Another significant bump occurred on May 7, 1909, in New York, three months before the spitting incident involving Eddie Collins. This time Hurst's opponent was Highlander third baseman Kid Elberfeld. The Highlanders beat the Boston Red Sox in the bottom of the 12th, and the play that caused the ruckus occurred in the bottom of the 11th with the teams knotted at three apiece. Elberfeld stood at third with one out when teammate Joe Ward lifted a fly ball to left. Following the catch—or perhaps as one report had it, a little before—Elberfeld steamed for home. In his mind, he had beaten the throw from Red Sox left fielder Harry Niles and the game was over. He was stunned when Tim Hurst called him out, sending the game into yet another inning. Elberfeld had skirmished with Hurst before and was unwilling to back down. He rushed Hurst and jabbed him in the side. Hurst picked up his mask and swung away, striking Elberfeld in the jaw. After several Red Sox players intervened, Hurst tossed Elberfeld from the game.¹⁶ Hurst was suspended by Ban Johnson until May 13.¹⁷

By August, Hurst was in the eye of the storm that would end his career. To a casual observer, a pattern seemed to be emerging: in both skirmishes the individual called out was irate and argued strenuously with Hurst. The incidents, however, bore significant differences. The first call was made in a tie game. Had Elberfeld been called safe at home, the game was over, his Highlander team victorious. The call at second base in the August contest occurred with Collins's Athletics team safely ahead, merely seeking to add to what appeared to be an insurmountable 10-4 lead. Where Elberfeld's game was played right in New York, Hurst's home base, the Collins dispute occurred in Philadelphia, a train commute for Hurst to his residence. While no one seriously disputed that Elberfeld's play at the plate was a close call, almost every observer agreed that Jake Atz dropped the ball and Collins was clearly safe at second. Thus, in the first instance as opposed to the second, Hurst's decision was justifiable.

Even the characteristics and circumstances of the two aggrieved ballplayers differed. Elberfeld had legitimately earned his nickname, "The Tabasco Kid," by his presence at the center of controversy throughout his career. Two of his more noteworthy skirmishes with umpires occurred in 1906, each involving highly-regarded signal caller Silk O'Loughlin. In the first, The Kid went after Silk with a bat, while in the second, he attempted to kick and spike O'Loughlin in the foot. This second incident, described by *The New York Times* as

“one of the most disrespectful exhibitions of rowdyism ever witnessed on a baseball field,” moved Ban Johnson to suspend Elberfeld for seven games.¹⁸ It is not so surprising then, if still not appropriate, that when Elberfeld rushed at Hurst in May 1909, the latter might strike back. On the other hand, three months later, when Eddie Collins attempted to advance to second following Frank Baker’s fly out, he carried none of Elberfeld’s baggage. At the time Collins was only 22, in his first full season as the A’s second sacker. There is no question that Collins played the game with a competitive spirit that at times—particularly on the base paths—seemed aggressive. In fact, only a couple of weeks before the row with Hurst, Collins had vigorously protested to no avail a call by rookie umpire Fred Perrine.¹⁹ But throughout a long and illustrious career his disputes over calls were brief and relatively few. Disputes he was involved in did not rise to the level of all-out war as did Elberfeld’s. He would eventually earn the nickname “Cocky” more for an attitude of quiet assurance than for any negative connotation.

Unlike “The Tabasco Kid,” Collins did not physically assault Tim Hurst on August 3, although there were some who said the young infielder kicked dust on Hurst’s patent leather shoes. This might have been enough to set off Hurst, a man known to buff his shoes prior to games until they glared back at him. Nonetheless, those wondering why Hurst, who did not eject Collins, went so far as to spit on him that fateful day need look no further than Sir Timothy’s own words. When he was eventually confronted by Ban Johnson for an explanation of his actions, Hurst supposedly told his boss, “I don’t like college boys.”²⁰ Eddie Collins was a graduate of Columbia University, just one of a growing number of college-educated young men signed to a contract by the refined Connie Mack.

That might explain why Hurst spit on Collins. It does not explain why he made perhaps the worst call of his career. Hurst never spoke about the matter publicly. Thus we will never know the answer for sure. A reasonable explanation can be pieced together by a look at the timing of the call and revealing statements Hurst had made on earlier occasions.

The Collins incident occurred in the bottom of the eighth inning of game two of a twin bill. By this time, Hurst and his colleague Silk O’Loughlin had been umpiring for 17 innings. Game one had taken almost two hours to complete. The second game was heading toward the two-hour mark. (Today a two-hour game is considered short, but not so in 1909.) In the sixth inning the White Sox seemed to be in control, leading 4–0 behind veteran flinger Doc White. Then the A’s

turned things around, scoring one in the bottom half of the sixth and five more in the seventh. They had pushed four more runs across by the time Collins tagged up and chugged toward second in the A’s half of the eighth. By that time the game was solidly in hand, the play of little consequence. When Sox second baseman Atz dropped the relay throw representing the third out, Hurst must have groaned. He had seen enough. Instead of calling Collins safe and allowing the inning to continue, he called the base runner out. A half-inning later, the game was over. So, it would prove, was Hurst’s long, storied umpiring career.

Hurst’s intentions that day did not go unnoticed by that keen observer, Ring Lardner. At one point in his game summary he wrote that “Hurst must be thanked for the fact that they are not out there playing yet....” Later he opined that the umpire “to the amazement of every one ruled Collins out at second on the ground that it was almost supper time.”²¹ This was not a far-fetched assertion regarding Hurst. One time when Hurst’s buddy O’Loughlin complained that an umpire leads a “dog’s life,” Hurst reportedly responded, “Sure it is, Silk, but you can’t beat the hours.”²² On another occasion Hurst heard that Ban Johnson was interested in ways to shorten ball games. According to umpire Billy Evans, Hurst wrote Johnson suggesting the games be reduced to seven innings.²³

It is said that when Hurst umpired in Philadelphia he would often call games due to darkness. The reason: He wanted to catch the commuter train back to his home in New York City.²⁴ According to sports columnist Joe Williams, who called Hurst “the most colorful” of umpires, “Whenever he [Hurst] was assigned to Philadelphia he would always catch the train back to New York after the game. If the lure was particularly fascinating, as it was on the occasion when he was to have refereed a marathon race, he would cut the game short himself.”²⁵

Of course, these statements and stories could be apocryphal, as are so many tales of the diamond’s early days. However, a pattern seemed to emerge that fit perfectly Sir Timothy’s ministrations of the late afternoon of August 3. In the crafty arbiter’s mind he could make a call on Collins at second that affected not a whit the outcome of the game. In so doing he greatly increased his chances for a pleasant night in his cozy abode. When Collins protested and Hurst reacted by spitting at him, it was to be the umpire’s undoing.

On August 5 Ban Johnson indefinitely suspended Tim Hurst pending an investigation into his actions. In announcing the suspension, the league president stated that any final decision would await his receipt



During a Hall of Fame career that spanned 25 years and 2,826 games, Eddie Collins (shown here) had few disputes with umpires. His face-off with Tim Hurst on August 3, 1909, was the exception and not the rule.

of a report of the incident. It is said that neither Eddie Collins nor Connie Mack, who held Hurst in high esteem, ever wanted charges against Hurst.²⁶ The way was clear for Hurst to explain his actions. He never offered an explanation—perhaps because there was none plausible—taking the same road he took when Johnson asked him to explain why he struck Kid Elberfeld in May. Johnson liked Hurst very much, and recognized his ability and valuable service to his infant league. But Johnson could not abide by this sort of repeated conduct from an official. When questioned on August 16 about reports that Hurst was still on the active list, he replied, “Hurst was dropped from the American league [sic] staff immediately after I investigated the charges against him and found them to be true.”²⁷

Reports that Hurst’s unseemly deportment and seeming indifference in 1909 stemmed from an increasing weariness with umpiring were dispelled in 1910 when he returned to the minor leagues, umpiring in the Eastern League. That stint proved his last in baseball, although in 1914 he was mentioned as a candidate to umpire in the outlaw Federal League.²⁸ In the ensuing years from 1911 until his death at age 54 on June 4, 1915, reportedly from ptomaine poisoning following an attack of acute indigestion, he continued to referee boxing matches—many at Madison Square Garden. He also acted as manager and matchmaker of the Garden Athletic Club, and in his last years sold real estate in Far Rockaway, New York.²⁹

In 1946, before election of umpires to the Baseball Hall of Fame was permitted, Tim Hurst was recognized among some 39 managers, executives, sportswriters, and umpires named to the newly instituted Honor Rolls of Baseball. Hurst’s colleague and friend, Hall of Famer Billy Evans, would have seconded the nomination. According to Evans, “While Hurst hardly

measured up to Jack Sheridan, Hank O’Day, Tommy Connolly, or Bill Klem as to perfection, he had the implicit confidence of every player in the majors. They accepted his decisions with respect, firmly convinced that he called the plays as he saw them without fear or favor.”³⁰ No doubt Eddie Collins was of that mind as he approached second base in the eighth inning on August 3, 1909. Thus his uncharacteristic reaction when that confidence was shattered, as in turn was the illustrious career of an umpiring legend. What a shame if it all ended for Sir Timothy Hurst because were he to call Eddie Collins safe at second, he might just miss the 5:25 to Grand Central Terminal. ■

Notes

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The Delaware River Shipbuilding League, 1918

Jim Leeke

Baseball leagues flourished in American shipyards during World War I as legions of workers built warships and troop transports to safeguard the Atlantic sea lanes and carry men and materiel to Europe. Among the best of these circuits was the Delaware River Shipbuilding League of 1918. Centered in Philadelphia, it represented eight shipyards operating along the river in Delaware, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania:

- CHESTER SHIP** – Chester, Pennsylvania
- HARLAN & HOLLINGSWORTH** – Wilmington, Delaware
- HOG ISLAND** – Philadelphia
- MERCHANT SHIP** – Bristol, Pennsylvania
- NEW YORK SHIP** – Camden, New Jersey
- PUSEY & JONES** – Wilmington (replaced League Island Navy Yard after two games)
- SUN SHIP** – Chester, Pennsylvania
- TRAYLOR SHIP** – Cornwells, Pennsylvania

“The Delaware River Shipbuilding League is due for a successful season in its first year on the baseball diamond judging by the results of Saturday’s games,” the *Philadelphia Public Ledger* commented after opening day.¹

The newspaper also pointed out what it considered “a defect in one of the rules of the organization which is entirely too stringent.” A worker had to be on the job for 40 days before he was eligible to suit up for his shipyard team. The *Public Ledger* thought 10 days would have been wiser.

“For the opening any player should have been eligible up until Saturday,” it declared, “and in order to avoid disputes all men who were in uniform on Saturday should be declared eligible, especially so because of the shortness of the season.”² The stricter requirement remained in place, and would bedevil the league the rest of the season.

Only two of the four opening games drew sizeable crowds. The Traylor-Hog Island turnout was especially disappointing. Traylor had a “class infield, but... should hunt up an entire new outfield,” the *Public Ledger* opined. A shipyard official brushed aside any

such worries. “We are in this for the sport alone,” he said, “and if some other fellow gets Ty Cobb and (Grover Cleveland) Alexander, let him trot them out and, win or lose, we will be shouting just the same.”³

The Traylor man was perhaps clairvoyant. On May 13, the same day that his comments appeared, a Selective Service board in South Carolina notified Joe Jackson, of the champion Chicago White Sox, that it had reclassified his draft status. “Shoeless Joe” was suddenly set to join the next group to be called for military service, a situation that Jackson initially seemed to accept.

“Well, the old boy will be out there slugging the Dutchman pretty soon,” Jackson said in Philadelphia, where the White Sox had just played the Athletics. “And if I ever draw a bead on one of them birds, it’ll be all off with him.”⁴

The next morning, however, at the urging of his wife, Jackson instead reported for work as a painter at the Harlan yard in Wilmington, a subsidiary of mighty Bethlehem Steel. Shipyard workers, like those in other vital war industries, were usually exempt from military service. Although the outfielder was illiterate, the shipyard not only accepted Jackson, it immediately promoted him to painting inspector.

“If Jackson should stay at the shipyard as an employe [sic] he would be eligible to play in the Bethlehem Steel Baseball League as a member of the Wilmington team,” a wire service reported. “This organization has teams at Bethlehem, Lebanon and Steelton, Pa., Fall River, Mass., Wilmington, Del., and Sparrows Point, Md.”⁵

The Delaware River and Steel leagues both played their games on Saturdays, and Harlan had a team in each. Jackson suited up for Harlan’s Steel League nine, and appeared in his first game on June 1. Fans of the company’s Delaware River team would have to wait until the end of the season to see him.

Any big-league player who sought a shipyard job in 1918 heard abuse from many fans and sportswriters. A former St. Louis player serving in the Navy saw the phenomenon first hand in a shipyard game featuring



Charles "Chief" Bender's major league career was essentially over when he pitched for the Hog Island team. The Hog Island yard employed 35,000 workers at the time.

several ex-Giants. "Nothing was too mean to call them," he wrote, "and if they got a dollar for every time some one called them 'slackers' or 'trench-dodgers' they must have gotten round-shouldered carrying their money home."⁶

Jackson, especially, became a lightning rod for condemnation, but many people defended him. Former Chicago teammate Alfred "Fritz" von Kolnitz, a major in the wartime Army, insisted that Shoeless Joe had every right to hold a shipyard job. "During the draft period, I will venture, there were thousands of men walking the streets in civilian clothes with exemption papers in their pockets with far less claims than Joe," he later wrote to a sportswriter.⁷

The Delaware River League had about two dozen recent or retired big leaguers on its rosters, most of them journeyman players. Among the better-known players was former Athletics star Charles "Chief" Bender, whose time in the majors was over (although he would pitch one final inning for the White Sox in 1925). With Joe Jackson watching from the stands as a spectator, Bender made his league debut the second weekend of play, appearing on the road in relief for Hog Island. The enormous Hog Island yard employed 35,000 workers on the site of what is now the Philadelphia airport.

"'Chief' Bender has at last broken into the box score of the Delaware River Shipbuilders' League," the

Public Ledger reported. "He accepted the mound for the final three innings of the Harlan-Hog Island encounter at Wilmington, which the former captured by 6-4."⁸ Although later claimed on waivers by the Yankees, Bender didn't report to New York and would remain in the shipbuilding league until hurt in a car crash in August.

Despite having Bender and other experienced players, the Delaware River Shipbuilding League was still an industrial circuit. The hot club early in the season was Chester Ship, which played in nearby Upland on a field called White Hip. Chester fielded perhaps the river league's most colorful and diverse team, with one player who had once been under contract to the Browns, another to the Athletics, a pair of ex-minor leaguers from the New York State and North Carolina leagues, and a former player from Colby College. Its roster also included three Chinese ballplayers from Hawaii, who "put up a brand of base ball that Chester fans like to see."⁹

Widespread national criticism of shipbuilding leagues grew as the season progressed. New York Yankees manager Miller Huggins let loose a tirade in mid-May, after pitcher George Mogridge jumped the team for a shipyard job.

"A half dozen players on my club have been approached by men who presumably are conducting the welfare work for the Bethlehem Steel Company," Huggins charged, "and I have authoritative knowledge that players on virtually all the big league clubs who thus far have played on the Atlantic seaboard, have received offers similar to those made to my men." The outraged manager added that one Yankee "was offered more money for going to one of the Atlantic Coast shipbuilding yards to play baseball and learn a skilled trade than his American League baseball contract called for."¹⁰

The government looked into this and similar allegations, including one made by a US senator. Officials yanked at least two ballplayers from the so-called "paint and putty" leagues and sent them to an Army training camp on Long Island. Otherwise, little appeared amiss in the shipyard leagues. A vice president of the US Shipping Board Emergency Fleet Corporation, Howard Coonley, later announced that the number of ballplayers "camouflaging" as shipyard workers was actually negligible.

"The stories that all ball player workmen at \$500 a month have to do is punch a clock in the morning is false, says Coonley," *The Sporting News* reported. "He says 'with very few exceptions' everyone [sic] of them does a full day's work. Furthermore, he praises the efforts that have been made to make baseball the main

recreation for the ship yard workers and says an even more expansive sport program is being planned, to include soccer, football, trap shooting, and other activities.”¹¹

Significantly, directors of the New York shipyards voted to limit teams in their league to two ex-major leaguers apiece. “In the Philadelphia district there seems no limitation to the number of former major leaguers on a ball team, as there apparently are enough to go around,” *The Sporting News* tartly added.¹²

By the middle of June, as controversy still bubbled, Chester Ship led the Delaware River league with a 6–0 record. New York Ship was a game back with one loss. Although eligible to play, Shoeless Joe hadn’t yet taken the field for Harlan’s river club. “Manager [Fred] Gallagher, of Harlan-Bethlehem, of the Ship League, will find it necessary to requisition the services of Joe Jackson if the Wilmington aggregation is to stay in the running at all,” the *Public Ledger* commented. “They dropped to fourth place by losing to Hog Island, 4–3. It was the first game for Hog Island on its new grounds at Brill Park.”¹³

The following Saturday featured an important Chester-Harlan matchup. The *Public Ledger* expected “the largest crowd that ever witnessed a game in Wilmington,” and added that it was “almost a certainty that Joe Jackson and other big leaguers will appear.”

“I don’t care who they play. We are going to win,” Chester Manager Frank Miller confidently promised. Fred Gallagher, skipper of the Harlan nine, said that his club “must win (this) game or quit the league.”¹⁴

Chester took the highly anticipated contest, 3–0, in front of 5,000 fans, besting the former White Sox battery of Claude “Lefty” Williams and Byrd “Teddy” Lynn. Williams had won 17 games for Chicago in 1917 and six more early in 1918, and had unwisely speculated on what he would do to poor Chester, “but bragging doesn’t win games, and Williams soon found it out.”¹⁵ The league leaders plated all three runs in the third inning before chasing Williams in the sixth. Jackson, Williams’s former Chicago teammate, didn’t appear—and regardless of Gallagher’s bold statement, Harlan stayed in the league.

Chester finally lost a game on July 6, bowing 7–5 to New York Ship at Camden. The *Chester Times* acknowledged the loss, but devoted more space to describing Chief Bender leading Hog Island to a 6–3 win over Merchant Ship the same day. “Bender Does the Trick,” the headline read. “Chief Bender, doing the twirling for the Islanders, showed all of his old-time cunning, and had the Bristol boys at his mercy all during the game.”¹⁶



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS BAIN COLLECTION

Dan Griner had been a pitcher for the Cardinals and the Dodgers, but gave up two home runs to “Shoeless” Joe Jackson in the final game of the 1918 shipbuilding league playoffs.

Hog Island now trailed Chester by only half a game. “When Hog Island started the season it looked like anything but a ball team that played the opening contest against Traylor at Franklin Field, but hard work has molded together one of the best clubs hereabouts,” the *Public Ledger* declared. “Great interest is centered in next Saturday’s game between Hog Island and Chester.”¹⁷

More than 2,000 fans watched the thriller the following week at Upland. Ebullient headlines in the *Chester Times* told the tale: “Chester Wins Thrilling Game From Hog Island/Shipmakers Stage Wonderful Rallies, Tieing [sic] the Score in the Eleventh and Chasing the Winning Run Over in the Next Period—Long, Miller’s Southern League [sic] Heaver, Pitches Great Ball.”¹⁸

Chester’s record now stood at 9–1. “Chester Ship virtually won the pennant of the Delaware River Ship League by defeating Hog Island, 4 to 3,” the *Public Ledger* opined.¹⁹

Despite the wonderful game, the real excitement that week had centered on Red Sox pitcher George Herman Ruth. On the fourth of July, headlines on sports pages across the country declared that Ruth had jumped the Boston club to pitch for Chester. Boston management threatened injunctions, but teammates didn’t believe the news and said they expected to see the Babe back any day. His Red Sox pals were right. Ruth had stormed home to Baltimore after an argument with Manager Ed Barrow, but returned once tempers cooled.

Chester Manager Frank Miller later conceded that he had received a wire from Ruth, but said the pitcher had asked only to play for his team on the holiday, and hadn't inquired about a job in the shipyard.

"Ruth doesn't even know I am managing the Chester team," Miller insisted. "He probably thinks I am still running the Upland club, which was abandoned because of the war. The Chester Shipbuilding Company is not financing the ball club. It was simply organized by the employees and has to be self-supporting."²⁰

Draft calls and enlistments continued depleting big-league rosters as the summer wore on. A government "work or fight" order covering male workers nationwide added to the woes. Shipyard teams naturally attracted many worried ballplayers. Hog Island Manager Johnny Castle, who'd had a cup of coffee with the Phillies in 1910, stoutly defended his team's ex-big leaguers.

"If any new men wish to enter this work they can start at about \$35 a week and they will earn every cent they get," Castle said. "If they show any unusual ability they will receive more. Not one cent extra will be paid to ball players. Hans Lobert and Chief Bender are on the job from morning until night and play ball on their off days. That's how things are run at Hog Island. I don't know anything about the other yards."²¹

Shipyard workers and Philadelphia-area fans alike seemed to accept such arguments. The Delaware River league drew good crowds as the summer waned.

"Shipyard baseball is a very exciting branch of our great national outdoor sport," wrote Robert W. Maxwell, the *Public Ledger* sports editor. "It is beginning to cut a wide swath in the sporting world, and if the big leagues take the count these independent teams will step in and furnish the fans some real fun and amusement. It is a different kind of baseball, but the spectators are handed more thrills."

Maxwell described the rural Upland field, where 3,500 fans could watch Chester play Harlan, as "one of the most picturesque spots we have ever seen... On that field you can see more exciting baseball in one afternoon than you can witness in a modern park in a month."²²

This was a hardscrabble shipyard league in wartime, however, and hardly a dreamy idyll. Several teams played their home games not in pastoral perfection, but within the confines of their own clanging shipyards. An exhibition game between Chester and



George Mogridge defected in mid-May from the New York Yankees to the shipbuilding league, prompting a tirade from manager Miller Huggins against the aggressive recruiting. According to Huggins, one of his players "was offered more money... than his American League baseball contract called for."

Sun Ship at the latter's new athletic field on a raw, rainy Memorial Day provided a perfect example.

"On all four sides of the field are tents pitched for the shelter of a company of soldiers who are training and on guard duty at the plant," the *Chester Times* reported. "The sight was an attraction in itself and the boys went through their drills while the game was in progress. Another singular incident was the launching of a minesweeper by the Sun Company. The boat glided into the Delaware while the game was ending and no one knew anything of the launching."²³ (Later in the season, fans also saw the launching of a cargo ship during a game at the Harlan yard in Wilmington.)

Chester had the pennant nearly sewn up in late July. "Frank Miller and his crowd of Chester clouters have captured the championship of the Delaware River Ship League. They visited Bristol on Saturday and had a slugfest at the expense of Merchants," the *Public Ledger* reported—somewhat prematurely, as it turned out.²⁴

Questions about player eligibility still beset the league. A week after the *Public Ledger* item appeared, Chester, Merchant, and Sun all were forced to forfeit a game apiece, with two more games still under protest. "The managers accepted the rulings gracefully, claiming they did so in ignorance, believing the men protested had fulfilled all the league qualifications,"



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS BAIN COLLECTION

Joe Jackson went to work as a painter at a subsidiary of Bethlehem Steel and suited up for his first game Harlan's Steel League on June 1.

the *Chester Times* explained.²⁵ The uncertainty persisted far into August. "DELAWARE RIVER SHIP TITLE STILL UP IN AIR ON PLAYERS' ELIGIBILITY," the *Public Ledger* headlined.

"The pennant in the Delaware River Shipyard Baseball League will not be awarded until the eligibility status of a number of players under question has been further investigated," said Edgar S. McKaig, league secretary and a member of the Emergency Fleet Corporation.²⁶ The season ended with Chester, Harlan, and Hog Island all even.

"TRIPLE TIE IN SHIPYARD LEAGUE WILL BE BROKEN BY END OF THE WEEK," the *Public Ledger* announced.²⁷

The tie wasn't broken on the diamond, but rather in corporate meeting rooms. An eligibility committee issued a ruling on August 22, taking victories away from both Chester and Hog Island. As a result, the Chester club plummeted from atop the standings with a record of 12-2 to fourth place at 8-6. Harlan was suddenly tied with New York Ship, both with revised 11-3 records.

"CHESTER LOSES TO 'OFFICIALS,'" blared the *Chester Times*. "There is no denying but Chester has

the best team," the paper grouched. "It is unfortunate that a league of this kind should have fielded such an incompetent set of officials who might do well in deciding a game of ceckers, [sic] but are way off in baseball."²⁸

The league arranged a one-game Harlan-New York playoff, set for noon Wednesday, August 28. The Strawbridge & Clothier Athletic Field at 63rd and Walnut Streets in Philadelphia provided the neutral site.

Harlan's other baseball team meanwhile had finished third in the Steel League following a 19-game schedule. Joe Jackson, who had led the Bethlehem league with a .393 batting average, now at last joined Harlan's Delaware River lineup. Former Washington Nationals Patsy Gharrity and George Dumont also made the switch with him.

"Just what the eligibility rules of the Shipyard League are we do not know," wrote *Philadelphia Inquirer* sportswriter Edgar Wolfe (under the pseudonym Jim Nasium), "but Chester must have committed murder if they were found guilty enough to have their games thrown out, while the acts of Harlan in reinforcing its team with players from another league solely for the decisive championship contest can be considered innocent."²⁹

Harlan easily won the playoff game, 5-0. Jackson played center field, went one for three at the plate, walked once, and scored a run. "With Joe Jackson the Wilmington Bunch Grabs Play-off," the *Chester Times* headlined.³⁰ Still resenting the technical ruling that had cost Chester the pennant, the newspaper said little else about Shoeless Joe's very belated league debut.

The playoff victory next sent Harlan into a best-of-five series for the championship of Atlantic Coast shipyards. The new opponent was Standard Shipbuilding of Staten Island, which had won the New York Shipyard League pennant. Jackson again was in the Wilmington lineup for the opener September 7 at the Phillies' ballpark, the Baker Bowl. Standard led the game 2-1 entering the ninth inning.

"The Harlans looked like a beaten team until Jackson, who is suffering with an injured right foot, took Dumont's place at bat in the ninth," the *New York Sun* reported.³¹ Shoeless Joe "lammed out a hard drive down the first base line for a single," the *Inquirer* added. "Jackson could have easily made a two-bagger out of the hit if it had not been for his injured foot, as it was all he could do to reach first."³² The single started a rally that brought Harlan a 3-2 victory.

The series shifted north to the Polo Grounds the following day. In a steady drizzle, and with Jackson out of the line-up, the old Chicago battery of Williams

and Lynn held Standard scoreless before 4,000 fans. Two first-inning runs held up for Harlan's 2–0 victory.

The Wilmington team went for the sweep back in Philadelphia on September 14. Jackson returned to the Harlan lineup before 4,500 fans, doubled, and homered twice off former Cardinal and Dodger pitcher Dan Griner. "Shoeless Joe was a whole show in himself," the *Public Ledger* marveled.³³

"When Jackson hit his second home run, which virtually clinched the game and series for Harlan, the Wilmington fans went money mad and showered him with greenbacks," the *New York Sun* added. "For more than five minutes he was kept busy walking to the boxes and pulling in bills. After he had his fist full he walked over to a box directly behind home plate and handed them to his wife."³⁴

"Joe was not a bit backward about accepting the financial reward and he made a tour of the boxes collecting everything handed out," reported the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, which put the total windfall at \$60.³⁵

The 4–0, two-hit victory by Williams gave Harlan & Hollingsworth the Atlantic Coast Shipyard championship. With it came the Coxe Trophy, a 30-inch-high silver loving cup donated by William G. Coxe of the Emergency Fleet Corporation. This final, stirring game was also the brightest moment in the league's brief history.

The First World War ended with the armistice on November 11. Many shipyards downsized or closed by the following spring. The Delaware River Shipbuilding League briefly fielded six amateur teams before folding in 1919. Shoeless Joe Jackson and Lefty Williams both returned to Charles Comiskey's big-league club in Chicago, where their names would be forever tarred by the Black Sox scandal. ■

Notes

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5. "Joe Jackson to Be Shipbuilder; Quits White Sox," *Indianapolis Star*, May 14, 1918.
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7. "Major Kolnitz Former Player Defends Jackson," *New Castle (Pennsylvania) News*, February 6, 1919.
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24. "'Little League' Ball May Soon Prove the Center Attraction," *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, July 22, 1918.
25. "Chester Loses Protest Game," *Chester Times*, July 25, 1918.
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27. Robert W. Maxwell, "Triple Tie in Shipyard League Will Be Broken by End of the Week," *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, August 16, 1918.
28. "Chester Loses to 'Officials,'" *Chester Times*, August 23, 1918.
29. "Harlan Team Is Ship Yard Champ," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 29, 1918.
30. "Harlan Trims New York Ship," *Chester Times*, August 29, 1918.
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Harry Passon

Philadelphia Baseball Entrepreneur

Rebecca T. Alpert

Semi-professional baseball, black and white, flourished in Philadelphia in the first half of the twentieth century. Harry Passon (1897–1954), a Jewish owner of Philadelphia’s leading sporting goods store, played a strategic role in organizing and promoting it. In his youth, Passon played first base for a variety of local baseball teams and was a well-respected basketball player for the renowned South Philadelphia Hebrew Association team (SPHAS). He also coached evening school basketball at the University of Pennsylvania as well as basketball, baseball, and football in the Army.¹ Newspaper reports described him as “the well-known local all-around athlete.”² However, after World War I his interests turned to the business side of sports. Along with Ed Gottlieb, his childhood friend, teammate, and eventual business associate, Passon was responsible for making Philadelphia a leading center for semi-professional sports, especially baseball. This essay will examine Passon’s experience in and contribution to the segregated world of black baseball in Philadelphia.

Passon’s involvement in sports management began when he, Gottlieb, and Hughie Black, founders and stars of the basketball (and baseball) SPHAS, opened PGB Sporting Goods in 1920. They reported having done so because they wanted better uniforms for their teams than the sponsoring organization would provide.³ Passon saw the financial and social benefits of supplying good-looking uniforms and high-quality equipment to local teams. Running and promoting the sporting goods store became his central focus. Before long Passon bought out Gottlieb and Black and brought his younger brothers in to help him run the business.⁴ Passon’s Sporting Goods, located at 507 Market Street, was the hub of the Philadelphia semi-professional sports world for decades. Gottlieb maintained offices for his own sports promotion enterprise in the building through the mid-1940s. Passon’s Sporting Goods was the home base of the Passon Athletic Association, a member of the Amateur Athletic Union. The Union sponsored all the Passon Clubs (baseball, basketball, boxing, track and field, and soccer).⁵ The store also

housed a booking service and served as a place where managers, players, and umpires came to meet and find one another to talk sports, purchase equipment, make deals, and schedule contests. Passon was appointed State Commissioner of semi-professional baseball in 1936, organizing the tournament that selected the team that would represent Pennsylvania in Ray Dumont’s National Baseball Congress Tournament in Wichita. Passon also maintained and rented out Passon Field at 48th and Spruce Streets. He was among the first baseball entrepreneurs to install lights for evening games, and he played a key role in challenging Pennsylvania’s Blue Laws that were finally overturned in 1934. He also organized semi-pro leagues and owned several baseball teams, both white (Passon’s Athletic Club) and black (the Bacharach Giants).

Passon had a complicated relationship with the black teams he owned, operated, and scheduled. Beginning in the 1920s, African Americans ran most black teams—it had become a mark of racial pride. White ownership became a point of contention between the newly-developing leadership of the Negro Leagues, Rube Foster and Ed Bolden. The best team in Philadelphia in that era, the Hilldale Daisies, was the project of Bolden, a middle-class black man who worked for the Post Office. Although Bolden also identified himself as a “race man,” he understood that in order to finance his team, he would need the support of powerful whites who had access not only to capital but to playing fields and other teams to play. Foster also relied on white financing, but was less public about it. As organizer of the Eastern Colored League, Bolden had made peace while working with Nat Strong, the man who controlled black baseball in New York City. Passon became acquainted with Bolden through the world of semi-professional baseball in Philadelphia, and the Daisies were among Passon’s first clients in the sporting goods store. When Bolden was having difficulties keeping Hilldale afloat he initially turned to Passon for help and support. But when Bolden’s efforts did not make it off the ground, Passon started his own team, the Bacharach Giants.

Bolden then turned instead to Passon's friend and rival, Ed Gottlieb, who became Bolden's silent partner with his newly organized team, the Philadelphia Stars.

As early as 1923, when Passon was in his mid-twenties, he was identified in the black press as the manager of two local black baseball teams, the Texas Eagles and Philadelphia Giants.^{6,7} As many athletes played baseball in the summer and basketball in the winter, most of Passon's connections derived from his experiences in the basketball world. Apart from his work with the SPHAS, he also coached the Panthers, a black basketball team that often practiced with the SPHAS.⁸ A few years later, Passon was no longer associated with the SPHAS, but began to operate his own white team in the American Basketball League. Passon became the league's leading scorer in addition to managing the team.⁹

Passon's business acumen developed and he decided it would be a good investment to become the proprietor of a baseball field as well. By 1929, he had taken over the popular field at the northwest corner of 48th and Spruce Streets in West Philadelphia and renamed it Passon Field. Formerly called Lit Brothers Field and Elks Field, the grounds were in need of improvements. By May, Passon had added 1,500 new seats in hopes of making the location an even more popular attraction for black and white audiences. With good access to public transportation and in the midst of a middle-class white neighborhood with a very small African American population, this field had the potential to provide Passon with a regular source of income, although he only rented the land. Making sure the arena was popularly known as Passon Field also created another opportunity to advertise the brand that was becoming a household word in the Philadelphia sports community.

From the opening of the 1929 season Passon used the field as a location from which to challenge the Blue Laws, scheduling his (white) Passon Athletic Club for Sunday games. The Passon Club, managed by his associate Malcolm McGowan, was playing against a black team, the Broncos, managed by the well-known Negro League player Louis Santop. Both managers were arrested and, oddly, charged with disorderly conduct.¹⁰ Passon testified in court to how peaceful the game was. Passon repeatedly challenged the blue laws in order to, as he said, "find out just where amateur baseball stands in Philadelphia." He resented the fact that other sports (like miniature golf) were not shut down, but only subject to "summons and fine."¹¹

Before the 1930 season commenced Ed Bolden sought Passon's help. Bolden assumed that the collapse



Harry Passon, the Jewish owner of a sporting goods store, played a strategic role in promoting both black and white semi-pro baseball in Philadelphia.

of the American Negro League (a league organized in 1929 from teams that survived the collapse of Bolden's Eastern Colored League the year before), coupled with the stock market crash, meant the end of the Hilldale team. Planning to start a new club in Philadelphia, he did not renew the lease on the ballpark in Darby, the suburb where the team had played for many years, and shipped the team's equipment to Passon Field. It was rumored that Passon would be financing a new Hilldale team that Bolden would be organizing.¹² Three members of the old Hilldale Corporation blocked Bolden from dissolving the club and secured themselves a new lease to continue to operate the original club in Darby. Bolden's plan to develop a new team with Passon did not come to pass, although rumors continued to surface about Bolden organizing a new team, operated by former star John Henry "Pop" Lloyd and sponsored by "the Passon interests" in the winter of 1931.¹³

Instead, Passon went out on his own and began to organize an independent black team. Passon did not use his own name for the black team. Rather, he appropriated the name of the Bacharach Giants, an old Eastern Colored League team from Jacksonville, Florida, that had been playing in Atlantic City until the collapse of the American Negro League. The Giants had been a successful franchise but, like other teams, were undone by the Crash and played their last games in 1929 to meager attendance. Ironically, the Bacharachs were named after another white Jew, Atlantic City mayor Harry Bacharach. Bacharach himself was supportive of the team, but had no official affiliation with it. Passon's Bacharachs would be based in

Philadelphia, and play at Passon Field on Monday evenings, where Passon had installed lights to his refurbished field. The team planned to travel on Wednesdays and Saturdays. To assemble the Bacharach team, Passon drew on many players who had been successful with other teams, including Hilldale and the St. Louis Stars. Otto Briggs, who was close to Bolden, managed them. Former stars “Sleepy” Joe Lewis also signed on to play for the team, as did Turkey Stearns, Jesse “Nip” Winters, Pop Lloyd, and Obie Lackey.¹⁴ The Bacharachs played well against highly-skilled opponents like the Pittsburgh Crawfords, Homestead Grays, New York Black Yankees, Hilldale, and the Lincoln Giants. Rumors circulated in the black press about the possibility of a new league forming, or at the very least a round-robin tournament to determine a champion, although in 1932 the teams continued to play independently.¹⁵

In 1933, as interest in the Bacharachs grew, Passon made improvements to the field, adding a grandstand, clubhouse, and a more sophisticated lighting system.¹⁶ Ed Bolden, meanwhile, started a new independent black team, the Philadelphia Stars. Instead of working with Passon, Bolden’s co-owner was Ed Gottlieb. Bolden and Gottlieb would own the Stars together, with Gottlieb remaining the financial power and silent partner, until Bolden’s death in 1950 when Gottlieb took control. For the 1933 season, the Stars played at Passon Field. The Bacharachs and Stars, the top two black teams in the area, were billed as rivals.¹⁷ In addition to games against each other, both teams played against Passon’s own white team, on which at least one of the Passon brothers, probably Chickie, continued to play first base.¹⁸ They also battled Gottlieb’s Jewish team, the SPHAS, as well as popular traveling teams that Gottlieb booked, like the House of David.¹⁹ The black press built up the rivalry, probably at Gottlieb’s urging, to encourage fan interest.²⁰

Although Passon’s teams did well and received a fair amount of media attention, he was not sure that he wanted to continue running the Bacharachs. He told Rollo Wilson that independent co-plan baseball was causing problems and, if he were to continue with the Bacharachs, he would want to pay the players on salary and be part of a league. The problem was that some of the players were taking advantage of the access to goods in his store. He told a reporter:

They came into my sports goods store, got radios, clothing and other articles and never paid for them. Not all of the men did this, understand, but some of them did, and I am stuck for plenty.

I have had my experience in that line and I am through.²¹

In 1934, however, things changed for the better on several counts. First, due to Passon’s earlier efforts and the influence of Connie Mack, the Pennsylvania legislature opened the Sunday blue laws to the possibility of playing games on Sunday afternoons and charging admission without fear of arrest or having to pay bribes.²² Second, a new league was being formed.

Passon was recruited by sportswriter and entrepreneur Cumberland Posey to join Gus Greenlee’s newly established National Negro Association of Baseball Clubs (that would later become the Negro National League). The Bacharachs applied for league membership and Passon attended several organizational meetings during the winter. Nevertheless, the Bacharachs were denied membership because, as the *Pittsburgh Courier* reported, Stars owners Bolden and Gottlieb refused to join if the Bacharachs were included. Bolden said that he made this move against Passon because he did not believe that the city could support two teams. In response to the opposition from his rivals, Passon withdrew his request for full membership. To the press he expressed surprise, not anger. Randy Dixon reported that he was also shocked by Bolden’s move and Passon’s acquiescence, as Passon appeared to be prepared to post forfeits and assume obligations of membership. Cum Posey, who was both an owner and a columnist for the *Courier*, expressed his disappointment with the decision. In his column, he argued that as long as the clubs did not play in Philadelphia on the same date, the Bacharachs—who could draw on the road—would be an important attraction for the league.²³

Passon, the black press, and other team owners like Cum Posey had difficulty understanding Bolden’s opposition. They did not agree with the assessment that Philadelphia could not support two league teams. It is unlikely that Bolden worried about attracting fans, because he committed to having the Stars play at Passon Field, and convinced Passon to make more improvements to the field. Passon did so, adding another 4,000 seats. The Stars played their weekend home games there for the season as did the Bacharachs. Bolden’s opposition may have stemmed from his anger at Passon for starting his own team rather than working with Bolden. Bolden would also have been unhappy had the Stars not been the top Philadelphia team, and having the Bacharachs in the league could have threatened the Stars’ status. It is also possible that Gottlieb’s rivalry with Passon contributed to the problem. Bolden

chose Gottlieb, not Passon, as the white man he would work with. The relationship among the three was complex.²⁴ The Bacharachs were subsequently accepted to associate membership, which meant they would play games against league teams and would be protected against being raided for players (insofar as the league could control its members) in exchange for a 50 percent franchise fee.²⁵

The Stars began their season in the new league at Passon Field against the Newark Dodgers. Articles about the event boasted about the refurbished stadium with the additional seating. An officer of the Pennsylvania State Athletic Commission threw out the first ball and the Octavio Catto Band entertained.²⁶ Coverage in the black press noted that fans were pleased by the new field arrangements and praised Passon for providing them.²⁷ The Bacharachs had a strong first-half season as associate members. Former Hilldale star Otto Briggs was managing and the team won 22 of its first 27 games. Sportswriters spread rumors that Passon was trying to obtain the services of Satchel Paige.²⁸ The “big hearted” Passon won the admiration of the black press for how he handled himself in the context of the business of black baseball. Rollo Wilson, who was both a sportswriter and the commissioner of the league, devoted an entire column to praising Passon’s “sportsmanship” and “intestinal fortitude.” Wilson appreciated how Passon handled his players who “overdrew accounts, went into his store and bought stuff and didn’t pay and didn’t deliver baseball of which they were capable.” And many of them didn’t play well and left at the end of the 1933 season, making it difficult for Passon to put together a team for the following season. Yet Passon paid salaries, met obligations, and vowed to put together a better club in 1934.²⁹ Based on their first-half performance, Passon’s team, despite Bolden’s objections, was awarded full membership in July 1934. At that league meeting, the team was represented by Harry’s brother Chickie, Otto Briggs, and Malcolm McGowan, Passon’s chief assistant and general manager.³⁰

Unfortunately for Passon, these successes were short-lived. The Bacharachs did not do as well in the second half of the season, compiling a record of 3–11 by mid-August.³¹ And several episodes of violence at Passon Field marred the rest of the season. In one case, a player assaulted an umpire.³² Later that season a detective was injured arresting men accused of beating a park attendant. The newspaper noted complaints all season about a gang of alleged “hoodlums” who waited in left field and kept the balls knocked out of the park. Passon had retained a man named Henry

Taylor to retrieve the balls. One night the detective caught the men as they were beating up Taylor.³³ The neighbors raised concerns about safety, and it was clear that Passon did not have the situation under control. In addition, visiting teams complained that Passon had set the admission price too low. He raised the fees when the league played some of the “World’s Colored Championship Series” there in September.³⁴ But Bolden and the Stars would move their “home” games to the nearby Penmar Field at 44th and Parkside the following year. The park had a larger seating capacity and was under Gottlieb’s control.

The following January when the league owners met, Passon was ready to rejoin. He and Malcolm McGowan, along with new manager Phil Cockrell, another former Hilldale player, represented the Bacharachs.³⁵ Although Passon was once again praised in the national black press for being among those owners who “caught the vision and pledged unstinted efforts toward making a permanent and abiding organization for Negro baseball,” Passon had decided to quit.³⁶ He offered to sell the franchise for \$400, which was the amount that he had advanced in player contracts. One of the owners suggested that it really wasn’t necessary for the other owners to make good on those contracts and suggested that they “just go on and sign them up anyway.” Passon went away disappointed with the way the league owners treated him and his players.³⁷ Passon continued to field the Bacharachs as an independent semi-pro team that still played against (and served as a source of young players for) the Stars and other league teams. Passon continued his association with the league in another way—his sporting goods store supplied equipment to the league and the Worth ball that he sold remained the official ball of the National Association in 1935 and 1936.³⁸

Nineteen thirty-five was also a tumultuous year in Harry’s personal life as his wife, Bessie Greenbaum, died at 34, leaving Harry alone with a young daughter. Nonetheless, he took on a new project, turning his attention to the white, semi-professional game as the Pennsylvania Commissioner in 1936. Under his leadership, Pennsylvania became the first state to organize championship games for entry into Ray Hap Dumont’s national showcase for semi-pro teams, the National Baseball Congress in Wichita.³⁹ Passon also sponsored international soccer matches, welcoming the Maccabee Tel Aviv F.C. soccer team in 1936 from Palestine to play against his own Passon soccer team.⁴⁰

Passon Field was at the center of another controversy in 1937 when Joe Louis brought his “Brown Bombers” softball team to play against a white Philly



Ed Bolden, whose Hilldale Daisies were among Passon's earliest customers, would later become a rival when Passon started the Bacharach Giants.

All-Star team that Passon organized. A crowd estimated at 30,000 wanted to see the contest—but the park only seated 4,000. As people were entering, the grandstand collapsed. Five people were hurt in the crush. The white press reported they were “all Negroes,” although the crowd was integrated. The game was moved to another time and location.⁴¹

Passon continued to have his teams, the black Bacharachs and the white Passon team (often called the “storeboys”), play at Passon Field through the 1930s. He also sponsored football, soccer, and tennis at the location. By 1937 Tom Dixon, a former Negro Leagues player and Passon's employee in the sporting goods store, was managing the Bacharachs. Along with Malcolm McGowan, Dixon has been credited with bringing the young Roy Campanella into professional baseball. The Bacharachs would be the first team he played for, and they⁴² continued to serve as a “feeder” team for other Negro League teams through the mid-1940s, although they no longer played at Passon Field.

Unfortunately, pressures in Harry's life continued to be difficult for him, and family members reported that Harry was depressed and had threatened suicide. In February 1954 he was found dead in the ammunition vault of his store, a gun at his feet from which one bullet had been fired.⁴³ Although he could not compete with Ed Bolden or Ed Gottlieb for prominence or power, Harry Passon was an important part of what made black baseball in Philadelphia strong and prosperous for many years—and his store and field left an important legacy in Philadelphia baseball history. ■

Notes

1. “Passon Coaching Evening School,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 29, 1918.
2. “Plenty of Activity on Independent Baseball Fields,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 11, 1918; “Harry Passon to Coach Camp Jackson Athletes,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 12, 1918, 12.
3. Rich Westcott, *The Mogul: Eddie Gottlieb, Philadelphia Sports Legend and Pro Basketball Pioneer* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), 26.
4. According to Passon's niece's recollection, funding came from Passon's father-in-law, Benjamin Greenbaum. (He was also Passon's brother Sam's father-in-law). They brought their brothers Henry (Chickie), Morris, and Nat into the business. Posted at ancestry.com, 19 December 2010 <http://boards.ancestry.com/surnames.passon/10.3/mb.ashx>. Passon's sister Gertrude [Silverman] and her husband also worked in the store. Harry's other sister, Bertha, became a pharmacist, and other brother Morris later became an attorney. Sam left the sporting goods store in the 1950s and opened his own electronics business. The store moved from the Market Street location in 1953 when Philadelphia purchased the property to create a site for the Liberty Bell and relocated to 733 Arch Street, relocating to 1028 Arch in 1960 and remaining there through the 1970s. The brothers began a mail-order business that they subsequently sold. It remains in business to this day. (Bonnie Silverman, personal communication, September 30, 2012; Barbara Joyce-Jones, telephone conversation, October 6, 2012; “Building at 731 Arch is Sold to Stationers,” *Evening Bulletin*, February 9, 1960.)
5. “Passon Club in A.A.U.,” *Evening Bulletin*, March 4, 1932.
6. “Texas Eagles are Setting a Dizzy Pace,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, August 2, 1924.
7. W. Rollo Wilson, “Eastern Snapshots,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, June 27, 1925.
8. “Panther Five to be Formidable Foe This Season,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, October 4, 1924.
9. “Borgeman Threatens Goal-Tossing Leader,” *Washington Post*, March 10, 1927.
10. “Broncos Leading By One Run When Police Break Up Game,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, September 5, 1929.
11. “Three Sentenced for Sunday Ball Game in Philly,” *Syracuse Herald*, August 5, 1930; “3 Men Get 30 Days for Sunday Ball,” *Evening Bulletin*, August 4, 1930.
12. Neil Lanctot, *Fair Dealing and Clean Playing: The Hilldale Club and the Development of Black Professional Baseball, 1910–1932* (Jefferson, NC, McFarland and Co., 1994), 203. See also *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 12, 1930; April 19, 1930.
13. Randy Dixon, “Money Man Aligns with Hilldale Team,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, February 26, 1931.
14. *Evening Bulletin*, June 12, 1931; W. Rollo Wilson, “Sports Shots,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, April 9, 1932; no author, “The Bacharach Giants” *Colored Baseball and Sports Monthly* in Art Carter Files, box 12, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.
15. Dick Sun, “Negro World Series Gets Underway,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, September 10, 1931; W. Rollo Wilson, “Sports Shots,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 1, 1931; September 12, 1931 and Randy Dixon, “Randy Says,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, August 20, 1931.

16. "Quaker Team to Open Soon," *New York Amsterdam News*, April 5, 1933.
17. "Bolden's Stars and Bacharach's Start Five Game Series," *Philadelphia Tribune*, June 22, 1933.
18. "Negro Clubs to Oppose Passon '9'" *Philadelphia Tribune*, July 13, 1933.
19. "Bolden's Nine Trims Bearded Clan by 5 to 1," *Chicago Defender*, May 13, 1933; "Passon Outfit Set to Check Bolden's Stars," *Philadelphia Tribune*, July 6, 1933.
20. "Boldenmen at Passon's Wed." *Philadelphia Tribune*, August 17, 1933; "Bacharach and Boldenmen Settle Dispute Saturday," *Philadelphia Tribune*, August 24, 1933; "Passon Nine to Meet Bacharach and Boldenmen," *Philadelphia Tribune*, August 31, 1933.
21. Rollo Wilson, "Sports Shots," *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 9, 1933.
22. See David Jordan, "Another Quaker City Champion: The 1934 Philadelphia Stars" *Black Ball*, 5:1 (Spring 2012), 24–32.
23. "Baseball Owners En Route to Philly Pow Wow," *Pittsburgh Courier*, February 10, 1934; Randy Dixon, "Baseball Magnates Convene in Parlay Here," *Philadelphia Tribune*, February 15, 1934; "Blacksox, Grays Not Included," *Pittsburgh Courier*, February 17, 1934; Cum Posey, "Posey's Pointed Paragraphs," *Pittsburgh Courier*, March 3, 1934.
24. Although the newspapers attribute the concerns to Bolden, it is hard to imagine that Gottlieb was not somehow involved. The meetings began at Passon's Sporting Goods Store (and Gottlieb's office) but were moved to the Citizens Republican Club at 25th and Lombard. Gottlieb, not Passon, appears in the photo that was taken of the owners at the meetings. "Moguls 'Talk Shop' in Baseball Pow-Wow," *Pittsburgh Courier*, February 24, 1934.
25. "Bolden's Team to Play All Games at New Passon Field," *Chicago Defender*, March 24, 1934.
26. Advertisement, *Philadelphia Tribune*, May 10, 1934.
27. W. Rollo Wilson, "Sports Shots," *Pittsburgh Courier*, May 19, 1934.
28. "Otto Briggs Revamping Bacharach's," *Philadelphia Tribune*, June 14, 1934.
29. W. Rollo Wilson, "Sport Shots," *Pittsburgh Courier*, October 13, 1934.
30. "Bees and Black Sox Join National League," *Philadelphia Tribune*, July 5, 1934.
31. "Philly Drubs Yanks," *Chicago Defender*, August 11, 1934.
32. "Players Pay for Offenses," *Pittsburgh Courier*, August 4, 1934.
33. "Crack Detective is Hurt Nabbing Man," *Afro-American*, August 18, 1934.
34. "Display Ad," *Philadelphia Tribune*, September 20, 1934.
35. G. Fleming, "Men Admit Two New Members," *Afro-American*, January 19, 1935.
36. Chester Washington, "Sez Ches," *Pittsburgh Courier*, March 9, 1935.
37. William Jones, "Sidelights on League Meeting," *Afro-American*, March 16, 1935; "Oust Wilson as Baseball Czar," *Philadelphia Tribune*, March 14, 1935.
38. "League Will Open," *Philadelphia Tribune*, March 26 1936.
39. "National 1936 Championship," *The Sporting News*, April 23, 1936.
40. Display Ad, *Jewish Exponent*, October 30, 1936.
41. "14 Hurt in Crash of 2 Grandstands," *Evening Bulletin*, September 21, 1937; "Joe Louis in Game at Stadium Today," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 21, 1937; "Joe Louis Mobb'd by Crowd of 30,000," *Pittsburgh Courier*, September 25, 1937.
42. See Neil Lanctot, *Campy: The Two Lives of Roy Campanella* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011).
43. "Harry Passon is Found Dead," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 17, 1954. The story of Passon's death was front page news in the daily paper. He was described as a former sports star, founder of the SPHAS, a leader in organizing sandlot sports, co-owner of Passon Sports Company, and as active in Jewish charities. An obituary that did not mention the suspicion of suicide appeared in the *Jewish Exponent*. Passon had become involved in the Jewish community, sponsoring the Maccabiah soccer team and becoming a leading contributor to the Jewish Theological Seminary and Germantown Jewish Center in Mt. Airy where he resided with his second wife, Tillie (he remarried in 1938) and their two daughters from prior marriages, Dorothy and Marcie. "Harry Passon," *Jewish Exponent*, February 26, 1954.



The Real Jimmie Foxx

Bill Jenkinson

“You just can’t imagine how far he could hit a baseball.” Ted Williams spoke those words to me in a 1986 interview in Winter Haven, Florida. He was talking about his former friend and teammate, Jimmie Foxx. Ted’s reflection created an unforgettable image. Yet, it wasn’t what Williams said that made it so. It was how he said it...almost like a prayer whispered in a church. Teddy Ballgame was a grounded man, not given to hyperbole or casual sentimentality. But on the topic of Jimmie Foxx, he was like a child recollecting the deeds of a beloved older brother.

Later in the same conversation, Williams became teary-eyed and unashamedly emotional as he remembered Foxx, the man. Pausing to compose himself, he settled on the only words he could utter in that difficult moment: “He was a real peach of a guy.” Of course, the story of Jimmie Foxx is bitter-sweet, and that was on Ted’s mind as he spoke. He was there when Jimmie was still in his prime as one of baseball’s greatest sluggers. He was there when Foxx’s career diminished prematurely as he battled injury and alcohol. And Williams was well aware of how Jimmie Foxx struggled with life after baseball, and ultimately died before his time. So, who was James Emory Foxx, and how should he be perceived by fans in the twenty-first century?

It began in 1907, when Jimmie was born in the rural setting of Maryland’s Eastern Shore. It is a place which remains today much as it was then: rolling farmlands where folks live a simpler, unadorned way of life. By 1924, at age 16, Foxx’s combination of good genes, strenuous farm work, and rigorous athletic competition had created a physical prodigy. Playing minor league ball that same year for iconic fellow Maryland native Frank “Home Run” Baker, Foxx’s Herculean abilities were quickly recognized. Before that first professional season ended, Jimmie signed with the Philadelphia Athletics to begin life as a major leaguer. And, although he traveled far while earning fame and fortune over the next two decades, his persona never really changed.

Foxx started as a catcher, but his legendary manager, Connie Mack, acquired Mickey Cochrane the same year. Mickey was four-and-a half years older and

more experienced than Jimmie, so “Black Mike” had the inside track on that position. Cochrane proved his worth behind the plate, ultimately earning his place in Cooperstown. Yet, this initial change, combined with Foxx’s athletic virtuosity, caused young Jimmie to become somewhat of a defensive gypsy, moving from position to position throughout his career.

In his first few seasons, Jimmie Foxx mostly sat on the bench beside Mack, who, recognizing his potential as well as his vulnerability, groomed him cautiously. In 1928, believing his gifted protégé was ready, Mack allowed Foxx to play in 118 games (mostly at third base) for the fast-rising Athletics. In 1929, Connie turned him loose and Jimmie Foxx, age 21, became a star first baseman.

He was built like a Greek god with bulging biceps and sculpted physique. His rounded face was marked by handsome features set off by a full head of brown hair and bright blue eyes. His joy was infectious, hustling on the field with a spontaneous smile and boundless enthusiasm. He played the game with a combination of speed and power that a later generation would see in Mickey Mantle. Foxx ran like a cheetah, threw like an Olympic javelin champion, and hit the ball like Babe Ruth.

During the season in those early years, Jimmie often boarded with his Aunt Virginia, who lived in North Philadelphia, not far from Shibe Park. On other occasions, he rented rooms from homeowners who resided close to the ballpark. As a result, folks came to know him well. Local merchants, stadium personnel, and ordinary townspeople watched Jimmie Foxx grow up. They liked what they saw. Life was like a dream for young Jimmie Foxx. In 1928, when the Athletics nearly dethroned the lordly New York Yankees, led by Babe Ruth and Murderers’ Row, he teamed with future Hall of Famers Mickey Cochrane, Al Simmons, and Lefty Grove, as well as aging legends Ty Cobb, Eddie Collins, and Tris Speaker. Then, in 1929, with Jimmie pounding 33 home runs, Philadelphia actually defeated the Yanks for the American League pennant and went on to win the World Series.

In 1930 the Athletics repeated as World Champions, while Foxx slammed 37 home runs. The following year, the A's barely missed their third straight championship when the St. Louis Cardinals prevailed in a hard-fought, seven-game fall classic. Jimmie added 30 more circuit shots that year, despite two serious leg injuries. Although the Yankees reclaimed the AL pennant in 1932, the personal ascendancy of Jimmie Foxx became complete. He batted .364, slugged .749, drove in 169 runs, scored 151 times, and slammed 58 homers to challenge Ruth's so-called "unbreakable" season record of 60. As a result, Jimmie earned the American League's Most Valuable Player Award.

Sadly, finances intervened, and the glory days of the Philadelphia Athletics came to an abrupt end. Largely due to Pennsylvania's so-called "blue laws," which prohibited Connie Mack from scheduling profitable Sabbath baseball in Philadelphia until 1934, he was forced to sell his best players. Al Simmons went first, sold to the Chicago White Sox immediately after the 1932 season. Lefty Grove and Mickey Cochrane followed after the 1933 campaign, respectively joining the Boston Red Sox and Detroit Tigers.

In the interim, despite the dwindling fortunes of his team, Jimmie Foxx enhanced his individual legacy. In 1933 he won the American League Triple Crown by recording a .356 batting average, along with 48 homers and 163 runs batted in. Jimmie also added his second straight Most Valuable Player Award. Even as the Athletics plummeted in the standings during 1934–35, Foxx kept pounding away. In those two otherwise gloomy seasons, he added 80 more home runs, batted a combined .340, and drove in 245 runs.

Yet, seemingly unknown at that moment, a malady of body and mind was growing inside Jimmie Foxx. The affliction would not destroy Foxx quickly. It would gradually erode his gifts to the point where he would never attain the supremacy for which he seemed to be destined. On October 8, 1934, while barnstorming in Winnipeg, Canada, Jimmie was struck violently on the left side of his head by a pitched ball. Batting helmets were not worn at that time. Although x-rays were negative, Foxx was diagnosed with a concussion.

He stayed in the local hospital for four days, but two days after leaving was too lethargic to play in an exhibition game in Spokane. Although this should have raised a red flag, Foxx resumed a prearranged tour to the Far East with other American League stars and sailed across the Pacific Ocean. There he played in every one of his team's international games, including 18 in Japan. Upon returning to Philadelphia on January 6, 1935, Jimmie confirmed that he would resume



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Foxx started out as a catcher, but Connie Mack acquired Mickey Cochrane in the same year, and the future Hall-of-Fame catcher nabbed the position, pushing Foxx to the infield corners, mostly third in 1928 and first in 1929.

the grueling duties of catcher, a position that he had not manned in seven years.

But on January 24, before leaving for spring training in Florida, Foxx underwent a double surgical procedure in Philadelphia. Dr. Herb Goddard removed Jimmie's tonsils, along with a nasal obstruction. Hardly anyone took notice of that event, but it was a harbinger of the eventual downfall of Jimmie Foxx. The effects of his "beating" a few months before in Canada were beginning to manifest.

As promised, Jimmie played catcher in every spring game, as Connie Mack saluted him as the best receiver in the American League. He stayed there until third baseman Pinky Higgins was injured, whereupon Foxx, the dutiful soldier, temporarily replaced him. He moved back to catcher before finally resuming his normal spot at first base on May 25. Through this period, Foxx and his teammates rarely enjoyed a scheduled off day, playing in-season exhibition games in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, Buffalo, Allentown, Pennsylvania, Bridgeton, New Jersey, and Hartford. When the season ended, Jimmie joined another troupe of barnstormers for an

extended schedule of games in Mexico. These events directly preceded his sale (officially called a release) to Boston.

Coming from nearby Maryland and growing up on the A's roster, Jimmie was viewed as a hometown hero. After he married, Foxx purchased a home in the Philadelphia suburbs, further endearing him to the local populace. Connie Mack understood this, and desperately wanted to keep "Double X" as an Athletic. Foxx played like a superstar, and wanted to be paid like one, but Mack was on the brink of bankruptcy in those hard Depression times, and was powerless to keep him. The last star level player to leave, 28-year old Jimmie Foxx departed Philadelphia for the Boston Red Sox in 1936.

In truth, Foxx was elated with the opportunity to again play for a contender while earning an income commensurate with his skills. However, he immediately acknowledged how much he would miss the Philadelphia fans with whom he had grown into manhood. For their part, Philly fans were devastated. They feared that they would never again see such a talented player in an Athletics uniform, and they never did. Predictably, Jimmie Foxx became immensely popular in Boston.

When Jimmie returned to Shibe Park for the first time as a visiting player on April 19, 1936, he was greeted in typical Philadelphia fashion. He was wildly cheered on his first at-bat, but booed thereafter by some in attendance. Even then, that was a Philly tradition. But, in their hearts, the local fans would always have a special place for Jimmie Foxx. They demonstrated that on another visit to town later that same season.

In a custom typical of the times but unknown in the modern era, the Athletics scheduled pre-game field events on September 19, 1936, when the Red Sox returned to Philadelphia. The big attraction was a 75-yard sprint race by the fastest players from both squads. It featured the A's Lou Finney and Wally Moses against Boston's Foxx. Although Jimmie had been a Maryland state sprint champion in high school, by that time in his career, he was primarily viewed as a burly slugger. Moses was regarded as the fastest man in the American League (along with Ben Chapman) with Finney rated right behind them. Yet, when the race ended, there was a virtual dead heat between the three; all were timed at 7.75 seconds. After some deliberation, Finney was declared the winner although the *Boston Herald* insisted that Foxx had finished in front.

Despite his still blazing speed, fielding virtuosity, and titanic home runs, Jimmie Foxx was showing signs of physicality that were not so benign. Earlier in the month, Jimmie had complained about vision problems

associated with a sinus condition. Since he was playing productively, little attention was given to the matter.

However, when Foxx suffered through a long bout with the flu during spring training the following year, he slowly became aware that something was amiss. The Red Sox were scheduled to open the 1937 season in Philadelphia on April 20. Still not feeling well, Foxx decided to see his personal physician a few days before that opener. Again suffering from vision issues and pain above both eyes, Jimmie was quickly admitted to Jewish Hospital, where he stayed for over a week. Despite the severity of the ailment, no long-term solutions were offered. There was no apparent linkage between Foxx's 1934 head trauma and his development of these alarming symptoms.

Consistent with the behavioral norms of his era, Jimmie Foxx rarely said anything about his almost constant battle against chronic, so-called sinus pain. But in 1939, Ted Williams joined the Red Sox, and immediately bonded with Foxx. The two men talked about their rare but mutual gift for power-hitting along with many other topics. So, when Jimmie sidetracked to Philadelphia for further treatment of his problem during a trip from Chicago to Washington on May 12, 1939, Williams knew all about it. For the record, Foxx was administered the new "radio beam treatment" without any apparent results. Within a few days of returning to Boston, he suffered a relapse. That prompted Boston team physician James Conway to assert that Foxx should have been in the hospital back in 1937 instead of playing baseball.

Later that season, Jimmie succumbed to the constant pain in his lower abdomen, and checked himself into St. Joseph's Hospital in Philadelphia on September 9, where an emergency appendectomy was performed. When questioned by his surgeon prior to the operation, Foxx admitted that he had experienced symptoms for the past one-and-a-half-years! He finally sought treatment only when the pain became unbearable. This cost Jimmie the remainder of the 1939 season.

That incident, although not directly related to the main issue of Foxx's "sinuses," is an indicator of how Jimmie Foxx approached his health care. First, he never complained. Despite high levels of pain, Jimmie would simply march on, doing his best despite his burdens. Second, there was a clear pattern of postponing treatment until he could see his familiar caregivers in his former home base of Philadelphia. Many folks have that tendency, but Foxx went to extremes. Boston boasted some of the best hospitals in the country, yet Jimmie followed his country-boy instincts, and insisted on being treated only by those he knew and trusted. From

a medical perspective, it was reckless and ineffective.

During those years, despite his health issues, Jimmie Foxx was still one of America's most successful athletes. From 1936 through 1940, his first five seasons with the Red Sox, Jimmie averaged about 40 home runs per year. In 1938, when he won his third American League MVP Award, Foxx slugged 50 homers, batted .349, and drove in 175 runs (still a franchise record). But in 1941, at only age 33, Jimmie Foxx suddenly fell off the athletic cliff. Ted Williams was one of the few people who understood what was really happening.

In May of that year, Jimmie had again sought treatment for his recurring blurred vision and facial pain. This time, he was told to quit smoking, which he did. Yet there was no relief. Williams remembered those times well, and recounted some of the details in that 1986 interview. Foxx himself had been wondering if the whole pattern had begun as a result of his 1934 beaming. Prior to that time, he had no such issues.

Ted remembered Jimmie being only a "social drinker" when he (Williams) joined the Sox in 1939. He actually believed that Foxx did some of his partying because of his desire to emulate Babe Ruth. Yet, Ted did not recall any overt drunkenness on the part of Double X. Then, as Jimmie's pain increased, so did his drinking. Williams recalled a cross-country airplane flight at the conclusion of the '41 season when the altitude exacerbated Jimmie's condition. As a remedy for the pain, Foxx gulped down "about a dozen" miniature bottles of scotch.

It didn't help that Jimmie had unwisely invested in St. Petersburg's declining Jungle Club Golf Club in late 1939. Florida's Gulf Coast was experiencing a downward real estate spiral at the time, and Foxx had been duped into the ill-advised venture. Since Foxx loved playing golf in Florida, he had been an easy mark for business sharks trying to unload unprofitable properties. When the market failed to rebound, Jimmie's life savings were lost. According to Williams, all this converged on Foxx at about the same time, causing Jimmie to turn more frequently to the bottle.

When Jimmie belted his 500th career home run at the implausible age of only 32 on September 24, 1940, many observers, including Ted Williams, assumed that he would ultimately surpass Ruth's record total of 714. The next day, Williams was quoted in the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* as saying: "What a man. And I'll bet he does it, too!" Just two months before, on July 14, Foxx had badly sprained his left knee in a collision at first base, and did not return to full duty for five days. When he did, Jimmie volunteered to catch in order to

help his team. Think about that: Foxx was an established super-star slugger with 15 years of major league seniority, returning to the lineup after a serious knee injury. And he came back as a volunteer catcher, staying there for nearly six weeks!

Within days, Sox manager Joe Cronin hailed Jimmie as the finest catcher in the American League, while adding accolades about his diverse skills. In the *Boston Evening Traveler* on August 2, 1940, Cronin was quoted: "He's a marvel, isn't he? Tell me: who was a better all-around ball player than Foxxie? Why right now I'd say he was the best catcher in the American League...They can talk all they want to about some of those old time ball players being able to play different positions. I'll take Foxxie. They don't come any better."

Accordingly, two future Hall of Fame legends (Cronin and Connie Mack) had labeled Foxx as the league's best catcher, though he played that demanding position only part time. Cronin's sentiments should not be dismissed as those of a manager hyping one of his own players. Back in 1933, when they were still adversaries, Joe had referred to Foxx as "the greatest all-around ball player in the game today." That quote appeared in the *Philadelphia Record* on October 13, 1933, with Cronin specifically citing Jimmie's fabulous power, superior throwing arm, and defensive versatility. That was the day after Foxx was voted AL MVP, just ahead of the second-place Joe Cronin. Jimmie has historically been regarded as an indifferent defender, but facts say otherwise. Surely, the testimony of Cronin and Mack means something.

On August 2, 1940, the *Washington Times-Herald* featured even more laudatory sentiments from writer Frank "Buck" O'Neill. He opined: "Some of these days when baseball historians meet to award the capital prize of the national game to its greatest player of all time, they are not going to give the title and plaque to Tyrus Raymond Cobb, nor to George Herman Ruth... The present day has its candidate for the greatest of all ballplayers, and his name is James Emory Foxx of the Boston Red Sox."

Jimmie was a victim of his superb athleticism, and was often obligated to change positions. As a result, he never acquired much standing in any particular spot. Williams watched all this unfold, and never forgot Foxx's team spirit and stalwart tenacity. It is no wonder that, in 1940, Ted thought that Jimmie would go on forever. But, almost a half-century after the fact, Teddy Ballgame felt that he knew why it didn't work out that way. The combination of physical pain along with family and financial pressure eventually became too much for Foxx to endure. Adding to his already



Foxx was struck in the head with a pitch during while barnstorming after the 1934 season. During spring training 1935, Foxx took up catching again for the Athletics but did not last long at the position, first replacing the injured Pinky Higgins at third, and then resuming his usual post at first on May 25.

toxic situation, Jimmie's wife had refused to move to Boston when he was traded there, staying in Philadelphia with their young son.

Jimmie Foxx hit only 19 home runs in 1941, and the Red Sox management hoped it was simply an off year. But when he struggled early in the 1942 season, they shipped him off to the Chicago Cubs, where his play did not improve. The disillusioned Foxx sat out the entire 1943 season, but returned to play part time in 1944 and 1945 when World War II depleted the major league talent pool. As late as 1944 Cubs manager Charlie Grimm acknowledged that Jimmie still possessed awesome power, but couldn't hit because he could no longer see the ball. Then, playing big league baseball for the final time with the Phillies in 1945, there were even more flashes of Foxx's once formidable athleticism.

On August 19 he was the starting pitcher for the Phils. Featuring a fastball and twisting screwball, Jimmie went six and two thirds strong innings, striking out five while recording the win. Three weeks later at Pittsburgh's Forbes Field, Foxx blasted his final two major league homers by launching a pair of 420-footers into Schenley Park. When it was all over, Jimmie Foxx had accumulated 534 home runs, an impressive total, but far from the 714 predicted just a few years earlier.

As Ted Williams told us, however, many of those 534 were hit so far that Jimmie's power now seems fictional. In every American League stadium of his era, as well as dozens of exhibition and barnstorming sites, the trail of Foxx's longest drives challenges credibility. Twenty-four times he cleared the 65-foot high left field grandstand roof in Philadelphia. At Comiskey Park in Chicago, where no one else reached the towering roof more than twice (until home plate was moved forward in the 1980s), "The Beast" did it six times. In St. Louis at Sportsman's Park, Jimmie powered seven tremendous drives over the left field bleachers. And so on. Everywhere Foxx logged more than just a few games, and in many places where he stopped only once, the man hit home runs that defied logical analysis.

How do we assess the career of Jimmie Foxx? Let's indulge in some revisionist speculation. What if Jimmie Foxx was wearing a batting helmet when struck on the head by that pitched ball? Although nobody can say, it is not hard to make the case that Jimmie Foxx could have recorded 700 home runs along with the associated acclaim. Sure, in today's world with even more substance abuse alternatives, he might have fallen just as far into temptation. So too with his financial hardship: We still see successful athletes lose their money. And, although Jimmie was self-absorbed on occasion, consider the counterpoints: Foxx had a proven history of honesty, likeability, perseverance, resilience, and intelligence. Given those attributes, negative outcomes seem unlikely.

Obviously, something did happen to Jimmie Foxx in 1941, which caused him to diminish rapidly as an athlete. There is no definitive medical proof that the 1934 event caused his subsequent problems. His medical records are now gone, but the available data strongly point in that direction. Interestingly, in February 1940, Boston teammate Fritz Ostermueller had suffered from the same symptoms as Foxx. In the case of "Ostie," physicians linked his problem to a head trauma similar to the one Jimmie experienced in '34. On May 25, 1935, while Fritz was pitching at Fenway Park, Hank Greenberg savagely lined a ball off the left side of his face. He soon recovered but, according to the *Boston Globe* (February 23, 1940), "At that time, it was also learned doctors told Fritz he might experience a reaction from the blow within 'three or four years.'" So, why is it that nobody has connected the dots, and given Jimmie the same understanding?

Also, in the latter years of his career, Foxx referred to his malady as "neuralgia" instead of "sinus problems." Jimmie wasn't a physician, so it seems logical that he learned the term from one. Neuralgia and

sinusitis are not the same. Neuralgia is a generic name for nerve pain which is often linked with trauma. Sinusitis is generally attributed to infections. What does it all mean? It is hard to know. Yet, with the advantage of well-documented hindsight, it seems likely that 26-year-old Jimmie Foxx had his nasal passages knocked violently out of alignment by the errant pitch in the autumn of 1934. As a result, he suffered a chronic infirmity from which he never recovered.

This we do know for sure: at the conclusion of the 1940 season, Jimmie Foxx was regarded as a genuine baseball hero. He was viewed as an athletic dynamo and poster boy for behavioral excellence. It is virtually impossible to find anyone who had anything bad to say about Jimmie. That includes players, coaches, managers, umpires, administrators, writers, fans, clubhouse attendants, or anyone else associated with Major League Baseball. Foxx was admired for his gentlemanly disposition, abiding generosity, work ethic, sincere camaraderie, and physical toughness. Then a combination of chronic pain and financial ruin became too much for him. Sadly, his premature decline has become his most notable legacy.

In the twenty-first century, Jimmie Foxx is often caricatured as a drunken failure. That is wrong. Jimmie drank heavily toward the end of his career, but there is no evidence that he was anything more than a moderate drinker until around 1940, when extreme adversity pushed him in the wrong direction. It is also true that life was often unkind to Foxx after his playing days, but, until near the end of his career, he was one of baseball's greatest success stories. Jimmie always did his best, and did so with grace and charm. He should primarily be remembered for his joyful demeanor and Olympian talent.

How would we react if we turned on our televisions or computers at the end of a summer night, and watched a highlight of Double X blasting a 500-foot home run? Keep in mind that modern technology tells us that such blows are very rare phenomena: only two 500-footers have been hit by the combined rosters of all MLB teams since 2000. Then consider that Jimmie

Foxx personally recorded at least ten such drives in his wondrous career. What would we do? In all probability, we would react just like Ted Williams. We would be in awe... and we would speak about Jimmie Foxx with respect and admiration. ■

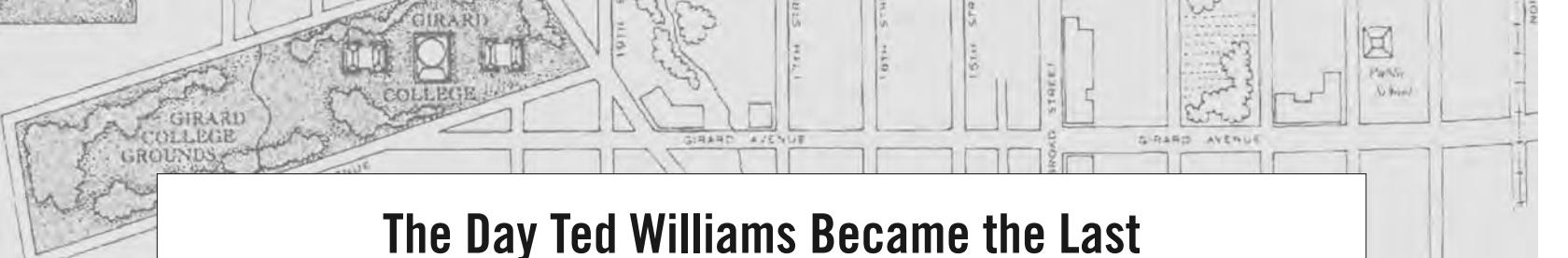
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The Day Ted Williams Became the Last .400 Hitter in Baseball

Bill Nowlin

September 28, 1941. Shibe Park, Philadelphia. The Red Sox split a Sunday doubleheader with Connie Mack's Athletics on the final day of the 1941 season. These were meaningless games in the standings; the Red Sox were in second place but 17½ games behind the Yankees and the Athletics were dead last, 37½ games out of first. But these were professionals and there was something else at stake.

Young Ted Williams, who had turned 23 less than a month earlier, woke up that morning hitting .39955 on the year, just .00045 below the hallowed .400 mark. Except for a stretch from July 11–24, when his batting average dipped as low as .393, he'd been hitting above .400 since May 25.

After closing out Boston's final home game at Fenway Park on September 21, Williams was batting .4055. There were six games left in the season; three in Washington and three in Philadelphia. Ted was 1-for-3 on the 23rd, and then in a doubleheader on the 24th, he was 0-for-3 and 1-for-4. He'd gone 2-for-10 and seen his average plunge to a perilous .4009. The weather was turning colder—not good for Williams. There was a lot on the line, and the team had two days off, the 25th and 26th. On the morning of September 27, the *Philadelphia Bulletin* headline noted what Williams faced: “Williams Risks Batting Mark” with a subhead showing his determination to play out the full season: “Boston Star Refuses to Protect his Season's Record of .401.” This is when Ted could have sat out the final three games.

There's a longstanding legend that Sox manager Joe Cronin had gone to Ted on Saturday evening and told him he could sit out the game to preserve his average, and nobody would have blamed him. If this had occurred, it would have been Friday night, before the Saturday game. Indeed, the *Bulletin* reported, “There was a rumor that Manager Joe Cronin would let Ted spend the rest of the year on the bench to protect his batting mark.” Williams took “a special session of batting practice at Shibe Park” during the day on Friday, after the Red Sox arrived in town, and Ted told the *Bulletin*'s Frank Yetter, “I either make it or I don't.”

Yetter mentioned to readers a couple of obstacles Williams would face: “the lengthening shadows of autumn afternoons, and facing strange young pitchers getting the usual end-of-the-season tryouts.” The advantage, he said, was in the pitcher's favor.

On Saturday the Athletics rookie pitcher Roger Wolff was pitching in only his second-ever major league game (he had lost a tight 1–0 game in Washington the previous Saturday, allowing just three hits). Williams drew a walk from Wolff his first time up and then doubled to right field. But then he flied out to Eddie Collins Jr. in right, fouled out to first baseman Bob Johnson, and struck out—the only man Wolff whiffed. It was Ted's last strikeout of the season, number 27.

By batting 1-for-4, Ted's batting average dropped to .39955. It could have been rounded up to .400 if he had sat out the two Sunday games. But .39955 was not .400.

Naturally, Williams wanted to hit .400. He had no way to know that he'd be the last .400 hitter in the twentieth century, but a .400 batting average in 1941 was still a major mark of distinction. Ty Cobb and Rogers Hornsby had each hit .400 three times. Hornsby could have done it a fourth time, if one applied rounding. Entering the last game of the 1921 season, he was hitting .39966. Hornsby played that game, failed to get a hit in four at-bats, and saw his final average fall to .397.

Ted said that his own teammate Jimmie Foxx had once lost a batting title to Buddy Myer by sitting out the last day of the season in 1935. It was not true, but Williams and biographer John Underwood apparently believed it was. Foxx finished third, batting .346 to Joe Vosmik's .348 and Myer's .349. In fact, Foxx did bat and was 3-for-4 on the final day. Myer had a 4-for-5 day.

In his autobiography, *My Turn At Bat*, Williams recalls Joe Cronin telling him, “You don't have to be put in if you don't want to. You're officially .400.”¹ Ted reports his reaction: “Well, God, that hit me like a goddamn lightning bolt! What do you mean I don't have to play today?”²

At some point, the subject had been raised. The September 29 *Christian Science Monitor* reported, “A week



Contrary to legend, Red Sox manager Joe Cronin almost certainly never offered Ted the opportunity to sit out the final two games in Philadelphia.

ago it was suggested to the young outfielder that he might stay out of the game for the remainder of the season and thus assure his finishing in the select circle. But he chose rather to play the season out in his regular position, even though it jeopardized his standing.”³

The Sporting News said Ted had declared, “I want to have more than my toenails on the line.”

Williams didn’t want to hit .400 by the rounding of a number, and truth be told, .39955 is not .400—as he would have been reminded by newspaper headlines he may have seen that Sunday morning. Williams was an inveterate newspaper reader, typically reading four or five a day. If he saw *The New York Times*, he would have seen WILLIAMS AT .3996 AS RED SOX WIN, 5-1; STAR BATTER SLIPS BELOW .400 GOAL. Had he seen the *Washington Post*, he would have read its headline: WILLIAMS DROPS BELOW .400 AS RED SOX DEFEAT A’S, 5-1. Whether the *Chicago Tribune* made it to Philadelphia before game time, we don’t know; the *Tribune* headline read WILLIAMS DROPS UNDER .400. The *Boston Globe*’s game story headline? WILLIAMS GETS ONLY ONE HIT, with a subhead reading “Average Now is .399 as Red Sox Win, 5-1.”

And Sunday morning’s *Philadelphia Inquirer* was unambiguous: “SOX TOP A’s; WILLIAMS FALLS TO .399.”

Ted really didn’t have a choice. He had to hit. Perhaps it took a little less personal courage, but his actual accomplishment was no less dramatic. Everyone knew what was on the line. He’d be facing Dick Fowler in the first game—a rookie like Wolff, pitching in only his fourth big-league game. Mr. Mack reportedly told the Athletics to play it straight, as Porter Vaughan—the second pitcher to face Williams in the first game—explained: “Connie Mack didn’t talk to the pitchers but he talked to the catcher, Frank Hayes. Frank was a good catcher. When Ted came to bat, he told Ted that the pitchers had the word from Mr. Mack that they didn’t ought to let up at all on Ted, and if they did, they’d have to pay the consequences.”⁴

Joe Cronin had told the *Boston Globe* before the game: “If there’s ever a ballplayer who deserved to hit .400, it’s Ted. He’s given up plenty of chances to bunt and protect his average in recent weeks. He wouldn’t think of getting out of the lineup to keep his average intact. Moreover, most of the other stars who have bettered the mark before were helped by no foul strike rules or sacrifice fly regulations.”⁵ Indeed, had the rule been in effect which does not count a sacrifice fly as an at-bat, Ted would have entered the day hitting comfortably above .400, at .40498. But in 1941, a sacrifice fly—Ted had six of them—was counted as an at-bat and an out.

Ted himself kept it simple: “‘Gee, I only hope I can hit .400,’ was all he would say.”⁶

The *Philadelphia Bulletin*’s Yeutter reported that “Before the two games started he was nervous and sat on the bench, biting his fingernails. His mammoth hands trembled. He condemned himself for getting only one hit for four times at bat Saturday. He wondered who was going to pitch for the Athletics. He asked Jimmie Foxx if the late afternoon autumn shadows ever bothered him when he was a kingpin hitting in Shibe Park. He asked if the Athletics had knuckleball pitchers, for knucklers had been his nemesis all year.” Wolff, who had struck out Ted his last time up the day before, was a knuckleballer.

After Saturday’s game, Ted was nervous. That evening, he said he walked the streets of Philadelphia for several hours with Red Sox clubhouse man Johnny Orlando, walking maybe ten miles talking about it.⁷ John Holway quotes Williams: “I went to bed early, but I just couldn’t sleep. I tossed and turned and finally went to sleep, still thinking about that .400 average.”⁸

Williams was batting cleanup, and Fowler retired the side in the first, so Ted led off the top of the second. “Bill McGowan was the plate umpire, and I’ll never forget it,” Ted recalled. “Just as I stepped in, he



“The Kid” always said that if he had it all to do over again, he’d have taken more batting practice —and this from a guy who would routinely take batting practice after everyone else had gone home, if he’d been dissatisfied with his work at the plate that day.

called time and slowly walked around the plate, bent over and began dusting it off. Without looking up, he said, “To hit .400 a batter has got to be loose. He has got to be loose.”⁹

The first pitch was low and outside. The second was low and inside. On the 2–0 count, Ted was ready and he swung at Fowler’s next pitch. He “singled sharply to right” according to the *Inquirer’s* Stan Baumgartner. In *My Turn At Bat*, Williams called it “a liner between first and second.” Gerry Moore of the *Boston Globe* called it “a sizzling single past first baseman Bob Johnson’s right.”

After that first hit, Ted’s average stood at .40089. If he’d made an out his second time up, he’d be hitting exactly .400. He had nothing to lose by taking that second at-bat. If he’d made an out, would he have allowed himself to be taken out of the game? We can’t know. But the question became moot when he led off the fifth inning, still facing Fowler, and homered on a 1–0 pitch, driving the ball over the high right-center field wall, a shot of perhaps 440 feet. It was his 37th homer of the year; he led both leagues in homers. Now he was batting .40222 and could make outs each of the next two times up and still be hitting a little over .400 at .40044.

But he didn’t. The Red Sox had taken a 3–2 lead in the top of the fifth, but the A’s scored nine times in the bottom of the inning, building up an 11–3 lead.

Next time up, in the top of the seventh, Ted was facing reliever Porter Vaughan, who threw two straight curve balls, both of which missed the plate. Vaughn threw another curve, and Ted guessed correctly. He was waiting for it. “I hit a bullet right through the middle–base hit.”¹⁰ It was a single, and the Red Sox scored six runs that inning, closing the gap to 11–10 (they’d scored once in the sixth, too), and he singled off Vaughan a second time.

Vaughan told the story:

He got two clean singles off me. On the first one, he hit off a curve ball. Our second baseman was Crash Davis. Crash and I had come up at the same time. He played Ted in the hole between second and first. Ted hit the ball to the right of the second baseman. The second one he hit was a fast ball. I threw him a fastball. Bob Johnson, who was a leftfielder, was playing first base. Dick Siebert, our regular first baseman, had gone back to Minnesota; he taught out there. Johnson didn’t get to the ball; it was between him and the base. It was close to first base. Ted hit it right down the line. Obviously I didn’t fool him at all. He had wonderful eyesight and very quick hands. It was almost impossible to fool him. He really studied pitchers and remembered everything they threw him.”¹¹

Williams was 4-for-5 in the first game with two RBIs and two runs scored. He might even have been 5-for-5 but for the official scorer. In his final at-bat against Newman Shirley, yet another rookie (the hardest pitchers for Ted to hit, since they were neither predictable nor necessarily accurate), he grounded to second base and reached base, but with an error charged to second baseman Crash Davis. The Associated Press said that “a very ponderous” scoring decision “robbed” Ted of his fifth consecutive hit, though in his book, *The Last .400 Hitter*, John Holway noted that none of the other writers argued the decision.¹²

And even though Boston scored twice in the top of the ninth and won the game, 12–11, the Philly fans were all for Ted all day long. “Each time he came to bat the crowd roared, and when he went back to left field each inning the bleacherites gave him added applause,” wrote the *Evening Bulletin*.

By the end of the first game, Williams was batting .40397. He could have gone 0-for-4 in the second game and still been above .400 at .40044.

But he wasn’t done. In the second game, he faced Fred Caligiuri, who remembered Mack telling him to

bear down: “Don’t give him anything! Pitch to him!” Caligiuri talked about pitching to Ted. “He could hit most fast balls, and the only way to get him out is to change speeds on him. We tried to change up on him, if I remember. I know one changeup I threw him he hit—in Shibe Park there was a kind of a megaphone that sits up on top of the wall, and that ball went on a line right into that megaphone and fell back into the park for a double. I suppose that megaphone was at least maybe two feet across, just a speaker up there. He hit it pretty good. It kept it in the ballpark. If it had been a few feet left or right, it would have gone out of the ballpark.”¹³ Indeed, only the ground rules kept the ball from being a homer, since the loudspeaker was deemed in fair territory. That ground-rule double was Ted’s second hit of the second game; he’d singled between first and second his first time up.

Finally, in his eighth time to the plate that day, with darkness encroaching, the Athletics got Ted Williams out, when he flied out to right field. He was officially 6-for-8, hitting .40570, or, when rounded up: .406.

“There was not a questionable hit among the group,” wrote the *Inquirer*. “All were slashing drives that whistled through the infield or fell far out of reach of the outfielders.”

After the game, Ted said he’d never felt nervous in baseball before. Now, he said, “I was shaking like a leaf when I went to bat the first time. Then when I got that first hit, I was all set. I felt good. Gee, there’s a lot of luck making that many hits.” He turned to Jimmie Foxx and exclaimed, “Just think—hitting .400. What do you think of that, Slug? Just a kid like me hitting that high.”

The September 29 *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* wound up its story:

Although the second game was called in the eighth inning by Umpire John Quinn on account of darkness, at least 2,000 persons waited around the Boston dressing room and on 21st Street, to see Williams leave. He was surrounded by a mob that pinned him against the wall and made

him autograph every conceivable kind of paper, book or scorecard. A couple of cops rescued him so he could make a train from North Philadelphia. But he enjoyed the ordeal and left only when he was shoved in a taxicab.

By virtue of reaching base six of the eight times up (not counting reaching on the error), Ted Williams had achieved a season on-base percentage of .553. More than half the times he came to bat in 1941, he got on base, and he struck out only 27 times all season.

In 2012 Miguel Cabrera of the Detroit Tigers won the Triple Crown for the first time since Carl Yastrzemski did it for the Boston Red Sox in 1967. Will someone hit .400 again? That’s the gist for another story, but a good place to start would be pages 77–132 in Stephen Jay Gould’s *Full House: The Spread of Excellence from Plato to Darwin* (New York: Harmony Books, 1996), an expansion of his essay “Entropic homogeneity isn’t why no one hits .400 any more,” which appeared in the August 1986 issue of *Discover*. ■

Acknowledgments

Thanks to Rock Hoffman for providing photocopies of the Philadelphia newspapers of the day.

Notes

1. Ted Williams with David Pietrusza, *My Life in Pictures* (Kingston NY: Total Sports Illustrated, 2001), 43.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Christian Science Monitor*, September 29, 1941.
4. Porter Vaughan interview with author, July 30, 1997. Williams says Hayes told him, “Ted, Mr. Mack told us if we let up on you he’ll run us out of baseball, I wish you all the luck in the world, but we’re not giving you a damn thing.” Ted Williams, *My Turn At Bat* (New York: Fireside Books, 1969), 90.
5. *Boston Globe*, September 29, 1941.
6. *Boston Globe*, September 29, 1941.
7. *My Turn At Bat*, 87.
8. John Holway, *The Last .400 Hitter* (Dubuque: William C. Brown, 1992), 282.
9. *My Turn At Bat*, 90.
10. Holway, 285.
11. Porter Vaughan interview with author, July 30, 1997.
12. Holway, 287.
13. Fred Caligiuri interview with author, July 7, 1997.



The Philadelphia Phillies' 1943 Spring Training

James D. Szalontai

By 1942 World War II was already impacting the Philadelphia Phillies' spring training activities as they prepared for the regular season in the soft sands of Miami Beach, Florida. Air corps stunts were observed above Flamingo Park; the players inspected fighters and bombers at a nearby base; and manager Hans Lobert, who had run the US Military Academy baseball team from 1918–25, persuaded Army officers to lead the squad in military drills preparing them for a patriotic display as they marched with bats on their shoulders before a Grapefruit League game against the Boston Braves.

In 1943 major league teams were forced to abandon the salubrious conditions of the South. They adhered to Commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis's edict, which allowed baseball to meet government travel restrictions and promote a positive image in the public mind. Teams had to scramble to find northern training camps and were often burdened by harsh weather, fewer exhibition games, inferior training facilities, second-rate playing equipment, depleted rosters, and uncertainty regarding continuation of the game as the ballplayers departing for military service were replaced with 4-Fs, teenagers, old-timers, and career minor leaguers. Dan Daniel of the *New York World-Telegram* penned these eloquent words in March 1943:

There is no Florida sun. There are no bathing beauties. There are fewer steaks and it is tougher to get up a perspiration. There are more aches and muscles that never hurt before, squawks against calisthenics. There are dull hours. But there are good beds and long nights in which to rest in them. And God is with us!¹

Finding a spring training site north of the Ohio and Potomac Rivers was difficult for stable major league franchises. But the Phillies were in a precarious situation, concluding the last five seasons in the basement (with at least 103 losses per year) and their financially strapped owner, Gerald Nugent, heavily in debt to the National League. Chester Smith of the *Pittsburgh Press*

insisted that the Phillies “didn’t have enough talent to put up more than a fair battle in a class B league.”²

Naturally, Nugent’s predicament had a deleterious effect on the Phillies as they prepared for spring training. To raise funds, he traded his only decent players—Rube Melton, Nick Etten—for bodies and cash. He sent out no contracts.

It was believed that the Phillies would train near their home ballpark, possibly at the University of Pennsylvania’s Franklin Field. However, Nugent had his eye on Swarthmore College, which had a large field house with a dirt floor that could be transformed into a baseball diamond. The Phillies were courted by several towns and cities. Hershey, Pennsylvania, made an attractive bid, but it was initially believed that travel restrictions would make it difficult for the Phils to accept. By mid-January, the college town of Princeton, New Jersey, had made its bid, as did the seashore resort city of Wildwood and the eventual spring training home of the New York Giants, Lakewood. Phillipsburg, New Jersey, and Lancaster, Pennsylvania, came calling by early February.

Nugent’s fate was decided at the National League meeting on February 9, as the National League took control of the beleaguered franchise, and on February 18 sold it to a syndicate headed by William D. Cox, a wealthy lumber broker. Meanwhile, Swarthmore College informed the Phillies that they were unable to allow them to conduct spring training activities on their campus. The offer was rescinded because a unit of Navy engineers would possibly be assigned to the college. Cox insisted that he would allow the new manager to pick the camp site and mentioned Lancaster, Milford, and Newtown, Pennsylvania as possible destinations. Ultimately and perhaps reluctantly they settled on Hershey, a community founded by chocolate king Milton S. Hershey, as their spring training headquarters.

COMMANDO TRAINING

William D. Cox was an enthusiastic 33-year-old, who had played baseball and ran cross-country on the track team as a freshman at New York University before



Former collegiate track athlete William D. Cox became owner of the Phillies at age 33 and immediately demanded changes in player conditioning, stating, “I want the team to run morning and afternoon.”

transferring to Yale and leaving during his senior year to take a job in New York. The former president of the New York Yankees football team had reportedly thrown batting practice for the 1928 Boston Braves, managed by Rogers Hornsby, and written a book titled *Boxing in Art and Literature*.³

Cox quickly gained a reputation as an iconoclast, insisting that he would not force his ideas on new manager Bucky Harris, but also maintaining that the Phillies would endure “commando-type” training and incessantly run. He developed his devotion to running from his freshman track coach, Emil von Elling, and said, “I want the team to run morning and afternoon, and to come down to the start of the season ready to go top speed.”⁴

To execute his running philosophy, Cox hired Harold Anson Bruce to be the physical education director. The team’s baseball activities would be augmented by two hours of rigorous calisthenics each day. Bruce was a widely respected physical education specialist who coached the track teams at Lafayette and then at Union College, was named American Olympic manager in 1932, and coached the long-distance runners at the Los Angeles Summer Olympics. From 1935–38 he was the head coach of the Austrian National Track and Field Forces, leading them in the 1936 Berlin Olympics.

Bruce quickly developed a few ideas on how the team could improve their performance; sore-armed pitchers, for example, would exercise their arms the day after pitching to work the stiffness out, and sprained ankles would be treated with hot and cold applications. Bucky Harris, an old-school skipper who disapproved of Bruce’s presence, facetiously suggested

he focus on speeding up the Phillies’ catchers—with their incessant squatting, they would grow slower as the season progressed. Stan Baumgartner, a Philadelphia sportswriter and former Phillies pitcher, reported that after the first week of training Bruce was given an “unqualified stamp of approval.”⁵ Instead of watching from the sidelines, Cox would often participate in workouts with the club, running around the field, practicing quick starts, going through calisthenic drills, and playing catch with the players. The sportswriters developed colorful headlines, such as the one in *The Sporting News* on March 25: “Chilly Phillies Warm Up to Commando Conditioning.”

Bruce’s unusual conditioning program included several enervating exercises with names like the “pinwheel twist,” “jingle jangle,” “gorilla hedgehop,” and the “elephant walk,” for which a player lay down on his back, with his stomach towards the sky, and walked by using his arms as legs. Baumgartner observed, “The players tried. They fell down, they collapsed in the middle. They laughed at their own awkwardness and not more than three were able to go ten feet.”⁶

The players grew tired of some of Bruce’s controversial tactics, such as forcing them to drink hot water before, during and after practice. He made sure that the players ate fruit, improving their diet. Meanwhile, Bruce was amazed that his individual physical examinations were considered unique, and not ubiquitously employed by other major league teams.

Danny Litwhiler said Bruce “was a good man, our ball club was well conditioned. We were probably in as good a shape as any team as far as conditioning is concerned. The main thing was run, run, run.”⁷

Harris was looking for a reason to be rid of Bruce, and finally had his chance when the trainer fell asleep on the bench, surrounded by sliced oranges. His dismissal perturbed Cox and served as a harbinger of things to come. Harris was fired after 92 games (39–53) as Cox claimed he called the players “jerks” and failed to motivate them.⁸ Harris said, “He’s a fine guy to fire me—when he gambles on games his club plays.” The gambling allegations were true and on November 23 Cox was banned from baseball by Judge Landis.⁹

THE ROSTER

Bill Cox was not expected to be a miracle man. The Phillies, after all, had just completed a season in which they garnered only 42 wins and finished 62½ games behind the pennant-winning Cardinals. He possessed

enthusiasm and confidence, but also a roster that was perilously thin because of wartime departures. Hugh Mulcahy, the Phils' best pitcher, had a low draft number and was the first major leaguer inducted by Uncle Sam on March 8, 1941. Seven more Phillies joined the fight in 1942 and 11 entered the military in 1943.

Baumgartner believed that it was possible that the Phillies might win fewer than 40 games in 1943, writing, "If the Phillies suffer losses through injuries, sore arms or further calls to the service, the team is going to look like the cat that was machine-gunned on the back fence."¹⁰

At the National League meeting it was suggested that each club sell the Phillies one player at a bargain price. Branch Rickey, the Dodgers president, was apoplectic, shouting, "To Hell with that!" when asked if the league would help the Phillies solve their manpower problem. "If a club gets down, the others kick it around. To climb requires gameness, initiative, working capital, love for baseball, management, and a willingness to lose around \$125,000 a year for a few seasons." He also insisted, "Baseball is no place for charity."¹¹

The key cogs for the 1943 Phillies included position players Mickey Livingston, Buster Adams, Babe Dahlgren, Pinky May, Danny Murtaugh, Ron Northey, Glen Stewart, Coaker Triplett, and Jimmy Wasdell. On the hilltop there was Al Gerheuser, Jack Kraus, School-boy Rowe, Dick Barrett, Si Johnson, and Newt Kimball.

Before spring training began, the situation was so bleak for the Phillies that they held an open tryout on March 1 and the only three players to show up were "a minor leaguer, a local sandlotter who lacked the qualifications and a one-eyed youngster from Hartford, Conn."¹²

As the Phillies prepared for the regular season, the war was putting their roster into turmoil with players coming and going and uncertain situations. Their spring training roster was replete with career minor leaguers, 4-Fs, old-timers, and unproven youngsters. Additionally, the Phillies were very active in the trade market during early 1943, acquiring players like Rowe, Kraus, Stewart, and Dahlgren in deals. It was widely believed that the Phillies had improved their roster dramatically during the spring through trades and acquisitions and Baumgartner even wrote that with a little luck "Harris and the Phillies can be a real drawing card."¹³

A close examination of the Phillies' spring training roster shows how desperate they were to fill their uniforms with warm bodies and how the war was impacting their roster. In January, they signed 23-year-old Bill Anske, who had played in the low minors in



Manager Bucky Harris (left) was not enamored of the "commando" training. The acquisition of players like Babe Dahlgren (right) was much more crucial to the team's ability to win. Dahlgren had been classified 4-F because of migraine headaches that occasionally caused blackouts.

1940 and 1941 before catching for Narberth in the Philadelphia Main Line League in 1942, where his season was cut short because of an injury. He was also the bullpen catcher for the Phils during that 1942 campaign. His primary occupation was as a fireman for the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad. Anske's big league debut never materialized as he went into the Army before spring training ended.

To bolster the infield, Harris recruited Penn freshman baseball coach, Red Kellett. Kellett failed to record a hit in nine at-bats while playing for the 1934 Boston Red Sox, managed by Harris. Like Anske, he did not play in a regular season game in 1943.

The Phillies were hoping that first baseman Eddie Murphy, who had played for their Trenton Inter-State League farm team in 1942 and had a 13-game cup of coffee, could step up into the big tent. Instead, he decided to continue working at his war job in Joliet, Illinois, and asked to be placed on the voluntary retired list. Meanwhile, fly chaser Paul Busby asked to be removed from the voluntary retired list, and batted .250 in 40 at-bats for the 1943 Phillies.

Catcher Joe Holden was forced to leave spring training and return to his war defense job with the

Bethlehem Steel Company because his leave of absence had expired.

George Hennessey had yielded eight runs in seven innings for the 1937 St. Louis Browns and performed much better for the 1942 Phillies, going 1–1 with a 2.65 ERA over 17 innings. “Three Star” Hennessey had paid his dues in the bushes, playing for 11 minor league teams since he started his career as a semi-pro in 1928. The former prize fighter was hoping to be a part-time player for the Phillies in 1943. The United States, however, needed his services as a vital war worker as a skilled mechanic at the Eastern Aircraft plant in Trenton, New Jersey. He worked the night shift from 11 PM to 7 AM. Hennessey, who had intended to skip spring training, did not play in 1943, but made it back to the big leagues in 1945, pitching in two games for the Chicago Cubs.

A headline in *The Sporting News* on April 8 declared, “Del Savio Fills Out Infield Of Phillies.” Garton Del Savio had played independent ball in 1942 and had been training with the Reds in Bloomington, Indiana, before being released. Baumgartner insisted that the Phillies were “fortunate” to obtain Del Savio and this career minor leaguer was expected to fill the Phillies shortstop hole.¹⁴ Del Savio appeared in four regular season games, getting only one hit in 11 major league at-bats.

Pitcher Johnny “Specs” Podgajny was nearsighted and classified 4-F. He went 4–4 with a 4.22 ERA before being traded to Pittsburgh during the season. Babe Dahlgren batted .287 with a .354 on-base percentage for the 1943 Phils and made his only All-Star team. Dahlgren was also classified 4-F: When he was 12 years old, he was hit in the face with a ball, and he suffered migraine headaches into adulthood, carrying a box of aspirin wherever he went, and even occasionally blacking out during a game, unable to see a ball farther than five feet away.

SPRING TRAINING

The Phillies began spring training on March 15 in Hershey with fewer than a dozen players signed to contracts and only 20 men on the roster.

During the first day of practice, Harris had to choose between a frozen field and an indoor gymnasium. The weather created problems during the first week and there were “mingled feelings” about the Northern spring training experiment.¹⁵ *The Sporting News* insisted that long underwear would become ubiquitous during spring training and that the players had gone from the “Citrus Belt” to the “Sinus Belt.” Censorship restrictions prevented reporters from giving

certain information on the conditions in which the players were training, but if it was reported that teams trained inside a gymnasium or fieldhouse, then it can be assumed that the conditions were poor.¹⁶

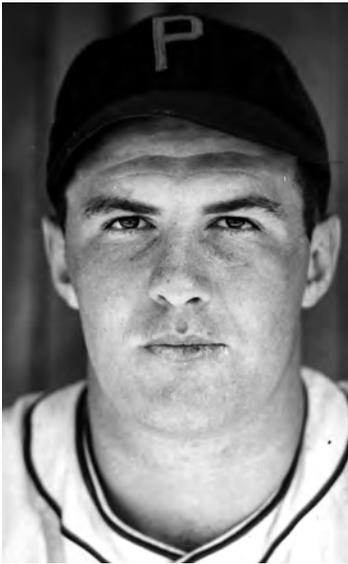
Harris incessantly urged his men to “forget this defeatist idea” and act as if they belonged in the majors. He treated his players like men, refusing to use a detective to see if the players complied with the midnight curfew, and insisted that they abide by the honor system. As a result the players generally trusted and respected Harris.¹⁷ Hershey was isolated, but “Chocolatetown, USA” had good food and plenty of amusement.

Because it took so long to fill holes in the roster through trades and acquisitions, Harris was not able to play an intra-camp game before the Phils took on the Philadelphia Athletics in Wilmington, Delaware, on April 4. There were fewer exhibition games in 1943, and they were generally played only against teams in the immediate vicinity of the camps. The four-game city series against Connie Mack’s woeful Athletics was going to be the highlight of the exhibition season.

The Athletics took the opener, 5–3, as Si Johnson yielded all five runs in the third inning before 5,000 fans. Frank Skaff hit a two-run homer to lead the Athletics attack. Earl Naylor went yard for the Phillies, Danny Litwhiler smacked two hits and drove in a run, while Garton Del Savio and young pitcher Bill Webb also made good impressions. Johnny Podgajny and Webb pitched scoreless ball for Harris’s aggregation. The starting infield consisted of Dahlgren at first, Murtaugh at second, Del Savio at short, and May at third. In the outfield from left to right there was Litwhiler, Naylor, and Busby. Livingston was behind the plate and Johnson on the hill.

On a chilly afternoon, 1,581 fans paid their way into Shibe Park on April 10, and watched Philadelphia’s American League aggregation take the second game, 5–2. Johnny Podgajny authored four scoreless frames before the Mackmen posted a three-run fifth. Former Villanova collegian Frank Skaff hit a double in the big inning, while a walk and two more doubles by Jo-Jo White and Eddie Mayo did the damage. Si Johnson yielded the other two runs in the seventh stanza. In the eighth, the Phillies scored their two runs on an error, doubles by Mickey Livingston and Ron Northey and a Danny Litwhiler single. Murtaugh had two hits, plated a run, and stole a base out of the leadoff spot, while Northey, Litwhiler, Naylor, and Livingston had a hit apiece.

The Shibe Park crowd numbered 5,000 on the following day as Charlie Fuchs and Jack Kraus combined



Ron Northey was another key cog for the 1942 Phillies, who had so few men in spring training camp they held an open tryout.

on a three-hit shutout, giving the Phillies their first victory in the city series. Pinky May drove in both runs for the Phils, singling in the second to score Naylor and hitting a sacrifice fly in the fourth. The Phillies had seven hits as Litwhiler led the way with two. Fuchs started, giving up one hit in five innings, baffling the A's with a sneaky fastball and good curve. Kraus, a left-handed pitcher with a smooth overhand delivery, worked the final four innings and was equally effective, handcuffing the A's with a live fastball.

On April 18, the Phillies received superb pitching from Kraus and Schoolboy Rowe as they defeated the Athletics, 4-1, to conclude the city series in a 2-2 tie. The A's mustered only one run and five hits against Kraus in five innings and then watched helplessly as Rowe pitched four perfect frames. Earl Naylor hit a two-run bomb in the three-run sixth off John Burrows. The 3,500 Shibe Park fans watched the Phillies collect nine hits, including two by Litwhiler and May.

Burleigh Grimes's Toronto Maple Leafs of the International League trained in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and did not encounter the warm weather which they anticipated, instead dealing with snow and low temperatures. They were forced to cancel three games with the Phillies.

The foul Northeastern weather also forced the Phillies to endure an unpleasant road trip to Hagerstown, Maryland, on April 13. The Phils boarded the 6AM train out of Harrisburg, traveled to Hagerstown, and had the game with the Buffalo Bisons halted by rain in the bottom of the second inning.

Besides the city series the only other game against major league competition took place on April 15 in Trenton, New Jersey, against the Washington Nationals before 300 freezing fans. Podgajny and Al Gerheuser held the Nationals to one run and four hits in nine innings as the two teams fought to a 1-1 tie. Ron Northey garnered a triple off Dutch Leonard in the fourth inning and scored on a sacrifice fly. Mickey Haefner followed Leonard to the bump and held the Phillies to two singles in four scoreless innings.

Perhaps the most famous exhibition game played by the Phillies in 1943 took place in New Haven, Connecticut, against Yale University. The Phillies battery in the first inning consisted of owner Bill Cox as catcher and Yale athletic director Ogden Miller as the pitcher. At the plate, Cox walked and Miller struck out. Red Rolfe, a former Yankee who was coaching the Yale team, played third base for the collegians. Gerheuser and Padden took over "the battery duties from the two tired businessmen" and the Phillies won, 7-0.¹⁸

The Phillies played well during the abbreviated exhibition schedule, which included two impressive wins against local Army teams. The first game took place on a cold, blustery day, in New Cumberland, Pennsylvania, on April 7, as they defeated the 1301st

The Philadelphia Phillies 1943 Spring Training Schedule

Date	Opponent	Location	Result	Pitcher of Record
April 4	Philadelphia Athletics	Wilmington, DE	L, 5-3	Si Johnson
April 7	1301st Service Unit team	New Cumberland, PA	W, 5-3 ¹	Jack Kraus
April 8	Indiantown Gap Army Service team	Lebanon, PA	W, 14-0 ²	Schoolboy Rowe
April 10	Philadelphia Athletics	Philadelphia, PA	L, 5-2	Johnny Podgajny
April 11	Philadelphia Athletics	Philadelphia, PA	W, 2-0	Charlie Fuchs
April 13	Buffalo Bisons	Hagerstown, MD	T, 0-0 ³	
April 15	Washington Senators	Trenton, NJ	T, 1-1	
April 18	Philadelphia Athletics	Philadelphia, PA	W, 4-1	Schoolboy Rowe
April 20	Yale University	New Haven, CT	W, 7-0	Al Gerheuser

1. Six-inning game

2. Seven-inning game

3. One-and-a-half-inning game

Service Unit team, 5–3, in a six-inning game. Manager Joe Lawler's Army team consisted of several former major and minor leaguers, including former Phillies pitcher Tommy Hughes, catcher Bill Peterman, and second baseman Harry Marnie. Hank Simmons of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* insisted that the "game had its points, despite a slight snowfall and the unpleasant wind," as Kraus and Fuchs impressed their manager while firing bullets. Murtaugh and Northey set the table, batting first and second in the Phillies lineup, collecting four of their six hits and scoring three runs.¹⁹

The second game was a rout, as the Phillies faced little resistance from a group of youngsters playing for the Indiantown Gap Army Service team, on April 8 in Lebanon, Pennsylvania. Harris's aggregation prevailed 14–0 as Rowe, Gerheuser, and Andy Lapihuska combined to pitch a no-hitter in the seven-inning contest. The offensive eruption was spearheaded by Northey, Litwhiler, May, and Padden, who each hammered out two hits.

The Phillies drastically improved their roster during spring training, played well during the exhibition season, and then won 22 more games than they had in 1942. They avoided the cellar, finishing in seventh place with a 64–90 record. All the running they did in Hershey did not make them any faster, as they finished last in the major leagues in steals, pilfering an abysmal 29 bases. It had been a memorable spring training with a colorful new owner, an old-fashioned skipper and an innovative physical education director who brought the best conditioned team to the starting line. ■

Notes

1. *The Sporting News*, March 25, 1943.
2. Finoli, *For the Good of the Country*, 55.
3. *The Sporting News*, February 25, 1943.
4. *The Sporting News*, March 4, 1943.
5. *The Sporting News*, March 25, 1943.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Goldstein, *Spartan Seasons*, 103.
8. Mead, *Baseball Goes to War*, 108.
9. Roberts and Rogers, *The Whiz Kids and the 1950 Pennant*, 27.
10. *The Sporting News*, March 18, 1943.
11. *The Sporting News*, February 18, 1943.
12. *The Sporting News*, March 11, 1943.
13. *The Sporting News*, April 22, 1943.
14. *The Sporting News*, April 8, 1943.
15. *The Sporting News*, March 25, 1943.
16. *The Sporting News*, March 11, 1943.
17. *The Sporting News*, March 25, 1943.
18. *The Sporting News*, April 29, 1943.
19. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 8, 1943.

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Eddie Waitkus and *The Natural*

What Is Assumption? What Is Fact?

Rob Edelman

Eddie Waitkus, the Fightin' Phillies first-sacker, is best remembered not for his 182 hits and .284 average on the 1950 National League pennant-winners and not for any other on-field accomplishment. Instead, his name is inexorably linked to the plight and fate of the central character in an all-time classic baseball novel.

One might imagine that *The Natural*—written by Bernard Malamud and published in 1952—is unadulterated fiction, while the 1984 screen adaptation is a baseball fantasy with a literary origin. However, a question that has long intrigued aficionados and scholars involves how much of Malamud's story has been culled from real life. To what extent was he influenced by baseball history and baseball lore? Even more specifically, what was Malamud's inspiration for one of the novel's crucial episodes: the near-fatal shooting in a Chicago hotel room of Roy Hobbs, the story's principal character, by a black-garbed mystery woman? Was it in fact a direct reference to the blast from a rifle wielded by an overwrought fan which almost snuffed out the life of Waitkus, also in a Chicago hotel room, on the night of June 14, 1949?

Malamud (1914–86) was loath to discuss his literary sources. As reported in an editor's note in *Talking Horse: Bernard Malamud on Life and Work*, "...during his lifetime as an artist and writer, [Malamud] said little in private about his own work. In public he said even less." So determining the genesis of the Hobbs shooting, not to mention other actual baseball influences in *The Natural*, is purely speculative, the equivalent of piecing together a giant puzzle that keeps changing shape.

In relation to the real-life Eddie Waitkus and the fictional Roy Hobbs, the two on the surface have little in common. Edward Stephen Waitkus was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on September 4, 1919. After debuting with the Chicago Cubs in 1941, he earned four Bronze Stars while serving with the U.S. Army in the Pacific during World War II. He returned to the Cubs in 1946 and, with Hank Borowy, was traded to the Phillies for Dutch Leonard and Monk

Dubiel after the 1948 campaign. "During his early career," explained Waitkus biographer John Theodore in *A Natural Gunned Down: The Stalking of Eddie Waitkus*, a documentary extra found on the Director's Cut DVD release of the movie version of the novel, "[Eddie] was called 'The Natural' by a few sportswriters. The writers back then also called him the 'Fred Astaire of first basemen.' At the plate, he had a wonderfully natural swing. Ted Williams called it one of the best swings he had ever seen." Off the field, according to Theodore, Waitkus "was very urbane. He spoke four languages. He was a Civil War historian. He loved ballroom dancing. [He was] not your typical blue-collar baseball player."

A two-time National League All-Star (in 1948–49), the 29-year-old Waitkus was hitting .306 when he was shot on June 14, 1949; his assailant, Ruth Ann Steinhagen, a stenographer, was a decade his junior. He did not don a Phillies uniform for the remainder of the 1949 season. However, on August 19, the ballclub sponsored "Eddie Waitkus Night," during which the ballplayer was deluged with gifts. He rejoined the team the following season, playing in all 154 games for the World Series-bound Whiz Kids—and the Associated Press cited him as the Comeback Player of the Year. Prior to the 1954 campaign, the Baltimore Orioles purchased him. He was released by the Orioles during the 1955 season and returned to Philadelphia before retiring at year's end. All in all, Waitkus enjoyed an eleven-year big league career, hitting .285 with 1,214 hits.

Hobbs, meanwhile, is neither big-city sophisticate, weathered war veteran, nor veteran major leaguer. He is a true innocent: a 19-year-old hot prospect, a product of rural America, and a pitcher with untold potential. Harriet Bird, the woman in black, is older than Steinhagen, and she exploits Hobbs's youthful ardor before shooting him and then committing suicide. Her motives—and whether she indeed is acting on her own or is in cahoots with others—remain unclear. But Hobbs's career is sidetracked, and he spends the next decade and a half languishing in obscurity with his promise an unfulfilled dream. Then, as a



Eddie Waitkus, Fightin' Phils first-sacker: Is he the inspiration—or merely one of a number of inspirations—for the Roy Hobbs character in Bernard Malamud's *The Natural*?

middle-aged rookie, he returns to baseball as a hitter and leads the last-place New York Knights up in the standings. Hobbs rises from the ashes when he is 34: an age when Waitkus was inauspiciously winding down his big league career. And there was nothing mysterious about Steinhagen. When she shot and wounded the unmarried big leaguer in room 1297A of Chicago's Edgewater Beach Hotel, the Phillies were in town to play the Cubs—and Steinhagen had been obsessed with Waitkus for several years, dating from his time in Chicago. According to John Theodore, the 19-year-old had constructed a shrine to the ballplayer, consisting of hundreds of photos and clippings, which she would stare at for hours. Her mother reported that she even would set a place for him at the family dinner table. After his trade to the Phillies, she felt abandoned—and her infatuation became deadly.

The story of Steinhagen was extensively covered in the media. As reported in several accounts published in *The New York Times* and elsewhere, a note from the teenager awaited Waitkus's arrival at the hotel that evening. It was signed "Ruth Anne Burns" and, in it, Steinhagen wrote:

It is extremely important that I see you as soon as possible. We're not acquainted, but I have

something of importance to speak to you about. I think it would be to your advantage to let me explain this to you as I am leaving the hotel the day after tomorrow. I realize this is out of the ordinary, but as I say, it is extremely important.

Steinhagen originally was planning to stab Waitkus and then shoot herself. Accounts vary as to what exactly happened when Waitkus entered her room. But what is clear is that, in an instant, Steinhagen changed her plans and shot the ballplayer but lost her nerve and failed to harm herself.

After the incident, Waitkus told reporters, "I went up to my room and called her because I thought it might be someone I knew—someone from downstate or a friend of a friend. When she opened the door, she took a look and said, 'come in for a minute.' She was very abrupt and businesslike. I asked what she wanted and walked through the little entrance hall over to the window. When I turned around there she was with the .22 caliber rifle. She said, 'You're not going to bother me anymore.' Before I could say anything else, whammy!" He added, "She had the coldest looking face I ever saw. No expression at all. She wasn't happy—she wasn't anything." Waitkus noted that he had never met Steinhagen, and was unsure if he ever had received correspondence from her. "We ballplayers get a lot of letters from girls and don't pay any attention to them. We call them 'baseball Annie's.'"

Waitkus was rushed to Illinois Masonic Hospital, where he was reported to be in critical condition with a rifle slug lodged in muscles near his spine. The bullet first pierced and collapsed his right lung, and he received two blood transfusions as well as oxygen. The bullet was surgically removed and, on June 18, another operation was performed to remove blood from his lung cavity. All in all, Waitkus underwent four procedures, and doctors described his quick improvement as "little short of miraculous." The ballplayer also told reporters, "I haven't got over the whole surprise. It's just like a bad dream. I would just like to know what got into that silly honey picking on a nice guy like me. She must be crazy, charging around with a rifle. It was safer for me on New Guinea, wasn't it?"

For her part, Steinhagen was booked by the police and charged with "assault with intent to murder." She told the authorities that she "just had to shoot somebody," adding that she liked Waitkus "best of anybody in the world" and had been dreaming about him—and praying for him. According to the *Times*, the police "attributed Miss Steinhagen's action to a twisted fascination for the ball player and a desire to be in the

limelight.” She was committed to Illinois’ Kankakee State Hospital, where she was given shock treatments. Steinhagen never went on trial for shooting Waitkus. Instead, she remained at Kankakee until 1952, when she was declared cured and released. She then faded into obscurity, and resided for decades in Chicago. In March 2013, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that she had died in Chicago three months earlier at age 83, after a fall in her home.

While Waitkus, unlike Hobbs, did not have to wait a decade and a half to resume his baseball career, one can only speculate on the overall impact of the shooting on the quality of his play. Sure, he was one of the stars of the 1950 Whiz Kids, but would he have enjoyed additional all-star seasons with the Phillies? What numbers might he have put up? Might he even have been worthy of consideration for the Baseball Hall of Fame? We will never know. However, the shooting clearly affected the ballplayer’s private life. For one thing, in the late 1980s, *New York Times* sports columnist Ira Berkow heard from Waitkus’s son, Edward (Ted) Waitkus Jr., a Boulder, Colorado, lawyer. The junior Waitkus reported that his father had met his mother while recovering from the shooting in Clearwater Beach, Florida. “Had it not been for this horrible event in his life, my sister and I would probably not be here,” he noted. “Life is very ironic. I think sometimes that all horror that comes to us has reason....”

Given that *The Natural* was published in 1952, Bernard Malamud could not have known what the future would hold for Eddie Waitkus. Yet certain aspects of Waitkus’s later life did indeed reflect on the plight of Roy Hobbs as envisioned by the writer. According to Ted Waitkus, his father “had always told me he understood the four years of his career lost to World War II. ‘Everyone went,’ he would say. He, however, never quite accepted being shot, that is, the time lost because of the shooting.” He also noted, “My dad was an easy-going, trusting guy at the time, and kind of flippant with women.... The shooting changed my father a great deal, as you might imagine. Before, he was a very outgoing person. Then he became almost paranoid about meeting new people, and pretty much even stopped going out drinking with his teammates, which is what I guess they did in those days.” And he added, “When [Steinhagen] was about to be released from the mental hospital after only a few years—they said she had fully recovered—my father and my family fought to keep her in. My father feared for his life.”

After his retirement from baseball, Waitkus faded from the limelight. In 1961 he split from his wife and suffered a nervous breakdown. “In my research talking

to doctors,” reported John Theodore, “they concluded that he was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder because his symptoms were classic. He avoided people. He had anxiety. He self-medicated his depression with alcohol.” A partial return to baseball came in 1966, when he hired on as a hitting instructor at Ted Williams’s baseball camp. However, in 1972, at the all-too-young age of 53, Waitkus died of esophageal cancer. At the time, he was living in a Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, boardinghouse. “Different doctors through the years have expressed the theory that the stress of the shooting, combined with the four operations, allowed the cancer to take hold,” explained Ted Waitkus. “Cancer of the lung or esophagus can take up to 20 years or more to be fatal. My dad was never diagnosed as having cancer. It wasn’t until after the autopsy that this came out. So I think Ruth Steinhagen was more successful than she thought.”

Conjecture regarding the connection between fiction and reality in *The Natural* dates from its publication. In his review of the book in the August 24, 1952, *New York Times*, Harry Sylvester observed that Malamud “draws heavily on baseball legend and history, almost interchangeably.” Since then, writers, reviewers, and historians have speculated about the players, personalities, and events that may (or may not) have influenced Malamud during the writing process.

Countless observers have assumed—and casually reported—that the entire premise of *The Natural* is directly linked to the Waitkus shooting. Here are some representative examples:

“The shooting of Eddie Waitkus inspired Bernard Malamud to write *The Natural*, first published in 1952.” (Charles DeMotte, in “Baseball Heroes and Femme Fatales,” *The Cooperstown Symposium on Baseball and American Culture*: 2002)

“What happened to Waitkus provided the inspiration for Bernard Malamud’s *The Natural*.” (Wil A. Linkugel and Edward J. Pappas, *They Tasted Glory: Among the Missing at the Baseball Hall of Fame*)

“The incident inspired Bernard Malamud to write his 1952 novel *The Natural*.” (Joshua Prager, *The Echoing Green: The Untold Story of Bobby Thomson, Ralph Branca and the Shot Heard Round the World*)

“...the attack [on Waitkus] was the seed from which Malamud’s story had grown.” (G. Richard McKelvey, *Lost in the Sun: The Comebacks and Comedowns of Major League Ballplayers*)

“[Waitkus’] story was the inspiration for the Roy Hobbs character in Bernard Malamud’s *The Natural*.” (Steve Johnson, *Chicago Cubs Yesterday & Today*)

“[The Waitkus case] inspired Bernard Malamud to write *The Natural*...” (Gordon Edes, writing in the *South Florida Sun Sentinel*)

“[The book was] inspired by the 1949 shooting of Philadelphia Phillies first baseman Eddie Waitkus...” (Carolyn Kellogg, writing in the *Los Angeles Times*)

“[The Waitkus shooting] inspired Bernard Malamud to write his 1952 classic novel, *The Natural*.” (Bob Minzesheimer, writing in *USA Today*)

“[The book’s] immediate inspiration was the real-life case of one Eddie Waitkus, a first baseman for the Philadelphia Phillies who was also shot by a deranged woman in a hotel room.” (Kevin Baker, in the introduction to a 2003 reprint of *The Natural*)

Nonetheless, it is flat-out incorrect to declare that the murder attempt on Eddie Waitkus was the singular inspiration for *The Natural*. For one thing, might the shooting of Roy Hobbs have been an outgrowth of an altogether different incident: the July 1932 shooting of Chicago Cubs shortstop Billy Jurgens by Violet Valli, a showgirl with whom he was romantically connected? To expand this further, might Malamud have been aware of a certain piece supposedly penned by *New York Times* columnist Arthur Daley—the existence of which has taken on a life of its own? In the novel (as opposed to the screen adaptation), Roy Hobbs’s ego allows him to be fatally corrupted—and it is noted in “A Talk With B. Malamud,” published in the *Times* in 1961, that *The Natural* “was suggested by a column written by Arthur Daley for this newspaper—why does a talented man sell out?” Even though there are no direct quotations from Malamud in this piece, in *After Alienation: American Novels in Mid-Century*, published in 1964, Marcus Klein reported that the book “was suggested, Malamud has said, by one of Arthur Daley’s columns in *The New York Times*, which raised



NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, NY

Might the shooting of Roy Hobbs in *The Natural* been inspired by the 1932 shooting of Chicago Cubs shortstop Billy Jurgens—pictured above—with showgirl Violet Valli, with whom he was romantically involved?

the question, why does a talented man sell out?” In a Daley obituary published in *Dictionary of American Biography*, Kevin J. O’Keefe noted that “one of Arthur Daley’s columns concerned a talented baseball player’s betrayal of his principles and was turned into a book, *The Natural*, by Bernard Malamud.” In a paper titled “Daley’s Diamond: The Baseball Writing of Arthur J. Daley,” Jim Harper observed, “Daley’s treatment of gambling and fixing in sport inspired novelist Bernard Malamud to explore the theme of a talented athlete gone wrong in *The Natural*.”

On the rare occasion in which he discussed the genesis of the book, Malamud in fact stressed that he had Brooklyn—and the Dodgers—in mind when conjuring up *The Natural*, rather than any one event or any team in Philadelphia or Chicago. In *Conversations with Bernard Malamud*, the author observed that the book “was the experience of being a kid in Brooklyn. I lived somewhere near Ebbets Field. The old Brooklyn Dodgers were our heroes, our stars, like out of myths. Since the stadium was that near, it had to concern you.” Malamud continued, “I didn’t play much baseball as a kid but I went to Ebbets Field and Yankee Stadium, I saw Babe Ruth, Dazzy Vance, and enjoyed the Brooklyn Dodgers in action.” He added that ballplayers “were the ‘heroes’ of my American childhood. I wrote *The Natural* as a tale of a mythological

hero... [I] tried to use [mythology] to symbolize and explicate an ethical dilemma of American life.”

On another occasion, Malamud told *Paris Review* interviewer Daniel Stern, “As a kid, for entertainment I turned to the movies and dime novels. Maybe *The Natural* derives from Frank Merriwell as well as the adventures of the Brooklyn Dodgers in Ebbets Field.” (In this interview, he also declared, without citing Waitkus or any other baseball figure, “Events from life may creep into the narrative...” and “When I start I have a pretty well-developed idea what the book is about and how it ought to go, because generally I’ve been thinking about it and making notes for months, if not years.”) In a talk given at Bennington College in 1984, two years before his death, Malamud noted, “Baseball had interested me... but I wasn’t able to write about the game until I transformed game into myth, via Jesse Weston’s Percival legend with an assist from T. S. Eliot’s ‘The Wasteland’ plus the lives of several ballplayers I had read, in particular Babe Ruth’s and Bobby Feller’s. The myth enriched the baseball lore as feats of magic transformed the game.” In all these discussions, Malamud clearly does not cite Eddie Waitkus.

During the summer of 1949, the writer and his family moved from New York City to Corvallis, Oregon, where he began teaching at Oregon State University. It was here where the bulk of *The Natural* was written. In a detailed, superbly researched article, “‘Them Dodgers is My Gallant Knights’: Fiction as History in *The Natural*,” Harley Henry offers what is perhaps the definitive connection between Waitkus and Hobbs: “We can assume that before leaving New York he had a baseball story in mind, though perhaps only a short story inspired by the shooting of the player Eddie Waitkus in June 1949, an event around which the first short section of *The Natural* is composed.”

In shaping *The Natural*, Malamud admittedly incorporated the public personas of Feller and Ruth and his youthful remembrances of the Brooklyn Dodgers. But Henry reported that he also “began to shape an ‘exile and return’ plot imitating current events, for which he fleshed out his conception of Roy—based on Feller and Ruth—with allusions to three other players, two of them active at the time: Joe Jackson, Ted Williams, and Sal Maglie.” He added that “Roy Hobbs is an amalgam of Feller’s youthful innocence, Ruth’s hungry prowess, Williams’s hostility and pride, and Jackson’s natural but corruptible talent.”

Roy Hobbs starts out as a teen pitching phenom who travels by train for a tryout. His experiences on board mirror that of the young Bob Feller as he journeyed to join Cleveland in 1936. They are described in *Strikeout*

Story, Feller’s 1947 autobiography, a copy of which, according to Henry, Malamud brought with him to Corvallis. Additionally, another episode in the book—Hobbs’s strikeout of Walter “The Whammer” Wambold, clearly a Babe Ruth clone—mirrors the untested Feller’s whiffing of eight St. Louis Cardinals in an exhibition game. And Hobbs’s transition from potentially great pitcher to fence-busting slugger reflects the career of the Bambino. “Ruth’s legend, and its retellings after his death in 1948,” noted Henry, “were matters Malamud could not possibly ignore when he began conceiving a baseball hero that very same year.”

Hobbs’s desire to be acclaimed the best damned ballplayer ever is pure Ted Williams—and, like Teddy Ballgame, he wears number 9 in the movie. The inspiration for “Wonderboy,” Hobbs’s hand-carved bat, could be Shoeless Joe Jackson’s lumber, which he called “Black Betsy.” (In his review of *The Natural*, Harry Sylvester described “Wonderboy” as a “trick bat—not unlike that used by Heinie Groh of the Cincinnati Reds back in the Twenties...”) Hobbs’s coming to the majors and his heroics for the New York Knights parallel the plight of Sal Maglie, who debuted with the New York Giants in 1945 and summarily was banned from professional baseball by Commissioner Happy Chandler after joining the Mexican League. Maglie, like Hobbs, was in his thirties when he resurrected his career, returning to the Giants in 1950 and sparking the team with an 18–4 won-lost record. At the novel’s finale, a newsboy’s query of “Say it ain’t true, Roy?” (in response to allegations that Hobbs threw a ballgame) echoes the legendary “Say it ain’t so, Joe?” question put to Shoeless Joe Jackson regarding his participation in the 1919 Black Sox scandal. And Hobbs’s banishment from the game mirrors the expulsion of Jackson and his White Sox cohorts.

Hobbs’s smashing a homer that breaks the face of a clock, resulting in a shower of broken glass, may embody the flight of a ball hit by the Boston Braves’ Bama Rowell in the second inning of the second game of a doubleheader at Ebbets Field on May 30, 1946. The ball smashed into the face of the Bulova clock that adorned the top of the scoreboard, spraying Dodgers right fielder Dixie Walker with falling glass. Furthermore, it may be said that the pre-Hobbs New York Knights are a version of the inept Brooklyn Dodgers of the 1930s. The Knights’ owner, Judge Goodwill Banner, shares similar characteristics with Dodgers general manager Branch Rickey, starting with a propensity for cheapness.

Clearly, as he shaped *The Natural*, Bernard Malamud had in mind a range of baseball facts and folklore.

The near-murder of Eddie Waitkus, the Fightin' Phillie and Whiz Kid, was just one of them.

THE PHILLIES AND THE NATURAL: A CAMEO APPEARANCE

If Rocky Balboa slugged home runs in Connie Mack Stadium instead of opponents in a boxing ring, one might boast of Philadelphia being the locale of at least one beloved baseball film. But such is not the case. Regrettably, the Phillies and A's—unlike the teams in New York, Chicago, or Brooklyn—rarely have been represented in any baseball film, good or bad. However, the Phillies do make a cameo appearance in the screen version of *The Natural*, as well as the novel upon which it is based.

The New York Knights may be a fictional team, but their opponents are real-life National League nines. The Knights' ineptitude is summarized in a pair of onscreen newspaper headlines: "Phils Blank Knights" and "Knights Lose—Philly Wins Four to Three." The Knights and Phillies also match up in Roy Hobbs's big league debut. It's the bottom of the seventh inning, and the Philadelphia nine lead the New Yorkers by a 4–3 score. The Knights are at bat, a runner leads off first, and Hobbs is called on to pinch hit. Pop Fisher, the Knights manager, cheers him on by yelling, "Alright Hobbs, knock the cover off the ball." But no one expects that this literally is what the rookie will do once he swings and bat meets horsehide. (In the novel, Fisher's line is, "Knock the cover off of it." After Hobbs does just that, Bernard Malamud writes, "Attempting to retrieve and throw, the Philly fielder got tangled in thread.") ■

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Phillies Bonus Babies, 1953–57

Sam Zygner

Beginning in 1947 and ending in 1965, Major League Baseball instituted what became known as the “Bonus Rule.” Major league owners, many slow to react to changes in the landscape of the game, were coming to the realization that in order to build a winning team, it was necessary to build a strong farm system. The strategy centered on signing highly touted prospects with the hope that these players would develop and produce winning results.

The “Bonus Rule” was an initiative by Major League Baseball to restore some semblance of competitive balance and counteract teams like the St. Louis Cardinals, Brooklyn Dodgers, and New York Yankees who were stockpiling and burying players in their vast minor league systems. Under the rule, any team was allowed to sign a prospect—many of whom were just out of high school—to a bonus of \$4,000 or more under the stipulation that they spend two years on a major league roster. Failure to follow the guidelines exposed the player to waivers, allowing him to be claimed by another team. Bonuses generally far exceeded the \$4,000 minimum. Scouts vied for the services of these “Bonus Babies” by offering them lucrative contracts. The rule was temporarily rescinded in 1950 after several owners expressed dissatisfaction, but was re-instituted in December 1952 by a committee chaired by Branch Rickey, swinging open the door to what would become the rule’s most infamous years.¹

During this period, one of baseball’s most prominent owners, Robert Carpenter Jr., although quite critical of the Bonus Rule, was quick to jump into the scrum by signing three of the most high profile talents available: Thomas Francis Qualters, Frederick William Van Dusen, and Mack Edwin Burk.² Like most of these signees, they would find little gold at the end of their baseball rainbows. Nevertheless, each has a story to tell. Although major league dreams were fleeting, their experiences enriched their lives and forever changed them as individuals.

TOM QUALTERS: “THEY CAN BEAT YA, BUT THEY CAN’T EAT YA”

There were two areas where young Tommy Qualters

took like a duck to water: the outdoors and athletics. Growing up in the friendly hamlet of McKeesport in western Pennsylvania, practically a stone’s throw away from Forbes Field, he joyfully engaged in both endeavors. On the athletic side of the coin, young Qualters excelled in baseball, basketball, and football.

Although more focused on the gridiron than the baseball diamond, he had a change of heart after an encounter with a friend and member of the Pittsburgh Steelers, Ray Mathews. Though Qualters was only a sophomore in high school, Mathews engaged him in a conversation that changed the young lad’s life.

I had contacts from Division I schools, and things like that...So, I said, “how much money are you making Ray?” and he says \$6,000. I went to bed that night thinking why would I go to college and get the heck kicked out of me for four years and if I’m any good I’ll go to the pros and get the heck kicked out of me. And so I made a sudden turn and I went to the high school football coach the next morning and I quit playing football and decide to concentrate on baseball.³

At 6’0” and 175 pounds, the strapping teenager dominated his high school team, accruing a 27–5 record while leading his squad to the WPIAL finals his junior year and winning the championship his senior season.⁴ In addition, Qualters honed his talents during the summer, hurling for the East End Merchants in the Greater Pittsburgh League and barnstorming with former major leaguer Frank Gustine’s traveling club.⁵ Reportedly, 15 of the 16 major league’s team scouts were pursuing the baby-faced phenomenon who was commanding their attention with his crackling fastball. The Phillies made an offer of \$50,000 (to be spread over an eight-year period), and upon graduating high school, Qualters was quick to sign on the dotted line.⁶ Some sources quote the actual amount to be \$40,000. “The Phillies pursued me harder than anyone,” recalled Qualters. He added, “Come to find out, what I heard later on, I was the number one guy in the coun-

try.”⁷ Soon after signing he acquired the nickname “Money Bags” which followed him his entire baseball career.

The future appeared rosy for the 18-year-old, but his introduction to the major leagues would prove to be a rude awakening. To say his reception was cold would be an understatement. He remembered many of his teammates resenting his taking a roster spot from established veteran Jackie Mayo, which brought not only the ire of several players, but disdain from a clubhouse attendant nicknamed “Unk” who outfitted him in a too-small uniform for his first workout with the club. When Qualters approached the petulant attendant about receiving better-fitting togs, he was told in so many words, “If you don’t wanna wear the God damned thing, you can leave.”⁸

For two seasons, Qualters rode the bench and occasionally pitched batting practice. Admittedly, he knew he didn’t belong there, but he was caught between a rock and a hard place. “It was very frustrating. The players and manager (Steve O’Neill) were from the old school and didn’t accept me. You can imagine the resentment. ...As a result I was off by myself most of the time.”⁹ However, a few of his teammates did their best to make the untried rookie feel at home, for which Qualters was grateful. “They treated me like one of the boys and were always giving me advice. I spent a lot of time with Jim Konstanty in the bullpen and he went out of his way to be nice, Robin Roberts, too.”¹⁰

Finally on September 13, 1953, during a lopsided contest against the St. Louis Cardinals, Qualters made his major league debut. With the Phillies trailing 11–1 in the bottom of the eighth inning, preparing to face Steve Bilko, the nervous rookie took his warm-up tosses. Bilko had already collected a pair of doubles and a single. It was an inauspicious beginning for Qualters when Bilko drove the ball deep over the fence for a home run. The misery continued as he allowed six runs on four hits, walked a batter, threw a wild pitch, and hit a batter, retiring only one man before being mercifully relieved by Konstanty.¹¹

With the two-year obligation coming to an end, the Phillies decided to assign the 20-year-old to their Class-B affiliate in Reidsville, North Carolina. On June 14, 1955, he made his first start and tossed a five-hitter against High Point-Thomasville, earning a 6–3 win. His next start against Fayetteville did not go quite as well; he allowed 12 hits and seven walks, but earned his second straight win in the 11–7 victory.¹² It wasn’t what Qualters had envisioned, but at least he had his chance to pitch every fourth day.

Under the watchful eye of manager and former

major league chucker Charlie Gassaway, Qualters regained his sea legs. “It was hard getting back into competition. I had doubts about myself,” Qualters recounted.¹³ Although he had lost some zip on his fast-ball he developed a sinker that he thought would help him get back to the majors. He finished the season leading his team in games started (23) while compiling a respectable record (8–9, 4.90 ERA).¹⁴

The next year, Qualters impressed the Phillies brain trust enough to earn an assignment with Triple-A Miami of the International League. Under the tutelage of skipper Don Osborn, his role would change from starting rotation to swingman. His two years in Miami left him with some of the happiest memories of his career.

Qualters laughs when remembering his introduction to Miami and a lifelong friendship he made with a baseball icon.

So, I’ll tell you an interesting story about that...The club was run by Bill Veeck...So it was a longshot, in my mind, for me to make that ballclub. I had only played a half a year of class B ball...and so I go down there and I’m really working my tail off and there were many ex-major league players on the ballclub. Then they start cutting guys...Finally it comes—Opening Day—and I am there, I’m still there, and I’m absolutely amazed I made the ballclub.

Well, before the game started, a big crowd and everything, and all of the sudden here comes a helicopter in. It lands beside the mound and who comes out but Satchel Paige. And I thought, you old son-of-a-gun, you just took my job you...And it had turned out that they had cut another guy: it wasn’t me. So, in the aftermath of that, Satch and I became very, very close.¹⁵

To this day Qualters still works with kids, helping them with their pitching and hitting skills. Among the many fond memories he has of his baseball career, are sharing those seasons in Miami with the great Satchel Paige and enjoying fishing expeditions, shooting the breeze in the bullpen and playing “Skidoodle” with the baseball legend who he still recalls as a friend.

There are moments in life when something or someone changes your course forever. Qualters remembers some sage advice from Paige that he credits with saving his career.

We’re in a game and it’s very early in the season...But this was my first shot, here I am in AAA

baseball, and it felt to me like I had made it to the majors. From the time I was a little kid I was never afraid of anything or anybody as long as I had a couple of rocks in my pocket which I carried all of the time, or a baseball in my hand. I had absolutely no fear of anything. And I come in the game and I get out there on the mound, most of these guys I'm playing against are ex-major league players...All of the sudden I'm on the mound and I'm taking my warm up tosses and I get the shakes. I mean I became petrified. I know I haven't felt anything like that in my life. And you can't bullshit another ballplayer, you know. Ballplayers can sense that, they can see it where nobody else can. Somehow or another I got them out. I threw the ball up there and they hit it at somebody or whatever. I got out of the inning. And I went home that night and I'm trying to figure how I can quit and go home. Not because of the fans or anything like that, just that I couldn't stand the thought of players on the team thinking that I was a coward. I mean that was something that I had never gone through before. I was just totally lost.

So, we were in the bullpen the next night. Of course I'm sitting beside Satch and a couple of innings go along. Finally he comes and hits me on the leg and he said, "What's the matter son?" I didn't know what to do so I just told him the truth and I told him what happened. And he started laughing. He said, "I'm going to tell you son," he said, "Those sons-of-a-bitches can beat ya, but they can't eat ya." Geez, they called down there and it's me again. So I get back up there and I take my warm up tosses like right on the mound and I'm standing there and I start getting the shakes again, you know, and I just thought that's it, the sons-a-bitches can beat me, but you can't eat me and I got them out. From that day on I could hardly wait to get out there. But Satch, without question, saved my career.

With newfound confidence, Qualters put together two successful seasons in Miami in preparation for his return to Philadelphia. In 1956, he finished with a 5-5 record and an impressive 3.38 ERA working 80 innings. His second season was even better, again splitting time between the bullpen and starting rotation; he crafted an 11-12 record, started sixteen games, and collected three shutouts, improving his ERA to 3.29 while working 186 innings. He earned a late season

call-up to the Phillies and appeared in 6 games, hurling $7\frac{1}{3}$ innings, with an ERA of 7.36.¹⁶

Qualters made the Phillies roster in 1958, but appeared in only one game before he was purchased by the Chicago White Sox and handed the role of reliever. Qualters proclaimed, "Al Lopez, without a doubt, was the greatest manager."¹⁷ Although the Sox staff was well-stocked with quality relievers like Turk Lown, Bob Shaw, and Gerry Staley, Lopez found a spot for Qualters who appeared in 26 games (43 innings, 4.19 ERA).¹⁸

Buoyed by the confidence Lopez had in him, Qualters reported to White Sox spring training in 1959 with high hopes of breaking into the starting rotation; he was slated as a fifth starter. However, for the first time in his career, Qualters developed a sore arm, which he blamed on the pitching coach, Ray Berres, who tried to change his mechanics. "I'm trying to be pleasant and listen to him, but when I'd get out to the mound I would throw the way I always threw it, which was nothing wrong with it...my mechanics were fine, but he wanted me to throw like something out of a book."¹⁹

Hoping that he would work through the injury, the White Sox assigned Qualters to Triple-A Indianapolis of the American Association. After pitching a few starts, he began to experience numbness in his fingers and his arm grew worse. Qualters recounted, "I was hurting all of the time and by the time I got to someone who knew a little bit about arms in those days...he gave me a shot of cortisone and he said don't pitch for seven to 10 days." He added, "Well I went back and told the manager [Walker Cooper] I wasn't supposed to throw for seven to 10 days and a few days later I'm throwing again."²⁰

Qualters then began the nomad stage of his career, bouncing from Indianapolis to Houston and then San Diego in 1960 (7-9, 4.47 combined), and in 1961 to Indianapolis, Dallas Fort-Worth, and Williamsport (a combined record of 5-1, 4.90). By 1962, and pitching in constant pain, Qualters made a last stop in Dallas-Fort Worth (0-4, 10.80) before hanging up his cleats for good.²¹

Qualters made the transition to private life by working for the Atlantic Refinery Company managing service stations, before finding his true calling. After passing his civil service exam, he became a Conservation Officer and proudly served for 30 years before retiring. Tom and his wife raised five children and have 10 grandchildren.²² One grandson, Shawn Stiffler, is a pitching coach and recruiting coordinator for Virginia Commonwealth University.²³

FRED VAN DUSEN: FROM BAGGING GROCERIES TO THE BIG LEAGUES

During the summers of 1954 and 1955, Fred Van Dusen received his fill of the elixir and drew attention from scouts from every major league team. The brash and boyishly handsome kid out of Bryant High School in Jackson Heights, New York, was exhibiting all the necessary tools: hitting for power and average, speed in the field and on the base paths, and a rocket arm. Representing the Astoria Cubs (Kiwanis) team from Queens, in the Hearst Sandlot Classic (HSC) held in the Polo Grounds, the 6'3", 180-pound high school junior was turning heads. The HSC was one of premier tournaments in the country for young talent, featuring the likes of Whitey Ford, Billy Loes, Gene Conley, Al Kaline, and Moose Skowron, just to name a few. Hall of Famer Al Simmons, serving as a manager for the J-A All-Stars, cited the youngster from Queens PSAL as the top performer of the tournament.²⁴

By graduation, the 18-year-old “phenom” was prepared to sign on the dotted line. The Van Dusen family was impressed by Phillies owner Robert Carpenter Jr. and they chose the Philadelphia Phillies and their generous bonus.²⁵

Van Dusen would later refuse his bonus choosing instead to play in the minor leagues, but in 1955, like other Bonus Babies, Van Dusen was unfairly ostracized by most of his teammates.²⁶ Rarely able to even appear in the batting cage, he waited impatiently to contribute. Finally, on September 11, 1955 at Milwaukee's County Stadium, manager Mayo Smith signaled Van Dusen to step into the on-deck circle and prepare to hit. In the bottom of the ninth inning, with the Phils trailing the Braves 9–1, lanky right-hander Humberto Robinson stood on the mound ready to deliver the pitch. “I was numb, but I told myself to get up there and go down swinging,” said Van Dusen.²⁷ On an 0–2 count Robinson delivered a bending curveball that nicked Van Dusen on the left knee, sending him to first base. The next batter, Stan Lopata, struck out, and Richie Ashburn popped out to right field to end the game. It would turn out to be Van Dusen's only major league appearance, giving him the distinction to be the only major league player hit by a pitch while never making an appearance on the field.

Even though his major league career was short-lived, Van Dusen recounted with great pride, “Wow, you know, even to be on the field with those fellas was something.”²⁸

After reporting to the Phillies spring training camp in 1956, Van Dusen was farmed out to the Wilson Tobs of the Class-B Carolina League.²⁹ It was a struggle for the 18-year-old, and he blamed his own immaturity

for his lack of success. “It happens to a lot of young players back in those days. I don't think it happens today as much because they're more mature.” He added, “But to come out of high school, go to the big leagues and sign, it was quite an emotional situation for a kid because you went from delivering groceries to being a big leaguer.”³⁰

Van Dusen rebounded strongly in 1957 at Class-B High Point-Thomasville, finding his stroke and batting .310 in 119 games while bashing 25 home runs. He was named the Carolina League “Player of the Year” and appeared to be back on track.³¹ Brimming with confidence, Van Dusen was sure he would return to the Phillies in 1958, but instead was assigned to Triple-A Miami of the International League. As a 20-year-old brash youngster, he said with a smile, “They don't know what they're doing” and added “Chuck Essegian and I are the only .300 hitters on the roster. Don't worry, though, I'll be back. I'll have such a great season; the Phils will have to get me back.”³²

Van Dusen's stay in Miami was brief; he appeared in 22 games while batting a paltry .167 with one home run and 5 RBIs. “I really stunk up the joint down there to be honest with you,” Van Dusen said.³³ Not used to being platooned, he was especially frustrated and found himself demoted to Class-A Williamsport of the Eastern League for the rest of the season. Van Dusen returned to the Grays in 1959 and finished the season batting .272 in 106 games, with 14 homers and 65 RBIs. Most impressive was Van Dusen's OBP of .437.³⁴

Van Dusen stayed in the Phillies organization his whole career. He spent 1960 with Asheville of the Sally League and Indianapolis of the American Association and in 1961 with Chattanooga of the Southern Association.³⁵ By then he could see the handwriting on the wall. “You go from prospect to suspect,” explained Van Dusen. He added, “You see younger guys pass you by and you know it's time to pack it in.”³⁶

Following his baseball career, Van Dusen found his niche in insurance and built his own lucrative business. He found love with his wife of 38 years and raised a happy family.

Now retired and living in Tennessee, Van Dusen received national attention when he threw out the first pitch on October 2, 2012, before a late season contest at Marlins Stadium. Van Dusen had been invited to this game to honor Adam Greenberg, who had become the second player to be hit by a pitch and never appear in the field. In his one-day comeback to the major leagues, Greenberg realized his dream of an official at-bat when he struck out on three pitches facing R.A. Dickey. Greenberg's ceremonial at-bat returned Van Dusen to

his solitary spot as the only player to be hit by a pitch and never appear in the field.³⁷

Van Dusen summed up his life experience:

You know they say youth is wasted on the young. Because by the time you figure it out...I look at it as an experience. What I did learn was how to take defeat and get through it. I wish I could have learned that a little sooner, but that's how the game is. Because you don't always learn by doing it the hard way, but I learned by doing it the hard way.³⁸

MACK BURK: "I THOUGHT I DIED AND WENT TO HEAVEN"

Mack Burk has a soothing southern drawl that naturally draws people to him like a Texas barbecue draws a crowd. The tall, lanky youngster grew up in Nacogdoches, Texas, and found out early that he was a natural athlete. He started out playing softball on the hard dirt fields in the neighborhood before moving to baseball.

Burk caught the eye of several scouts while playing shortstop at Stephen Austin High School and competing against adults as a member of the Mechanics Uniform Supply amateur team which won the American Baseball Congress national championship in 1955.³⁹ He was especially impressive during the tournament, batting a glossy .420 with a couple of home runs.⁴⁰

After graduating high school, Burk at 6' 4", 175 pounds accepted a scholarship to the University of Texas in basketball. "The only reason I took the basketball scholarship was because they offered it to me early and I felt I could play baseball, too," said Burk.⁴¹ Texas head coach Bibb Falk was ecstatic to have an athlete of such caliber and happily accepted Burk on the squad. However, fate stepped in and, after breaking his collarbone during his sophomore season at UT, Burk decided to focus on the diamond instead.⁴² On September 29, 1955, Burk sat down with his family and Hap Morse. After a bit of dickering he signed for a \$45,000 bonus.⁴³ The deal stipulated a \$10,000 advance, the balance to be paid in three annual installments. One benefit was that Burk, a college junior, was able to purchase an 800-acre Texas ranch in partnership with his father Edwin.⁴⁴

Burk reported to his first spring training in Clearwater, Florida, in 1956 unsure how much playing time he would receive. Upon arriving, Burk exclaimed, "I thought I died and went to heaven."⁴⁵ Surrounding him were players who, up to that point, he had only read about in the newspapers. "And I mean, here I am a 20-year-old kid, you know, and you got guys like

Robin Roberts, and Curt Simmons, and Andy Seminick, and Stan Lopata, and Granny Hamner, and Willie 'Puddin Head' Jones, Del Ennis and Richie Ashburn; these were all guys I had been watching for years. Here I am riding the bus with them and training with them."

Unlike many Bonus Babies, Burk had a very different experience with his baptism in the big leagues, as he fondly reminisced:

Robin Roberts was probably the nicest guy in the world. He kinda took me under his wing and told me not to do anything without consulting him because he didn't want somebody taking advantage of me...he knew I was young. In fact all of them—Willie "Puddin Head" Jones and I were real good friends—the whole group, they accepted me and I didn't have any problems at all.⁴⁶

On May 25 he made his first major league appearance pinch-running for Andy Seminick in the eighth inning of a Phillies 8–5 loss to Pittsburgh. His first big league at-bat came on June 5 at Crosley Field in Cincinnati. Pinch-hitting for Curt Simmons in the fifth inning, Burk singled sharply to center field off Reds starter Joe Nuxhall and later scored on a Lopata sacrifice fly. Although it was a special moment for Burk, the Phils fell short in the run column, 9–4.⁴⁷

He saw limited action his inaugural season and was used almost exclusively as a pinch-runner. His manager, Mayo Smith, used him several times, mostly running for second baseman Solly Hemus late in games. "I was kinda his designated pinch-runner whenever it would get late in the ball games," said Burk. Although he received little playing time with the Phillies, Burk gained much experience working in the bullpen in addition to receiving advice from a hall-of-fame receiver. Burk recounted, "Of course I worked the bullpen. Benny Bengough was the bullpen coach. We were going north one year and playing the Yankees and Bill Dickey was still with the Yankees. And Benny took me over to him and the three of us sat down and talked for a long time about catching and everything."⁴⁸

The 1957 season found Burk wearing olive drab instead of Phillies flannel while serving on active duty in the reserves. He missed that entire season. The Phillies had planned for Burk to play in the Panama League for winter ball, but because of his late release he was unable to participate. With his Bonus Rule obligation fulfilled, the Phillies assigned Burk to Class-AA Tulsa (Oilers) in April 1958.⁴⁹

After appearing in only eight games, and batting .182 in Tulsa, Burk was transferred to Williamsport

Class-A of the Eastern League where he finished the year batting .236 in 94 games. That same season he returned to Philadelphia for his last major league at-bat and unceremoniously struck out. He closed his major league ledger with a .500 batting average.⁵⁰

In 1959, Burk split time between Triple-A Buffalo of the International League and Williamsport again. Burk also served as Jimmie Coker's backup for the pennant-winning Bisons, batting only .200 in 35 at-bats. Contemplating retirement from the game he loved during the offseason, Burk decided to give it one more go on his father's prompting.

So one Sunday afternoon I'm sitting in my den with my mother and my dad. And my dad looked at me and said, "Son, you don't have a job so you might as well go out there and get on that airplane and go to Florida to spring training." I hadn't even signed a contract. I go to Florida for spring training and give it one more shot. So I did and I ended up going to Asheville, North Carolina. They had some young pitchers there they wanted me to handle and so that was the last year that I played.⁵¹

Although it proved to be a fairly successful season behind the dish—with Burk hitting a solid .281 and driving in 46 runs in 114 games—he decided to hang up the tools of ignorance and move on. He was clear on his goals and stated, "I said I'm going to give it a few years and I'm not going to be a baseball bum and play in the minors for years...I just wanted to get established in life." He added, "If I wasn't going to make it, I wasn't going to make it and I was going to quit."⁵²

After working many years in the electrical supply business, Burk retired in 1997 and now enjoys time off with his wife in the area of Houston, Texas. They enjoy traveling in their motor home and have been known to visit friends in Vero Beach, Florida now and again. He has no regrets from his baseball career and cherishes the friendships he made along the way. ■

Acknowledgments

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Tom Qualters's Amazing 1954 Season for the Philadelphia Phillies

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Thomas Francis Qualters was a bonus baby whom the Philadelphia Phillies signed on June 16, 1953, for an estimated \$40,000. He was a star pitcher at McKeesport, Pennsylvania and once struck out 21 batters in a seven-inning high school game and 24 in an eight-inning high school game, allowing only one hit in each contest.¹ When he joined the Phillies, he felt that most of the players were pleasant to him. However, manager Steve O'Neill and the coaches did not believe he should be on the team. Thus, they pretty much ignored him.² On September 13, 1953, O'Neill finally put Tom into a major league game when he relieved Tommy Glaviano in the bottom of the eighth inning, with the Phillies losing 11-1 to the Cardinals in St. Louis. Unfortunately, Steve Bilko greeted him with a home run and Peanuts Lowrey walked. After throwing a wild pitch, he hit Rip Repulski with a pitch. Harvey Haddix and then Solly Hemus singled, Red Schoendienst forced Hemus, Stan Musial doubled, and then Jim Konstanty replaced Qualters. A single by Enos Slaughter resulted in Qualters having faced seven batters and given up six runs on four hits, one walk, and one hit batter in the one-third of an inning he pitched (plus the one wild pitch).³ Qualters would not play in a major league game again until September 7, 1957, despite the fact that he was on the 1954 Phillies' roster for the entire season.

According to the *Sports Encyclopedia Baseball*, only four players have been on a major league roster all season without entering a game: Dick Rudolph in 1921 (Boston, NL), Joe Heving in 1935 (Chicago, AL), Grover Hartley in 1928 (Cleveland) and Qualters in 1954.⁴ All four have a designation in that volume after their names of "DP" for did not play. However, Rudolph had hurt his arm and was a coach, not a player in 1921.^{5,6} Heving had been sent to the minors after the 1934 season, and Hartley, like Rudolph in 1921, was officially a coach in 1928.^{7,8} Qualters was the only one to truly perform this odd feat of being on a major league roster all season, but never actually being in an official game.

A number of circumstances caused Qualters's unique 1954 season. Starting with the Detroit Tigers signing

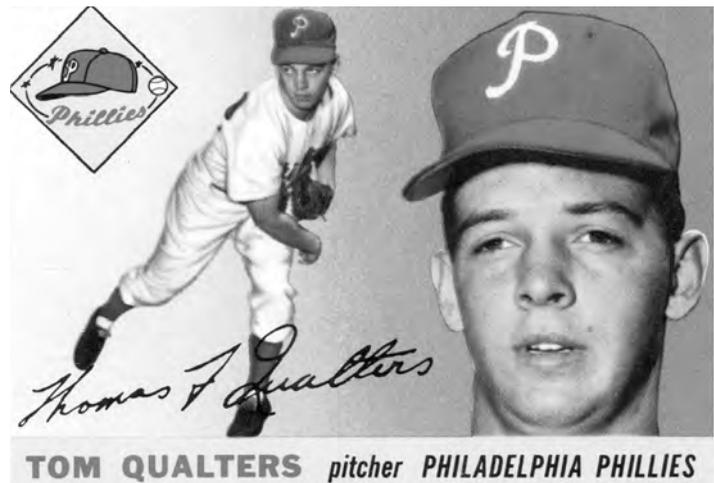
Dick Wakefield on June 21, 1941, teams were signing high school and college players for huge bonuses.⁹ This escalated after World War II and team owners felt that this spending of huge bonuses on unproven young players was out of control. A number of these bonus players did have outstanding careers such as Hall of Famer Robin Roberts, and others such as Johnny Antonelli, Curt Simmons, Dick Groat, and Herb Score also had significant success. Unfortunately, there were many players such as Frank House (Detroit Tigers), J.W. Porter (Chicago White Sox), Paul Pettit (Pittsburgh Pirates), Marty Keough (Boston Red Sox), Eddie Urness (Boston Red Sox), Jerry Zimmerman (Boston Red Sox), Tom Casagrande (Philadelphia Phillies) and Billy Joe Davidson (Cleveland) who were either complete busts or at best just journeyman players. In December 1952, the owners created a new rule to protect themselves from themselves.¹⁰ Any player who signed for more than a \$4,000 bonus had to stay on the major league roster for two full seasons, or be released. They figured that no team would be foolish enough to spend all that money on untested players who had to use up precious spots on the 25-man roster. However, all 16 teams did sign such players. This rule was in effect from 1953 through 1957. Finally, after the 1957 season, the bonus rule was rescinded.¹¹

Thus Qualters had to stay on the Phillies major league roster from June 16, 1953, through June 16, 1955. After 77 games in 1954, Phillies' manager Steve O'Neill was fired and Terry Moore replaced him.¹² Unfortunately, Moore felt the same way about Qualters as did O'Neill.¹³ Many people have forgotten, but the Phillies from 1950 through 1955 were not bad teams. They had won the 1950 National League pennant but fallen to fifth place in 1951. However, they still had their nucleus of the 1950 Whiz Kids team including Robin Roberts, Curt Simmons, Jim Konstanty, Granny Hamner, Willie Jones, Del Ennis, and Richie Ashburn. They finished fourth in 1952 (only one game out of third place), were tied for third in 1953, and finished fourth in both 1954 and 1955. The fact that the team was very decent actually hurt Qualters's opportunity to pitch.

Starting in 1918, baseball divided up the World Series profit with all of the first-division teams.¹⁴ The amount of money could be quite significant. The 1953 Phillies had 30 full shares of \$810 each (and six other cash awards).^{15,16} In 1954, while it was apparent before the season was half over that they would not win the pennant, they were always in the fight for first-division money. On August 1 they were tied in the loss column with the St. Louis Cardinals for fourth place.¹⁷ By September 1 they were in fifth, behind the Cincinnati Reds but ahead of the Cardinals. As September progressed, the Phillies inched ahead of the Reds. Going into the last game of the season, they were only one game ahead of the Cincinnati Reds for fourth-place money. If the Reds won and the Phillies lost, they would be tied for fourth and have to split the money. Therefore the Phillies could not afford to pitch an inexperienced rookie such as Qualters with so much money at stake. Of note, both the Reds and the Phillies lost their September 26 game and thus the Phillies collected the fourth-place money.¹⁸ There eventually were 33 full shares at \$648.36 each and four other cash awards.¹⁹ The average National League salary has been calculated to have been \$13,772 in 1954.²⁰ Thus, the fourth-place money was a significant enticement for the Phillies to win games and finish fourth. Other teams such as the Pittsburgh Pirates, who were long doomed to eighth place (and would eventually lose 101 games that year), could easily use bonus pitcher Laurin Pepper, and thus started him in eight games and used him in relief in six more. Of note, the buying power of a dollar in 1953 compared to 2012 was \$8.39 and thus the fourth-place money was worth \$5,439.74 today.²¹ Thus for many Phillies—the coaching staff as well as the players—this would be a significant windfall.

Also, the Phillies were not in any long, extra-inning games during the season.²² Typically, extra-inning games involve many pinch hitters and thus multiple pitchers. In fact, in some long games, non-pitchers have been forced to pitch. For the 1954 Phillies the longest game was 15 innings on June 17, but Robin Roberts pitched a complete game, which was typical of him. There was a 13-inning game on July 23 that Bob Miller and Robin Roberts pitched. However, there were not any long games that required multiple pitchers.

Finally, there were no real “blow out” losses for the Phillies in 1954. On May 17, there was an 8–0 loss, but the game was only 5–0 going into the 8th.²³ In the June 20 15–6 loss to Cincinnati, the Phillies used Herm Wehmeier, Jim Konstanty, Murry Dickson, Ron Mrozinski,



Qualters signed with the Phillies on June 16, 1953 but made only a single appearance in September and rode the bench the entire 1954 season.

ski, and Bob Greenwood.²⁴ That possibly could have been a chance for Qualters. There was a 10–0 loss on July 5 that was 10–0 after four innings that Wehmeier, Konstanty, and Greenwood pitched.²⁵ Again, Qualters could have pitched. On July 30 in a 12–3 loss to the St. Louis Cardinals, the score was only 4–3 going into the seventh. Bob Miller, Wehmeier, Konstanty, and Mrozinski pitched.²⁶ On September 18, the Phils lost 9–1 to the Giants; Dickson, Miller, Steve Ridzik, and Ron Mrozinski pitched.²⁷ While there were no double-digit losses except for the July 5 game, there were a few games where Qualters felt he could have had a chance at major league pitching experience.²⁸

Qualters went to the ballpark every day. He often pitched batting practice. Since they did not use any protective screen, this was a potential problem. Granny Hamner once lined a pitch that hit the bill of Qualters's cap. All pitchers, including Tom, had to have batting practice before the position players did. However, it was the batboy who pitched batting practice, not a pitcher or even a coach. After that, Qualters mainly went to the bullpen to watch the game, although he occasionally sat on the bench. He never was told by the managers or the coaches if or when he would pitch. He did not receive any pitching instructions from the coaches or managers until he was finally sold to the Chicago White Sox in 1958. There he was managed by Al Lopez and coached by legendary pitching coach Ray Berres.²⁹

Qualters did pitch in an exhibition game on May 3, 1954, when the Phillies played their Terre Haute farm team (Class B, Three I League). He relieved Johnny Lindell in this 10–2 victory.³⁰ Qualters did start a game in 1954 against a major league team but not a regular-season NL contest. The Phillies and the Philadelphia

Athletics used to play an annual charity game and Qualters was selected for the seventh annual game. Thus on June 28, Tom Qualters started for the Phillies in this exhibition game.³¹ He unfortunately beamed Vic Power in the first inning, knocking him unconscious. Qualters gave up four hits, and struck out one batter in only three innings, but was declared the winning pitcher. On July 12 during the All-Star Game break, the Phillies played an exhibition game against the Schenectady team. However, the Phillies tried to use as many former Schenectady players as possible and thus Qualters did not play, nor did he play the following day against Syracuse.³² On August 23 the Phillies played the Fort Wayne American Van Lines. However, this was a semi-pro team, not a professional team. Behind Qualters's five-hitter, the Phillies won 6–4.³³

Qualters was a fast runner.³⁴ In the minors he later did pinch running. However, despite slow players on the 1954 Phillies such as Del Ennis and Smoky Burgess, Qualters was never used as a pinch runner.

Pitcher Jim Brady of the 1955 Detroit Tigers almost was in the identical situation as Tom Qualters. He was signed to a large bonus on June 9, 1955, and did not play in any games that year.³⁵ However, the Tigers had played 52 games already and Brady was not with them all season.³⁶ In addition, it has been suggested that Brady was injured in 1955, but there is no evidence of his being on the disabled list.^{37,38}

Perhaps Qualters, O'Neill, and Moore were the fore-runners of Roy Hobbs and his manager Pop Fisher in the Robert Redford movie *The Natural*. When Roy Hobbs first came to the New York Knights, Fisher was very unhappy about his team signing Hobbs to a major league contract without his knowledge. Fisher said, "I ain't gonna play him," and for a long time he did not.³⁹ That was how O'Neill and Moore deep down felt about Qualters. As he said recently, "I'd been better off taking less money and signing with another team. But I was just a young, dumb kid then."⁴⁰ ■

Acknowledgments

The author wishes to acknowledge the help of Robert Gorman and Thomas F. Qualters Sr. for their help with this article.

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1964 Phillies, Fans, and Media

Andrew Milner

The 1964 Phillies enjoyed a six-and-a-half game lead in the National League with 12 games left in the season, proceeded to lose 10 in a row, and surrendered the pennant to the St. Louis Cardinals. The closing two weeks of the 1964 regular season inflicted psychic baseball wounds which began to heal after the Phillies' 1980 world championship and have faded with the passing decades and recent string of Phillies successes, (which began with the 2007 Phillies overcoming a seven-game deficit late in the season).

This article looks at the minds of Phillies fans in the weeks leading up to the 1964 collapse. In the manner of G.H. Fleming's *The Unforgettable Season* and Jean-Pierre Caillault's *A Tale of Four Cities*, this story is told through contemporary newspaper accounts.

SEPTEMBER 1

When you think of a baseball fan, the stereotype comes to mind: A noisy, pot-bellied guy, chest hair curling over a loud sports shirt, a torpedo-sized cigar in one hand and a six-pack in the other. He'll roost on a taproom stool all night, telling you how Jimmy Foxx belted 'em out of Shibe Park, or arguing whether Tris Speaker, Joe DiMaggio or Willie Mays could go get the deep ball with more class.

That's the old breed. It still flourishes, and Mr. R. R. M. Carpenter's accountants are grateful. The Phils, however, are luring a New Breed which comes in more ornamental designs than the old model.

The new fan wears toreador pants, a "Go, Phils, Go" button attached to a frilly shirt, and smells of Arpege rather than Corona-Corona. Pennant fever has destroyed the reason of most of Philadelphia's cupcake population. Chicks of all sizes and vintages are becoming wildly romantic about the Phils, of all people.

It is a little astonishing, as if Woody Allen suddenly began playing the hero in James Bond movies. Once the Phils were the objects of scorn, laughter and pity. Now they are cuddly, lovable, neat, fantastic and fab.

Nope, Connie Mack Stadium does not yet look like a run-down sorority house. If the Treador Set is still in

the minority, they are among the most intense loyalists in town. A word against John Callison will draw outraged screeches as fast—almost—as criticism of those furry cats from Liverpool, whatever their names are.

— *Bulletin*¹

SEPTEMBER 2

You could look it up. Bunning is now 9-0 vs. the Mets and [Houston] Colts. He is 6-4 vs. the rest of the National League. That adds up to 15-4.

What that could add up to can only be guessed at, but Bernard Baruch might be needed to break it down to dollars and cents. It already includes a one-hitter—vs. the Colts—and a perfect game—vs. the Mets. It could add up to 20 wins. It could add up to a pennant. It could add up to the Cy Young Award. It could add up to the Most Valuable Player Award.

Before you know it, Jim Bunning will be able to write a check that can make a bank bounce.

— *Daily News*²

SEPTEMBER 4

The Phillies have reached the stage in their National League pennant quest where they win even when they lose.

That's because the mathematics are all on the side of a front-runner when a flag race goes into its final stages. The league leader can lose games and still gain time unless the other contenders begin to move at a fast clip—which is exactly what the Phillies have been doing for the last week.

A week ago, a .500 pace by the Phillies in their remaining games meant that the Reds would have to play .622 baseball to take the pennant and the Giants would have to play .778 ball to do so. In this last week the Phillies have played .500 ball—worsening the position of both chief contenders because the Reds must now play .724 ball to win and the Giants .808 ball if the Phillies simply maintain that .500 gait.

— *Daily News*³

SEPTEMBER 5

Sure, I love the Beatles. But do you want to know something? I love the Phillies even better. Yeah! Yeah! Yeah!

— *Daily News* letter to editor⁴

SEPTEMBER 8

Probably the only Philly fan in Philadelphia who doesn't show signs of pennant fever is manager Gene Mauch.

"He never mentions the pennant," said his brunette wife, Nina Lee. "He only talks about today's ballgame, and winning that."

Her comments come as no surprise to sports-writers, who have wondered privately if Mauch knew how to pronounce "pennant"—they've never heard him mention it, either.

But baseball fans who crowd into Connie Mack Stadium not only know the word, they know the chances of calling it theirs—they know that the Phillies have won 60 percent of their games so far this season, and that if they win half the remaining games, the nearest challenger will have little hope of copping the National League flag.

And they know if that happens, fans can plan on seeing the World Series open here Oct. 7.

Right before he leaves for the ballpark, Gene Mauch has his favorite food, hamburger, and then makes sure that jingling in his pocket with his change is a silver medal, his good luck piece ever since a Catholic friend presented him with it years ago.

"Of course we're not superstitious," said his friendly wife, smiling as she knocked on the wooden porch post enroute to seeing her visitor to the car.

"But wouldn't it be terrific if we did win the Pennant?"

— *Bulletin*⁵

I think the *Daily News* 'Go Phillies Go' banners on the opening day of the season had a lot to do with giving our team the spark to go out and win the pennant.

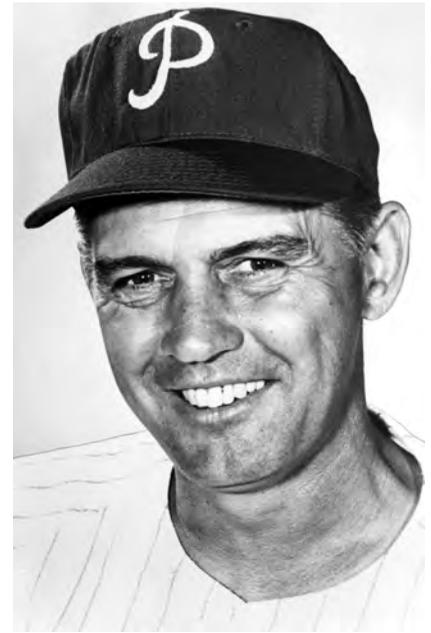
— *Daily News* letter to editor⁶

To the editor of *The Inquirer*:

I just came out of the desert to read in an Egyptian newspaper that the Phillies are leading the National League!

To a life-long Phillies fan this was so impossible that I had the French translated for me by an expert and he said, "In first place by seven games."

I still believe this is a trick, but even so it pleases me so much that I am going right out to the temples to



NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY COOPERSTOWN, NY

"Probably the only Philly fan in Philadelphia who doesn't show signs of pennant fever is manager Gene Mauch," reported the *Philadelphia Bulletin*.

pray to Isis, Ptha (sic), Hathor and Horus that this dream may continue through at least early October.

— *Inquirer* letter to the editor from James Michener⁷

SEPTEMBER 9

It would be a wonderful thing for baseball if the Phillies win the pennant because it took a phenomenon like the Mets to replace them in this land as a symbol of baseball's culturally deprived.

It would be no less wonderful if they won it by six games—their present margin over the Giants, Reds and Cards—or by eight or 10 games, but it might be more wonderful if they won it by one or two. The Phillies are a team that has gotten to where it is by somehow getting one more run than the other guy, and that is how the race should go. The 1950 Phillies, to their everlasting credit, blew a bigger lead than the 1964 Phillies now have, prolonging the agony until the 10th inning of the last day of the season. In retrospect, that was their greatest triumph. THAT took talent.

— *Daily News*⁸

Collectively and individually, the amazing Phillies are rewriting a lot of pages in the baseball record book this year as they make a valiant run for their first pennant in 14 years. In the process, they also are setting a new all-time attendance record—having exceeded, this week, the old mark of 1,217,205 which had stood since the 1950 season of those unforgettable "Whiz Kids."

This satisfying statistic indicates popular support for the Phillies unprecedented in their long history. In



“WHICH OF THESE THREE FAMOUS PHILLIES MADE THE BIGGEST HIT?” asked a 1964 newspaper advertisement. “Is it Jim Bunning, who hurled a perfect game?”

underscores, also, the need for a new and larger stadium to accommodate the growing throngs who would like to see their favorite baseball players in action on the home diamond.

If there ever was any question about Delaware Valley sports fans backing enthusiastically a winning baseball team, the doubts have now been effectively dispelled. The new attendance record provides an additional argument for expediting a spacious new stadium for Philadelphia, with plenty of parking space and convenient to public transportation.

— *Inquirer* editorial⁹

SEPTEMBER 10

I have been real nervous lately. Sharp-tongued, short-tempered. My old lady has been very nice about it, though. Oh, I haven't escaped entirely unmarked. She hasn't been that nice. A lump here, a lump there: about par for a married man.

I know what's bugging me, but can't do anything about it. You see, I'm a Phillies' fan, yet I dread the thought of them winning the pennant—if they have to meet the Yankees in the World Series.

Too well do I remember the fiasco of 1950. I can still see those Yankees dashing around the bases and scoring runs like they were playing the Rover Boys. A traumatic experience, the head-shrinkers would call it.

And, let's face it, the same thing will happen again this year if the Phils and the Yanks meet in the Series.

No wonder people are starting to call me Shaky.

—Joe Martin

Forget it, Shaky, and think of how the Dodgers clobbered the Yanks in four last year. —Ed.

— *Daily News* letter to editor¹⁰

Don't tell Gene Mauch the Cardinals are coming. Don't remind him St. Louis is five games back and rumbling through the final two months like a buffalo stampede.

“The only club in the National League that can beat us is the Phillies,” Mauch said. “We did that tonight, and it ain't gonna happen any more.”

The Cardinals got 20 hits and beat the Phillies, 10–5, last night in 11 weird innings, to snarl to within five games of the lead. It was a big game because the Giants had lost in the afternoon, and the Reds had lost at night, and a Phillies' victory would have meant a seven-game lead over the world.

“They might be peeking back at us,” Cardinal third baseman Ken Boyer suggested, after getting three hits and driving in three runs, including the tying run with two out in the ninth inning.

“If they win it, they break it open. A seven-game pad would have been tough. Especially the way the schedule is.”

Mauch sneered at Boyer's suggestion. “If I'm peeking back,” he said, after a closed-door clubhouse meeting, “and we get one more out in the ninth inning, then I'm looking back seven games in front.

“Anyway, I'd rather be peeking back, than peeking ahead.”

— *Daily News*¹¹

Mayor James H.J. Tate more or less put the fate of the proposed stadium up to the Phillies Wednesday, stating if they did not win the pennant it would “seriously jeopardize” the sports bowl loan proposal.

“It will be a sad blow,” the Mayor said commenting on the possible double tragedy.

Barring the Phillies dropping from first place the Mayor said he expects the \$25 million loan proposal to pass along with three other loans on the November ballot.

— *Inquirer*¹²

The St. Louis Cardinals are in second place and they are coming. It is hard to see the Phillies blowing the pennant to the Reds or Giants, because the Reds and Giants don't seem interested enough, but it is not

hard to imagine them blowing it to the Cardinals. The Cardinals are interested: they have won 13 of their last 16 games.

Down the stretch, the Cardinals have a few important things going for them, if a team five games out of first place on September 9 can have anything going.

They have their boss, Augie Busch. Busch recently fired general manager Bing Devine because the Cardinals weren't high enough in the standings for him. In other words, he didn't think Devine had done a good job of building a contender. No group of athletes has ever had a better chance to embarrass their boss, an incentive that's almost unfair to the Phillies.

They have this penchant for late-season heroics. A year ago the Cardinals won 19 out of 20 to project themselves into the big picture.

They have the Phillies. The Cardinals beat the Phillies. They have beaten them 10 out of 14 already. Three of the four remaining games are in St. Louis.

And they have Ken Boyer. He's nice, too.

— *Daily News*¹³

SEPTEMBER 11

Nobody knew the advantage of Chris Short's victory over the Cardinals yesterday more than Big Magic.

Big Magic now says that the Phillies have a 92 percent chance of winning the National League pennant.

Big Magic said the Phillies probably will face the White Sox in the World Series.

If you are wondering about Big Magic it is a huge hunk of metal. It can't go to its left. It couldn't reach the right field wall at Connie Mack Stadium if it tried until 1984.

Big Magic is a computer, a Honeywell 1400 computer if you please. It is housed at the Franklin Institute.

"This is the first time we've ever had the computer attempt to figure the pennant winner," said Al Polaneczky who feeds the computer with data cards once a day and gets the probabilities for the National and American League pennant races.

Big Magic's daily diet consists of the remaining schedules of each club against every other club. It digests the data, then gives its daily probabilities.

"The method we are using is much the same as we follow in computing sales," Polaneczky added. "We call it the Monte Carlo technique because we are actually gambling with data. The operation is well proven. It has a solid basis in mathematics."

Gene Mauch hopes so.

— *Daily News*¹⁴

LAS VEGAS, Nev. (UPI).—The Phillies were such prohibitive favorites in the legal bookmaking establishments here that no bets were being taken today on their chances of winning the National League pennant.

With the Phillies listed as "out," so far as wagering was concerned, the odds-makers in their day-to-day line posted the St. Louis Cardinals at 10-1 and the Cincinnati Reds and San Francisco Giants at 20-1.

— *Daily News*¹⁵

NEW YORK (UPI).—An old-fashioned "quickie" World Series—the first since 1956 when New York and Brooklyn played their last subway series—will be in the offing this year if the Phillies face either the New York Yankees or the Baltimore Orioles.

The elimination of the travel days between games two and three and five and six should the series opponents represent cities 300 miles or less apart was announced yesterday by baseball commissioner Ford Frick. The travel days would remain part of the series schedule in the event of a series between the Phillies and the Chicago White Sox.

— *Daily News*¹⁶

SEPTEMBER 13

It is a cinch who will be the hero, the darling of the masses, as the Phils whip down the stretch drive. Names such as Allen and Callison and Short and Bunning pale into triviality, compared to the true idol of World Series time.

The Most Valuable Player around Connie Mack Stadium is sure to be Frank (Everybody's Friend) Powell.

Powell cannot throw, run or hit. He has a graying thatch, thick specs and a comfortable girth. For the next three weeks, however, he will be the most popular Phillie in captivity—his fan mail will make the Beatles look like anonymous nonentities.

Powell is in charge of World Series tickets. His old title was Director of Sales. His new title is Big Chief With Heap Big Headache And Not Enough Pasteboards.

"Our first thought is to make sure the real Phillie fans, the ones who supported the club all year, get a chance at World Series tickets," said Everybody's Friend. "With a park this small (roughly, 34,000 seats), it's going to be a real problem. We could probably sell it out five times."

Letters asking to reserve Series tickets have hit Powell's desk at a 20-30-a-day clip since early in the year. A form letter goes back to each fan. The Phils will give the green light for customers Wednesday to shoot in Series orders. Prices, as last year's, will be \$12 tops.

— *Bulletin*¹⁷

SEPTEMBER 14

WHAT COULD MAKE YOU HAPPIER THAN SEEING THE PHILLIES WIN THE PENNANT?

(Watching them take the Series on RCA Victor Color TV!)

Phillies fans, this is your year. Callison won the All-Star Game. The Phils must win the pennant. And who can argue that they'll win the Series in a climax? Your only problem is: how do you get to see the Series? Connie Mack stadium [sic] seats only 33,608 and maybe 2 million of us want "in." The answer is: at least see it in living color. And that means RCA Victor Color TV, the finest color available. It's the finest because RCA Victor has spent 10 years in pioneering and perfecting it. Your dealer can put you in front of a set for only \$399.95.

It's worth the price just to see the whole Series in color—but, as a bonus, you can figure that there are 51 other weeks in the year of other great color TV shows as well.

P.S.: If the Phils don't win the pennant ... (bite your tongue!) color TV will not become obsolete. In fact, seeing the World Series, the NCAA football games and your favorite programs in color may help make life almost bearable.

— *Bulletin* full-page advertisement

SAN FRANCISCO, SEPT. 14— There are 20 sports writers in the United States who must decide whether Jim Bunning, John Callison or Rich (Don't call me Richie) Allen is the National League's Most Valuable player [sic] and Bunning, Callison and Allen won't cooperate.

All three keep behaving like MVPs, making it impossible to separate their contributions to the pennant that is growing in Philadelphia.

Yesterday, for instance, the Phillies moved a win and a day closer to the World Series and it was Bunning and Callison and Allen who did most of the moving in a wind-aided 4-1 victory over the Giants.

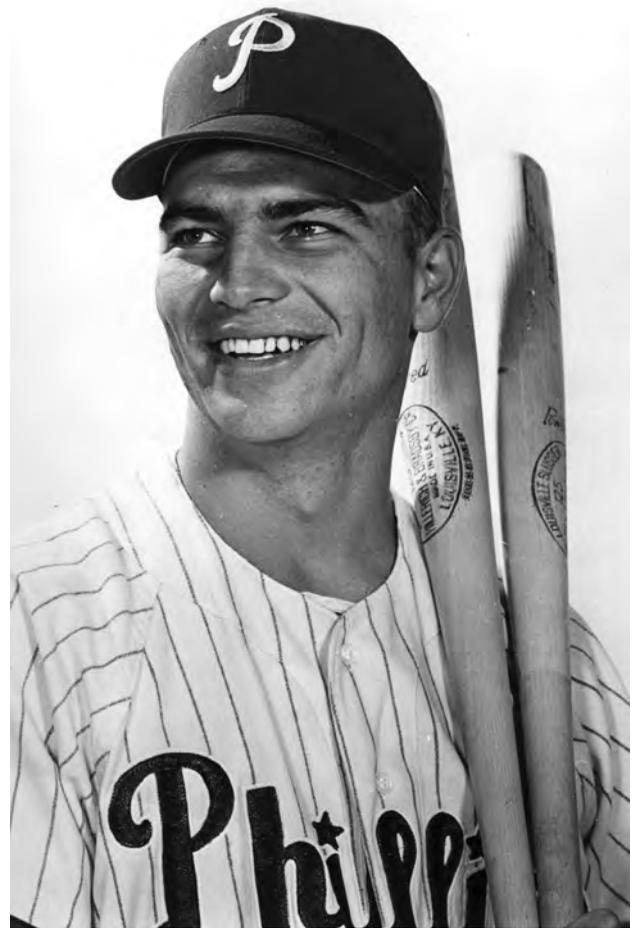
Bunning muzzled the Giants for ten innings, the best performance in a hurricane since Humphrey Bogart made *Key Largo*. Callison broke open the shivering tie with his single in the tenth. Allen's two-run homer followed—just in time to prevent 35,305 cases of windburn.

It was no way to help a sports writer make up his mind.

Somebody asked Gene Mauch what he would do if he was a sports writer and—before they carried the guy out—Mauch said:

"To tell you the truth, I couldn't cast a vote. I'd have to pass..."

— *Bulletin*¹⁸



Johnny Callison hit the game-winning homer in the All-Star Game and was named All-Star MVP, and was in the running for NL MVP honors, though he did not win.

Alvin Dark knows what made the Phillies tick like a time bomb.

Tick: Jim Bunning. Tick: Johnny Callison. Tick: Richie Allen. Boom.

Dark surveyed the wreckage of his battered pennant hopes yesterday after the Phillies whipped the Giants 4-1 in 10 innings.

Tick: Bunning pitched a gritty seven-hitter. Tick: Callison drove in the winning run with a single off lefthander Dick Estelle. Tick: Allen lashed a two-run homer off reliever Ron Herbel. Boom went the Giants, fluttering seven games back of the Phillies while the Cardinals stuck six games back.

"The Phillies couldn't have won it without Bunning," Dark said. "They couldn't have won it without Callison, or without Allen."

Not that Dark was running up the white flag. "The Phillies still have to win nine out of 19 to get to 95 games," he said, and people wrote it down out of politeness.

— *Daily News*¹⁹

SEPTEMBER 16

DEAR PHILLIES, 'UNCLE'
YOURS TRULY, GIANTS

— San Francisco theater marquee in photograph, captioned, “BY DAY IN 'FRISCO— Theater owner in Giants home town concedes National League flag to Phils”(above a photo of marquee at Gimbel’s at 9th and Market in Philadelphia reading GO PHILLIES/WE’RE FOR YOU), *Bulletin*²⁰

The Phillies’ Magic Number is down to 12, which should mean things are getting better.

Big Magic, the Honeywell 1400 computer, sees it differently. It says the Phillies now have an 89 percent chance to win the pennant. The other 11 percent went to the St. Louis Cardinals in tests run this morning at the Computing Center of the Franklin Institute.

— *Bulletin*²¹

HOUSTON, Sept. 15.—The Phillies announced plans to accept World Series ticket applications Tuesday, then played like future champions as they took another stride closer to the National League pennant in their 1-0 night-game victory over the Houston Colts.

The second-place St. Louis Cardinals swept a twilight-night doubleheader with the Milwaukee Braves, reducing the Phillies’ league lead to six games. Nevertheless, this—their third win in a row—was an important triumph for the Phils.

It’s beginning to sound like a broken record, but it’s a fact—John Callison batted in the winning run. The star right fielder, making a strong bid for the Most Valuable Player Award, singled home Richie Allen, who had led off the sixth inning with a double, and that was all the scoring.

It was the third straight game in which Callison knocked in the winning run.

— *Inquirer*²²

WHO’S EXCITED?

Let’s be Phillies-sophical about it all...
How would this look at the Victory Ball?
Thirty days hath September but we need only
four in October.
I’m the guy that picked them in spring training.
So what if it did take 14 years—it was worth it.
I can see it waving now.
They make me feel young all over.

— Captions of fan photos in a Ballantine Beer ad, *Inquirer*²³

SEPTEMBER 17

“This club,” (Vic) Power said, “we’re relaxed. When I was in Minneapolis, everybody was tense. Everybody was afraid of something, somebody. I don’t know who. Maybe the owner. I know it wasn’t the manager because he was a nice guy.

“This club is so relaxed—they’re always jumping around, they play the radio real loud, they make jokes.

“When I was in San Francisco last week, I was almost going crazy—the radio was going real loud, they were making jokes, everybody was ribbing everybody.

“This club don’t care about nothin’.”

— *Bulletin*²⁴

This is the year for The Phillies. This is the time when the most thrilling sound in the air is the crack of a bat. This is the time when every baseball fan salaams his favorite star, rubs his rabbit’s foot and puts the double hex on every challenger. This is the time when you will want to decorate your den, office or club room with pictures of the 1964 Phillies players...

— *Bulletin* display ad

SEPTEMBER 18

Through most of the 1934 season, the world champion Giants were virtually unopposed. On Sept. 7th, with three weeks to go, the Cardinals trailed by seven games. This was the old St. Louis Gas House Gang of Frisch, and Pepper Martin and Joe Medwick and Leo Durocher, with the Dean brothers, Dizzy and Paul, winning 49 games between them.

This was also the year Bill Terry, the Giants’ manager, asked at the wrong time and in the wrong tone: “Is Brooklyn still in the league?” On closing day the Cardinals led by one game, but in the ninth inning the Reds filled the bases against Dizzy with none out. Then the St. Louis scoreboard flashed the news: “Dodgers, 8; Giants, 5.”

Diz grinned and fired the high hard one. Two batters struck out. The third popped up. Dean had his 30th victory and the Cardinals had the pennant.

Is Gene Mauch, of the Phillies, listening? About three weeks ago the teams his club had to beat were Cincinnati and San Francisco. The Cardinals were fourth, 11 games off the pace.

A week ago Philadelphia’s lead was only five games, but it wasn’t the Reds or Giants who had closed the gap. The Cardinals were second, having made up six games in a fortnight.

They had almost a month to go. If they could pick up six more games in that space...



Vic Power described the Phillies' winning attitude: "This club? We're relaxed. When I was in Minneapolis, everybody was tense. Everybody was afraid of something, somebody. I don't know who. Maybe the owner. I know it wasn't the manager because he was a nice guy. This club is so relaxed."

So far they haven't done it. They were idle Thursday, six games back before the Phillies' night game at Los Angeles. At that point each had 16 games to play. The Cardinals have five with the Mets, the Phils none with New York, Houston or Chicago.

Philadelphia starts the last week of the season with three night games in St. Louis, then finishes with a pair in third-place Cincinnati. After the confrontation with the Phillies, the Cards wrap it up at home with three shots against the Mets.

No, sorry. No forecasts, predictions, prophecies, prognosis or auguries.

— *Inquirer*²⁵

WHICH OF THESE THREE FAMOUS PHILLIES MADE THE BIGGEST HIT?

Is it Jim Bunning, who hurled a perfect game?

Or Johnny Callison, who slashed the crucial homer in the all-star fracas?

Or is it the new Phillies Tip?

Phillies Tips, like the Phillies team, is on everybody's lips.

— Display ad, *Bulletin*²⁶

SEPTEMBER 20

The city, stricken with pennant fever these past few weeks, has now come down with a delightful new ailment—the World Series virus.

Nearly everybody, or so it seems, has been infected by the bug as the Phillies, with only two weeks of the season left, drive for their first National League pennant since 1950.

"Go Phillies Go!" is the battlecry in every neighborhood, in every nook and corner of the metropolitan area—and even beyond.

The slogan, or some variation thereof, shines forth from bedsheet banners, flags and pennants, and from billboards.

Fans shout it. Signs in store after store proclaim it.

Pretty girls stroll about wearing five-inch buttons emblazoned with:

"Go Phillies Go."

On a billboard on the eastbound side on the Vine St. extension of the Schuylkill Expressway near the 22nd st. off-ramp, the regular Strawbridge and Clothier advertisement has been replaced with:

"All the way! PHILLIES"

And there's a story behind a huge Phillies banner outside the rail division of the Transport Workers Union, 1630 Arch St.

A union spokesman said John Mellon, president, and his staff were half an hour late for a meeting with management. They apologized, saying something important had come up.

They didn't explain, the spokesman said, that hanging the Phils' banner was the "important business."

Official Philadelphia is also getting ready to honor the Phillies and take care of the World Series crowds that will flock here, if the Phillies take the pennant.

Mayor Tate is forming a "host committee" to make Philadelphia's hospitality available to visitors to the fullest extent.

The members, to be announced tomorrow, include persons from the business, sporting and entertainment world as well as civic groups.

Some kind of big rally or demonstration is planned for after the Series—if the Phillies get into it—win or lose, a spokesman for the mayor said yesterday.

"We're highly gratified," he said, "about the number of organizations which have called in wanting to cooperate. It's an outpouring of enthusiasm for the Phillies."

A similar tale was told by a spokesman for the Chamber of Commerce of Greater Philadelphia.

"A lot of people are talking about doing something

spectacular,” he said, “but nothing definite has been decided yet.”

Another source indicated that the Phillies’ management would like the players to concentrate entirely on winning ball games from here on in, instead of taking part in celebrations.

But the fans’ enthusiasm is unbounded.

Three empty three-story buildings at 11th st. and Ridge av. are decorated from top to bottom with Phillies’ slogans.

“Swing and stay all the way with the Phillies” and “You did it before; you can do it again” are a couple of them.

The bedecked structures are just opposite the Mummies Bar at 1105 Ridge av., sponsors of the Phillies’ display.

The bar people plan to stretch a sign across Ridge av. from the bar to the buildings reading: “Go, Phillies, Go. 1964 World Champions.”

A slightly more staid but just as enthusiastic salute to the home team are the 30 flags stretched along Chestnut st. saying: “Fight, Phillies, Fight.”

“We’re going to keep them up until the Phils win the pennant,” said Jack Pearson, president of the Chestnut Street Association.

— *Bulletin*, front page²⁷

Bucky Hoffman has been waiting for 14 years to get his right arm tattooed to match his left arm.

It looks as if this might be the year.

In 1950, Bucky had “Fighting Phillies 1950” tattooed on his arm.

“I got that done about two hours after Roberts beat Newcombe,” he told me, when I found him tending bar, as he usually is, at the Mummies Bar at 11th st. and Ridge av. “I went right from Brooklyn into Manhattan and had it done.”

Bucky has the design for his other arm drawn on cardboard and tucked behind the bar. It confidently says, “Phillies World Champs 1964.”

It will also have Pike’s name on it. Pike is a regular customer and buddy, and he made the design.

“That’s the way he wants it on,” Bucky said, “and that’s what he’s gonna get.”

(...)

“We got about 300 more feet of flags to put up,” Willy Kramer, Bucky’s co-fanatic, told me. “We gotta paint the street some more. We’ve invited the Phillies team to have a party here. We’ll get permission to close off the street and have string bands.”

Bobby Searles and his wife came in, and he rolled up his sleeve to show me a tattoo which says, “Fighting Phillies.”

“I got mine in 1943,” he said. “I’m a rabid fan.”

“If they blow the pennant,” Bucky said in a moment of sober reflection, “I got my suitcase right here. I’m blowing town.”

“If they don’t win,” one patron warned sternly, “this is gonna be a parking lot here, bud.”

— *Bulletin*²⁸

SEPTEMBER 21

Neither the prospect of catching early morning school buses, trains after a few hours shuteyes, the chill weather nor the fickleness of chartered airline schedules dampened the crowd of 2000 Phillies fans who swarmed to International Airport early Monday morning to welcome their heroes home.

School children, collegians, and elderly fans, who have been hanging on every pitch for months, were darned if they were going to miss the chance to give their pennant-bound team a fitting welcome.

And as Mayor James H. J. Tate strode out to meet the team’s chartered American Airlines Boeing 707 Astro-Jet as it touched down at 12:30AM, bedlam broke out in the airport’s second-floor concourse.

The packed crowd, which had been waiting since late Saturday night, feverously wiped the fogged-up plate-glass windows with handkerchiefs and coat-sleeves to better see their “boys.”

Schoolchildren who had been industriously working on their homework threw their books down and cheered lustily as Manager Gene Mauch led the team off the ramp.

Although pennants and signs were not in abundance the noise emanating from the concourse left little doubt as to where allegiances lay.

— *Inquirer*²⁹

The throng let out a lusty welcome at 12:30AM. when the Phils, led by manager Gene Mauch, came down the ramp of the jet that had brought them from Los Angeles.

But the cheers quickly died as the Phils headed for the nearest exit.

(...)

Some fans, obviously “sign-stealers,” stationed themselves at exits where they could get a close up look at Rich Allen, Chris Short, Jim Bunning and others.

“Oh, they’re wonderful,” said Evelyn William, 35, a housewife, of 1724 N. Taney st.

“They’re marvelous,” commented Dorothy Falkenstein, of 234 Margate rd., Upper Darby.

Margie Connally, 19, of 235 Westmoreland ave., Hatboro, was breathless with joy.

But Mrs. Emma Bravo, 36, of 2308 Chestnut ave., Ardmore, wanted to know “Why they didn’t com[e] up that ramp where we all waited.” She came carrying a “Go Phillies Go” sign but left chanting “Down with the Phillies.”

Bruce Kesler, 13, of 1803 Glenifer st, had two “Go Phillies Go” buttons on his sweatshirt. Close to tears he said, “I haven’t missed a home game since July 28. I buy Phillies helmets, buttons, banners, everything with Phillies on it.

“But I didn’t get to see hardly any of them. And, now I don’t think I’ll go to any games any more—even the World Series.”

Even Bill Campbell, the radio announcer, caught a bit of the fans’ wrath. One guy yelled as Campbell walked by, “There’s another long ball that ain’t going nowhere.”

— *Daily News*³⁰

Although the scent of World Series was in the air, some of the Phils are keeping their fingers crossed. Bunning was one.

“Don’t forget,” he warned, “we still have 12 games to play.”

(...)

“I wanted to come here tonight,” (Mayor) Tate said. “I wanted to extend my congratulations to the team and I’m hoping the pennant will be safe in Philadelphia by the weekend.”

Mrs. Cookie Rojas was happy but calm.

“Yes, Sir,” she said, “the way I see it we’ll have it clinched by Thursday night.”

— *Bulletin*³¹ ■

Notes

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3. “Phils Have Calendar on Their Side,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, September 4, 1964, 50.
4. Eileen, letter to the editor, *Philadelphia Daily News*, September 5, 1964, 7.
5. Eileen Foley, “Asks Wife of Phillies’ Manager: Pennant Fever... What’s That?” *Philadelphia Bulletin*, September 8, 1964, 60.
6. Leo O’Rourke, letter to the editor, *Philadelphia Daily News*, September 8, 1964, 35.
7. James A. Michener, Luxor, Egypt, letter to the editor, “Dazed Author Seeks Aid for Phils,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 8, 1964, 10.
8. Larry Merchant, “Two Big Lumps—One is Sugar,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, September 9, 1964, 57.
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11. Stan Hochman, “Mauch Says Phils’ Only Foe is Phillies,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, September 10, 1964, 52.
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15. “Las Vegas Takes Phils Off Boards,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, September 11, 1964, 53.
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20. *Philadelphia Bulletin*, September 16, 1964, 69.
21. “Phils Flag Chances Rated at 89 Per Cent,” *Philadelphia Bulletin*, September 16, 1964, 69.
22. Allen Lewis, “Phils Score 1–0 Shutout At Houston,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 16, 1964, 1.
23. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 16, 1964, 41.
24. George Kiseda, “Phillies ‘Shoot’ Holes in Pressure Theory,” *Philadelphia Bulletin*, September 17, 1964, 37.
25. Red Smith, “Phils Reminded of Those 1934 Giants,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 18, 1964, 48.
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27. Francis J. Burke, “Town Goes Wild as Phils Near Pennant; Innkeepers, Bars Ready for Series Crowds,” *Philadelphia Bulletin*, September 20, 1964, 1.
28. James Smart, “Go, Phillies! Bucky’s Arm is Waiting,” *Philadelphia Bulletin*, September 20, 1964, 4.
29. Dennis M. Higgins, “Tate and 2000 Greet Phillies After 3–2 Win Over Dodgers,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 21, 1964, 1.
30. Bill Malone, Daily News, “Dashing Phillies Leave Fans Miffed,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, September 21, 1964, 3.
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Dick Allen's Second Act

Mitchell Nathanson

It is hard to imagine a more polarizing figure in Philadelphia sports history than Dick Allen. Countless gallons of ink have been spilled in furtherance of trying to capture and explain Allen's stormy relationship with the Phillies and the city of Philadelphia during his 1963–69 tenure with the club. Much less focus has been given, however, to his mid-Seventies return to Philadelphia amid circumstances that were seemingly far different from those in which he left it. Despite these purportedly changed circumstances, Allen departed Philadelphia in 1976 much as he had in 1969—amid controversy and bad blood on both sides of the equation. This article focuses on Allen's return to the Phillies and his abbreviated tenure with a club that was building toward greatness. Whether Allen ultimately contributed toward, or detracted from, that greatness remains, like so much else regarding Dick Allen and the Phillies, subject to debate.

The story begins on September 14, 1974, the date Allen announced his abrupt retirement from the Chicago White Sox despite the fact that at the time he was not only leading the American League in home runs (a title he'd retain at year's end despite missing the final two weeks of the season), but a key element in Chicago's divisional championship aspirations (they eventually finished the season nine games behind Oakland in the AL West). In typical Allen fashion, his retirement was awash in contradictions: he arrived at the ballpark apparently prepared to play, suited up, took batting practice, and then announced his retirement. As for whether Allen's by then well-chronicled difficulties with management were to blame, he claimed otherwise, having told his teammates just prior to his official announcement to the media that he'd "never been happier anywhere than here."¹ By most accounts, Allen's statement was sincere—the White Sox appeared to have been an ideal place for him, with his easygoing manager, Chuck Tanner, giving him the room he needed to blossom at last. And blossom he did, winning the 1972 AL MVP award and developing, before a hairline fracture of his left leg in June 1973 sidelined him, into one of the best

all-around players in the game. Fully recovered from that injury in 1974 and, at 31, in the prime of his career, Allen picked up where he left off—he was hitting .301 with 88 RBIs to go along with his league leading 32 home runs at the time of his unexpected announcement. However, his body had been breaking down in other respects—a nagging shoulder injury hounded him all season and by September, the pain was radiating down his back.² Within weeks of his retirement, however, Allen had modified his stance with regard to his future in baseball, claiming that he was "gonna play somewhere next year—even if it's Jenkintown."³ This was all some in the Phillies organization as well as the Philadelphia sports media needed to hear. With Allen looking for a place to play, many Philadelphians began to ask the question few would have dared to ask only a few years earlier: "Why not here?"

The question made sense in many ways. The 1974 Phillies bore little resemblance to the squad, either on the field or in the front office, which Allen had departed amid so much rancor only five years earlier. Having abandoned crumbling Connie Mack Stadium as well as the racially divided North Philly neighborhood that seemed to provide a microcosm of everything wrong with both the city and the club, for the clean, spacious Vet (located, not by accident, in a South Philly warehouse district that was largely liberated from the city's grid and all of the squabbles that were perceived to have emanated from it) in 1971, the Phillies were, in many ways, starting fresh despite their deep roots within the city.⁴ Parking was plentiful, the team was young and exciting, led by rising stars such as Greg Luzinski, Mike Schmidt, Larry Bowa, and Dave Cash, and management was likewise young and enthusiastic, with Ruly Carpenter having taken over the reins from his father Bob, whose relationship with Allen during his initial tenure with the club was complicated to say the least. Along with general manager Paul Owens and manager Danny Ozark, the new Phillies bore little if any resemblance to the old ones in so many ways. If they could fix all that had been so

wrong with the franchise for so many years, why could they not repair their relationship with Allen as well?

Beyond the redemptive aspect of Allen's return, his presence in the club's lineup seemed to make sense in more practical ways. In 1974 the organization's surplus of young talent finally began to mature and the Phils, cellar-dwellers for so long, managed to tickle the pennant-chase fancy of the Philadelphia sporting public for the first few months of the season until Luzinski was lost to a severe leg injury in June. Adding Allen's bat to the lineup would provide insurance for 1975 should the team suffer another major injury. In addition, it would give the '75 Phillies lineup the presence of both the 1974 American as well as National League home run champs (Schmidt won the NL title with 36). Add in the "Yes We Can" enthusiasm of second baseman Dave Cash, the fielding and fire of Larry Bowa, the steady hand of catcher Bob Boone, and the mastery of pitcher Steve Carlton, and the Phillies would no doubt be in the postseason conversation all year long. First, however, Allen had to be convinced to put aside his reservations and agree to suit up once again for the club he once so despised that he signaled his displeasure through messages such as "Boo" and "Oct. 2" (the last day of the 1969 season and, he hoped, his final day as a Phillie) scratched in the dirt for all to see.⁵ That he would be willing to play, as he said, in Jenkintown for the 1975 season did not necessarily mean that he would just as willingly play a few miles away in South Philly for the Phils.

Initially, the leading proponent for Allen's return was Phillies' broadcaster Richie Ashburn, who repeatedly lobbied for the Phils to re-sign him in his *Evening Bulletin* columns.⁶ Eventually Ashburn caught the ear of the front office who thought enough of the idea to organize a clandestine visit (to circumvent tampering charges) to Allen on his Bucks County farm to gauge his interest and to encourage him to consider the possibility.⁷ Specifically, Ashburn, Schmidt, and Cash made the "secret" trek in February 1975, and were outed in the media almost immediately. By that time, Allen's rights had been purchased by the Braves who were unsure what to do with him after he announced that he'd never play in Atlanta.⁸ Despite Allen's protestations, given that he was the property of the Braves, the Phillies' secret mission quickly erupted into controversy, compelling the club to respond to the Braves' tampering allegations. Nevertheless, Dave Cash, who by that point had become the team's de facto leader, came away from the meeting impressed with Allen and, despite Allen's departure from Chicago and his refusal to play for Atlanta, convinced that Allen would



NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, NY

Dick Allen, one of the most polarizing figures in Philadelphia baseball history.

not disrupt the young team's cohesive chemistry.⁹ However, Cash seemed to be one of the dwindling few in baseball who still believed in Allen.

As spring training began and Allen remained on his farm, his list of potential suitors grew shorter and shorter. The Cardinals, for whom Allen played after his trade from Philadelphia, passed, with third baseman Joe Torre stating that he believed that the Cardinals' reluctance to sign Allen had much to do with ownership's belief that he would disrupt the team over the long haul.¹⁰ In New York, Mets manager Yogi Berra tamped down speculation immediately, announcing that he wanted no part of Allen even if the Mets could obtain him without surrendering any players.¹¹

Only in Philadelphia was the prevailing mood different. First baseman Willie Montanez, who would be displaced should Allen sign, stated that he'd gladly move to the outfield for Allen;¹² Schmidt announced that he did not see how Allen could do anything other than help the team win the NL East in 1975 and could not imagine a scenario where he would be disruptive; other players echoed similar sentiments.¹³ While Luzinski remained, at least outwardly, hesitant, his voice was in the clear minority.¹⁴

Regardless, with spring training winding down and the Allen issue no closer to resolution, the Phillies

“officially” ended their pursuit when they announced that they were unable to work out a deal with Atlanta to obtain his rights. Conspicuously silent was manager Danny Ozark, who was said to be pleased with the end of the courtship. No doubt aware of the perception of Allen’s effect on previous managers in Philadelphia, Ozark was relieved his fate would not sink into the abyss some allege swallowed Gene Mauch and Bob Skinner. *Inquirer* columnist Frank Dolson wrote, in an article headlined “That Was a Smile on Ozark’s Face,” that now he would finally have a realistic shot at completing the new two-year extension he signed in 1974.¹⁵

When the Phillies withdrew their courtship, however Allen stoked the cooling embers, announcing to those members of the media who had followed him to one of his favorite haunts, Keystone Race Track, that he was “available and I want to play baseball.”¹⁶ He stated he was in “great shape” and “could be available to play in five days to a week.” Finally, in April, the Phillies forced the Braves’ hand when they put in a claim for Allen when Atlanta placed him on waivers. The Braves withdrew his name from the waiver wire and negotiated with the Phillies for his rights. On May 7, the Phillies announced that they had signed Allen to a contract. Right away, Cash exhorted Philadelphia fans to “give him a chance” when he arrived in uniform.¹⁷ Very quickly, it was clear that the overwhelming majority of them were willing to do that and more. He was greeted by cheering fans while warming up before his first game and then, during the pregame introductions, received a standing ovation as soon as he was introduced. The cheers continued as PA announcer Dan Baker tried in vain to resume announcing the Phillies starters that evening. Eventually he gave up.¹⁸ After the game Allen was beaming, stating that the cheers had affected him in a profound way: “You don’t know what it means to me,” he said. “It’s a different situation altogether.”¹⁹ He said that he believed that, this time around, baseball in Philadelphia would be nothing but fun for him. This would turn out to be an overly-optimistic prediction.

The long layoff and the lack of spring training affected Allen more than he anticipated. By July he was hitting only .233 with only four home runs in 50 games. Hopes that he would eventually round into form were dashed by July when his average slipped into the .220s and he managed only one home run in the month. Defensively, age and injuries appeared to be catching up with him at last as he lacked the range and finesse of Montanez; the entire infield struggled due to Allen’s inability to dig balls out of the dirt. Larry Bowa was the most directly affected by Allen’s strug-

gles and, true to form, the one who protested most loudly as well, although even he tried to keep his public statements in check. When asked in early September why he had already amassed 22 errors—twice as many as in each of his five previous seasons in the majors—Bowa replied, “I’m not going to sound off. Knowledgeable people know what’s going on.”²⁰

By season’s end, Allen was hitting .233 with all of twelve home runs and 62 RBIs. Moreover, in just 416 official at-bats, he struck out 109 times. These were obviously not the numbers the Phillies had envisioned the previous winter when organizing their covert rendezvous at Allen’s farm. Regardless, the team as a whole did improve markedly from 1974, finishing second, 6.5 games behind the Pirates, completing their first winning season in eight years. Besides, this time Allen’s troubles appeared to be solely of the on-field variety. With a full spring training to help him prepare for 1976, the Phillies hoped that Allen would return to form. Therefore, they re-signed him for the ’76 season, setting aside their doubts that perhaps he was finished as a ballplayer.²¹ Although the ’76 Phils would indeed succeed on the field as management hoped, they nevertheless endured a difficult season off it, with Allen at the center of much of the controversy that erupted as the team headed towards its first postseason berth in over a quarter-century.

Despite having the benefit of a full spring training, Allen’s 1976 season began much the way his previous season ended. After only ten games, Ozark had come to the conclusion that the prospect of Allen at first on a daily basis was too much for the team to bear; he replaced him the next day with the defensively solid Tommy Hutton and thereafter Allen’s playing time began to wane. A few days later, after sitting yet again, Allen refused Ozark’s instruction to pinch hit in the ninth inning of a tight game against the Braves, forcing Ozark to scramble and call on Jerry Martin instead. After the game it became clear that Allen’s troubles had migrated from the field to the clubhouse. Ozark attempted to deflect the brewing storm by telling the media that Allen was “unable to play.”²² When reporters continued to press the issue Ozark attempted to clear the room. When that failed, he threatened to punch a reporter who questioned Ozark’s right to take such action. The exasperated Ozark then exited his office, slamming the door behind him and kicking the wall and waste paper basket on his way out. A few minutes later, Ruly Carpenter exchanged words with the same writer who had questioned Ozark earlier and then issued a more general epithet to the entire assembled press corps as he entered his elevator.²³

Thereafter, Allen settled uneasily into a platoon with Bobby Tolan at first base with the organization and fan base waiting for his stroke to return. Although he did hit better for a while (even flirting with the .300 mark for a portion of the season) it was clear that he was no longer the hitter he had been just a couple of years earlier. When he was dropped to seventh in the batting order (at the time, he was hitting .250 with a lone double constituting his only extra-base hit of the season) he expressed his frustration with how he was being handled: "If I'm going to slow 'em up that much I'd rather not be in there at all," he said.²⁴ Regardless, he received strong support all season. When he hit two home runs in a June rout of the Cardinals, he received a game-stopping ovation from the Veterans Stadium faithful. Afterwards he revealed just how much the ovation meant to him by stating that fan support in Philadelphia meant more to him than anywhere else "because of what went on before."²⁵ Still, his feelings for the Philadelphia fans would not be enough to stave off another confrontation between Allen and the Phillies front office.

This one began innocuously enough. On July 25 Allen was injured in a collision on the basepaths with Pirate pitcher John Candelaria. The next night he asked out of the lineup by telephoning Ozark and complaining of dizziness.²⁶ Thereafter the seeds for the inevitable clash were sown. The following day he neither phoned anyone nor arrived at the stadium. The day after that he arrived, remained for three innings and then left mid-game without informing anyone of his departure. The following day he neither phoned nor showed up for the game. Finally Ozark had no choice but to call a team meeting to discuss Allen's repeated absences. At that meeting, Ozark classified Allen as being AWOL and then called a press conference to announce that Allen would be fined for his repeated unexcused absences. However, in a reversal reminiscent of Allen's first stay in Philadelphia, Ozark subsequently rescinded the fine when Allen showed up unexpectedly in New York. At that time, Ozark shifted gears by announcing that Allen was injured and would be placed on the disabled list despite the fact that he had yet to be examined by a physician.

His DL stint was scheduled to end on August 10; on that date he called the team and insisted that he was still hurt, indicating, according to *Inquirer* columnist Bruce Keidan, that he had finally seen a doctor the day before—the first time he had seen one since his collision with Candelaria. This resulted in several additional weeks on the sidelines when Allen insisted that he was unable to play. Finally, on September 3, six weeks after

the collision with Candelaria, Allen pronounced himself ready for action. When pressed into service, however, he struggled, going 3-for-40 during one September stretch. With the Phillies suddenly in the midst of a pennant race (having lost much of their once seemingly insurmountable lead and now struggling to stay ahead of the surging Pirates), and with Luzinski's now chronically sore left knee bothering him again, Allen was unable to stanch the bleeding.

The locker room was devolving as well. In August Allen stated that he believed that Ozark's outfield platoon was racially motivated. He questioned why black players, including Ollie Brown and Bobby Tolan, were not playing as often as their white counterparts, suggesting that the Phillies were "working a quota system."²⁷ By the time the Phillies finally righted themselves and clinched the Eastern Division, they were clearly and openly separated along racial lines—the communal spirit of Cash's "Yes We Can" mantra having been replaced with spite and suspicion. As the team celebrated its divisional title in the cramped clubhouse of Montreal's Jarry Park, Allen initially refused to join in, preferring to remain, alone, on the frigid bench.²⁸ When he finally entered the clubhouse, the club's racial division was presented for all to see: Allen, Cash, Maddox, and Mike Schmidt (whom Allen had taken under his wing) removed themselves from the rest of the club and celebrated in private, in a clubhouse broom closet.²⁹ "The Broom Closet Incident," as it came to be known, would haunt the team throughout its abbreviated postseason run.

When the team boarded the plane from Montreal to St. Louis, Allen was nowhere to be found. Later, he announced that he would not participate in the postseason unless Tony Taylor—who had all but officially retired during the season, having only 26 plate appearances all year and by then serving as a de facto bench coach—was activated for postseason play.³⁰ Although this ultimatum appeared to many to have come out of the blue, in fact Allen confided to a member of the black press back in July that he would demand as much if the team qualified for postseason play: "I remember when I was playing with the Phillies before and having a fantastic season. It was Tony who made it possible He always encouraged me and suggested things that would help me....If we get to the playoffs and I know we will...I think it's only right that a guy like Tony that gave so much should be there."³¹ Now, determined to ensure that the club properly acknowledge Taylor's contributions to the organization over the course of his career, the postseason roster issue quickly progressed to a stalemate between the club and Allen. Hoping to head off a

steamrolling player insurrection, Ozark then publicly granted Allen permission to go home rather than participate in the St. Louis series, even though Allen was already home.³² Ozark then called another team meeting wherein he asserted that nobody was going to dictate the club's playoff roster to him. At this point, whispers of a postseason player boycott grew loud enough for the media to hear.

With the team headed for its first postseason series since 1950, the team was now openly feuding. Several black players questioned Ozark's managerial moves, echoing Allen in wondering why the white Jerry Martin rather than the black Ollie Brown played in the second game of the doubleheader in Montreal, after the Phils had clinched the division in game one. They were unsatisfied with Ozark's reply that Brown's recent struggles had put him on the bench.³³ White players voiced their anger and frustration with Allen and his decision to go home rather than accompany the team to St. Louis.³⁴ The Broom Closet Incident was rehashed, with Tug McGraw stating in a team meeting that "some of us white guys" were wondering "where all the black guys were."³⁵ As things continued to spin out of control, Garry Maddox responded to McGraw's comment by taking offense to what he thought McGraw's statement implied: "Either we had great unity on this team all year or it's been a great acting job by the players keeping their feelings inside...Now when all the racial stuff starts coming out, when guys start to say how they actually feel, then you know how it is...I signed a five-year contract with this team. I hope I didn't make a mistake."³⁶ Captaining the divided crew, Ozark was nevertheless adrift. He had considered quitting earlier in the season, during Allen's initial absence from the club, but decided to hold on due to the Phils' overwhelming divisional lead.³⁷ Now, with the playoffs at hand, he had no choice: he had to somehow steer the ship regardless of the infighting.

On the eve of game one of the League Championship Series against Cincinnati's Big Red Machine, the club was finally able to coax Allen back by promising that Taylor would be in uniform for the postseason, albeit as a coach and not as a player. Although Allen had previously insisted that Taylor be activated for the postseason, this time he stated that all he really wanted was for Taylor to be in uniform in some capacity and that he was happy with the brokered deal.³⁸ With that, it seemed as if the Phillies could finally focus their attention solely on the Reds. Very quickly, however, they became sidetracked yet again.

During the series, Allen, still smarting from the cavalcade of incidents over the past couple of months,

refused to participate in the team's pregame batting practice (Allen, not unlike some other top players of his era such as Ernie Banks and Willie Mays, considered batting practice to be an unnecessary ritual and often skipped it. But as with all things Allen, when he skipped it, more was made of the occasion).³⁹ Two of his broom closet brethren, Cash and Schmidt, then attempted to deflect attention from what they thought would be perceived by the media as yet another example of Allen's defiance by refusing to take infield practice before each of the three games of the series.⁴⁰ Not surprisingly, amid the heightened tension surrounding the club, the Phils were swept in the series and the once-hopeful 1976 season came to a sudden and disappointing end. Thereafter, Allen was informed that he would not be re-signed for the 1977 season and his second act drew to a close.

In assessing Allen's mid-Seventies return to the Phillies, there are, like so many things associated with Allen, contradictions and opposing points of view. On the one hand, the team as a whole did indeed improve during each of his two seasons with the club—he joined a club coming off a third place, sub-.500 finish in 1974 and left one which won 101 games and the National League's Eastern Division, reaching the postseason for the first time in over a quarter-century. On the other hand, disharmony and dissension trailed him throughout his return to Philadelphia as he was a key figure in the clubhouse issues that dogged the 1976 club which perhaps could have achieved even more than it did had it been free from such distractions and been able to focus more intently on the game on the field, particularly during the postseason. However, it is fair to ask if Allen was the cause of the dissension that enveloped the '76 club or merely responsible for bringing to the fore what was already there. Just as the 2008 election of Barack Obama failed to make the United States a "post-racial" society overnight, it seems difficult to fathom that the historically racially-troubled Phillies transformed as dramatically as touted in the short time between Allen's departure in 1969 and his return in 1975. Perhaps they had further to go in the department of race relations than many realized and it took Allen to bring that reality to the surface.

And then there was his impact on the young slugger Mike Schmidt. Allen took Schmidt under his wing in 1975 and Schmidt has frequently mentioned the pivotal role Allen played in his development. Schmidt followed Allen in many ways and to many places, including that Montreal broom closet. Whether Allen was ultimately a positive or negative force in Schmidt's career is a topic that has been debated for decades: did he help Schmidt

develop into the Hall of Fame slugger he ultimately became? Or was he at least partly to blame for Schmidt's career-long inability to become the cohesive team leader fans and the club wished him to be? Most likely, the answer lies somewhere between these two poles. Bill James once described Allen as someone who "did more to keep his teams from winning than anybody else who ever played major league baseball."⁴¹ On the surface, Allen's actions down the stretch in 1976 might appear to at least suggest as much. But beneath it, when focusing on actions that hindered the club's potential, one wonders if anything Allen might have done in '76 could match the organization's long-standing reluctance to embrace and encourage the development of black ballplayers in Philadelphia in the decades leading up to that season. Viewed through this lens, perhaps the succession of events that transpired during the club's '76 stretch run caused the organization to finally confront a demon it mistakenly thought it had slayed merely through its relocation to the Vet and the transition in ownership from father to son. As such, perhaps it was Dick Allen, more than any other factor, who finally compelled the organization to modernize its approach to black athletes at last. Perhaps. One thing is certain, however: when it comes to analyzing Dick Allen's second act in Philadelphia, so much depends upon where one sat while taking in the performance. ■

Notes

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3. Bruce Keidan, "Dick Allen Back in Phils Uniform?" *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 13, 1974.
4. For an in-depth analysis of the relationship between the Phillies and the city of Philadelphia, see Mitchell Nathanson, *The Fall of the 1977 Phillies: How A Baseball Team's Collapse Sank a City's Spirit*, (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 2008).
5. William C. Kashatus, *September Swoon: Richie Allen, the '64 Phillies, and Racial Integration* (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 2004), 198.
6. See Frank Dolson, "Richie Allen: Phillies Could Go To Top—Or To Pieces—With Him," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 2, 1975. In the article, Dolson quotes Greg Luzinski as saying, "I think Richie Ashburn's the guy who's really making the push as far as whether Richie Allen comes here. His articles and his persuasion have maybe prompted the Phillies to do a little something."
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10. Frank Dolson, "Mets Tune Out Richie Allen, Fear Lack of Harmony," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 4, 1975.
11. Ibid.
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13. Dolson, "Richie Allen: Phils Could Go to Top."
14. Ibid.
15. Frank Dolson, "That Was a Smile On Ozark's Face..." *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 14, 1975.
16. Russ Harris, "Allen Set to Play But 'Won't Beg,'" *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 26, 1975.
17. Frank Dolson, "Phils New Slogan: Give Him a Chance," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 8, 1975.
18. Frank Dolson, "The Boos Turn to Cheers for Richie Allen," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 15, 1975.
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21. Allen Lewis, "Allen's Future? 'I Gotta Play,'" *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 13, 1975.
22. Frank Dolson, "Ozark's Composure Shatters Noisily..." *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 26, 1976.
23. Ibid.
24. Allen Lewis, "Allen's Pride is Hurt: Bats 7th," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 19, 1976.
25. Allen Lewis, "Allen Clouts 2: Phils Win 12-4," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 26, 1976.
26. The events surrounding Allen during July and early August, 1976 are summarized in Bruce Keidan, "Today's the BIG Day that Allen Comes Back," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 10, 1976.
27. Dick Allen and Tim Whitaker, *Crash: The Life and Times of Dick Allen* (New York, NY: Ticknor & Fields, 1989), 163.
28. Bruce Keidan, "Allen Declines to Join in Phils' Fun," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 27, 1976.
29. See William C. Kashatus, "Dick Allen, The Phillies, and Racism," *NINE: A Journal of Baseball History and Culture*, 9, no. 2 (Spring 2001) 184; Tony Kornheiser, "Body and Soul," *Inside Sports*, Vol.1, October, 1979, 24, 30.
30. Keidan, "Allen Declines to Join in Phils' Fun."
31. John Rhodes, "Dick Allen Sees Future on West Coast," *Philadelphia Tribune*, October 9, 1976, 17. Rhodes wrote that he had not earlier published Allen's remarks because Allen "warned this reporter to keep what he was going to say under his hat because of damage that might occur with management and fellow teammates."
32. Bruce Keidan, "Phils are Resting Uneasily as Ozark Hides Hurt and Anger," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 30, 1976.
33. Bruce Keidan, "Phils Get Warning, Then Win," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 30, 1976.
34. Frank Dolson, "Phillies Bewildered in a Tower of Babel," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 1, 1976.
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36. Ibid.
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38. Bruce Keidan, "Allen to Play, Taylor to Coach: Owner Settles Dispute," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 1, 1976.
39. See Jerome Holtzman, "Why Allen, McLain and Conigliaro Really Were Traded," *SPORT*, Vol. 51, February, 1971, 38, 86.
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Fan Perspectives on Race and Baseball in the City of Brotherly Love

Jen McGovern

The history of baseball in America has always been closely tied to the history of race in America. The progression of baseball from an exclusionary sport to a beacon for integration and eventually to a global game has paralleled our country's movement from slavery to the civil rights movement to modern day multiculturalism. While the changes have taken place nationwide, they have played out differently in cities and regions across the country. In each city, the story of race and baseball is enmeshed with the city's history and culture as well as with the actions of professional organizations and the attitudes of the fans. In Philadelphia, historic hostilities to integration blemished the city's reputation of racial acceptance. Current Phillies fans have gradually embraced diversity but some still sense lingering racial tensions.

Cities are important for the ways in which their local contexts influence ideas about race and ethnicity, but also for their function in building community and "place bonding." Sports teams produce strong positive identifications with cities or regions, produce a communal spirit, and unite the city as whole.¹

For if residents invest themselves in favor of their local athletic teams, it is partly because those teams are exponents of a community to which they feel themselves somehow bound and in whose destiny they find themselves in some way implicated. The connection, however, is by no means a simple one. A local team is not only an expression of the moral integrity of a community; it is also a means by which that community becomes conscious of itself and achieves its concrete representation. Therefore, an athletic team must be something more than just an assemblage of skilled performers whose activities conform to physiological or psychological necessity. It is in fact, and above all, the representative of something beyond itself.²

Because baseball teams invariably come to represent their cities, the meanings and ideas about race and

ethnicity that are generated on the baseball field are important elements of the local context and the way the local context is projected outward toward others. This article examines this process in Philadelphia by briefly reviewing the city's history of racial acceptance and by illustrating current fan attitudes on the subject.

Philadelphia has been a home to professional baseball teams for over a century, but currently hosts only Major League Baseball's Phillies.³ The Phillies were infamously involved with integration in the early years. Early in Jackie Robinson's rookie season, Manager Ben Chapman and several Phillies players notoriously harassed Robinson with racial taunts and remarks. Later that season, Phillies' general manager Herb Pennock tried to dissuade Branch Rickey from bringing Robinson to Philadelphia. Rickey did not relent and Jackie traveled with the team, which had booked several rooms at Philadelphia's Benjamin Franklin hotel. When the team arrived, they were turned away by the hotel manager who told them not to come back "while you have any nigras with you!"⁴

The Phillies were slow to integrate despite pressure from the black press, leaders of the black community, and the local NAACP. Phillies' owner Bob Carpenter said, "I'm not opposed to Negro players. But I'm not going to hire a player of any color or nationality just to have him on the team."⁵ The Phillies finally integrated their major league roster in 1957—ten years after the Dodgers broke the modern day color barrier—leaving the American League's Detroit Tigers and Boston Red Sox as the only teams with all-white rosters.^{6,7} Once integrated, the Phils continued to struggle with racial issues. The organization didn't end segregation in spring training facilities until 1962. In addition, they didn't feature any star black players until Dick Allen's rookie campaign in 1964. Until then, while most major league teams were hiring prominent black players with big drawing power, such as Robinson, Willie Mays, and Hank Aaron, the Phillies only employed some marginal black and Latino players.⁸

It wasn't only the organization that had a negative image when it came to racial issues; Philadelphia fans

COURTESY OF THE PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES



Phillies general manager Ruben Amaro Jr. is one of the most prominent Hispanic figures in big league front offices.

were perceived to be a hostile bunch.⁹ Roy Campanella, who was born and raised in the Philadelphia area, disliked playing in Shibe Park because he felt that the white fans “spewed racial hate.”¹⁰ Philly fans seemed to take things to the next level with Dick Allen who wore a helmet in the field to withstand the objects that were thrown at him during games.¹¹ Allen was known to speak his mind, to act out, and to complain about the adverse treatment. The white media described him as arrogant, militant, malcontented, and radical but rarely acknowledged the racism that Allen faced and described. The black media portrayed him as misunderstood. Kuklick wrote that “in Philadelphia’s racially charged atmosphere, Allen’s own situation was inevitably distorted, not only by the press but also by the city’s baseball fans.”¹²

As the civil rights movement swept across the country, some white fans still harbored prejudice against blacks, but the organization tried to move forward. General Manager John Quinn, hired in 1959, began to increase the amount of black talent in the organization through free agency and trades. In 1958, the organization had only three black players in its minor league system, but by 1961, that number increased to 34 and continued to rise through the mid-Sixties.¹³ Even with these efforts, the Phillies had few black players and even fewer black stars throughout the 1970s and 1980s—a time when black players thrived in the big leagues. The 1993 National League Champions were one of the few teams in MLB with an all-white starting lineup, though they did feature several black platoon players and role players.¹⁴ In *Great White High Hopes*, sports scholar Benjamin Phillips describes how the ’93 team was symbolized by a “rugged, white masculinity emblematic of working

class males.” Phillips shows that when speaking about the team, both the fans and the media most often spoke about qualities like teamwork, work ethic, hustle, scrappiness, and grit, qualities which are commonly associated with white athletes. He argues that fans celebrated the whiteness of the team by emphasizing these character traits over the athleticism and physicality of the players.¹⁵

Today the Philadelphia Phillies, like most major league teams, have a diverse roster. Of the 49 players who appeared for the 2012 Phillies, 69 percent of the players had a white European background. This is slightly higher than the league average of 61 percent.¹⁶ The Phillies had five African American players, two of whom played prominent roles on their five consecutive division championship teams. Jimmy Rollins and Ryan Howard each have three All-Star games and an MVP award to their credit. The Phillies have recently strengthened their presence in Latin America and their 2012 roster listed eight Latino players from four countries: Cuba, Dominican Republic, Panama, and Venezuela.¹⁷ One Hawaiian player and one player of mixed Chinese/European ancestry also appeared for the Phils in 2012.

The current roster demonstrates that the Phillies have moved away from racially intolerant attitudes and towards embracing diversity. A great deal of research exists on how this transition has happened with major organizations such as the Phillies and the MLB; however, far less research exists on current fan attitudes towards these issues.^{18,19} Their viewpoints are important because fan actions and behaviors have always been intertwined with attitudes about race and ethnicity in Philadelphia, as illustrated by Dick Allen’s career. It isn’t only negative attitudes about race that are important. Bruce Kuklick notes that “white rooters seemed to come to the stadium to witness in Allen’s behavior the attraction and the revulsion of this time of shifting race relations. The park was the place where many white people expressed puzzlement, rage, along with a modicum of grudging respect.”²⁰ Matthew Jacobsen, in his essay, “Richie Allen, Whitey’s Ways, and Me: A Political Education in the 1960s,” probably spoke for many when he cited Allen’s career as the issue that inspired him to learn about race and politics.²¹

Most of what researchers know about race has come through historical records and media analysis. Very few researchers have conversed with fans to ask them how they think about and understand race and ethnicity.²² In the spring and summer of 2011, I conducted focus group interviews with baseball fans. The interviews, part of a larger project, generated great

conversations about baseball in Philadelphia, including some about race and ethnicity in today's game and in the Philadelphia area. From these interviews, I was able to gain a sense of how fans think and feel about this issue. The ideas and opinions expressed in these conversations were informed by the history of the organization, the city, and the personal lives of each participant.

Over the course of four months, I conducted eight focus group interviews with fans from across the Philadelphia region that I recruited through online advertisements, social networks, and email lists.²³ In the focus group interviews, I placed various pictures of the Phillies on the table to spark discussion. I asked the respondents many questions about baseball and about Philadelphia; one subject that we discussed was race. I report the findings below including some thoughts and quotes from our conversations, using pseudonyms for all fans. My intention is not to amass data capable of addressing the level of racial equality in baseball today but to report on how at least some Philadelphia fans view and understand the issue. Overall, the fans I spoke to perceived race and ethnicity as issues that should not matter when it came to baseball, but had a range of opinions as to whether and how much race and ethnicity still do matter in today's game.²⁴

Many of the older fans in my focus groups were able to articulate feelings about baseball and racial progress. Nick, a white fan, recalled some of his early memories of the Phillies as he "grew up in [Philadelphia's] very racist Kensington" neighborhood and began to root for the "mostly white" Phillies in the 1960s and 1970s. He vividly recalled the racial overtones associated with Dick Allen's career and the Phillies' poor reputation with racial issues. Nick remembered that his dad often commented on the team's lack of black players. For Nick, the Phillies only really achieved progress when they "got Hispanic players and more African Americans. That's when the team started taking off." He pointed to Gary Maddox, Manny Trillo, and Bake McBride as three minority players whom he admired while growing up.

Other fans noticed these changes as well. Dave, another white fan, found it a shame that in Philadelphia "there was a long period of time where ownership made a conscious effort to try to discriminate against certain racial types of ballplayers" but felt that "there's not nearly the sort of bias about baseball that there was in the sixties and all through the seventies... I think that's sorta [sic] gone away now because...it's a different world." The changes did not just occur within the Phillies organization, but in the media as well.

White fan Andrew stated that the "newspaper used to talk about people of a racial overtone as dark-skinned or dusky, or some other adjective that they used to attach to them. You don't see that anymore." In another group, Lisa, also white, commented that the Philadelphia media brought up race frequently when they covered education and other social issues, but not when they discussed sports.

The changes have made a difference to many, including some Latino fans that I interviewed. Long-time fan Mateo recalled a time when the "Phillies weren't that friendly to Latinos" and expressed how changes in the organization's position have made rooting for the local team more enjoyable to him (though he admitted that winning didn't hurt). The other participants in this group echoed Mateo's sentiments by recognizing differences in the mainstream English language media. "I remember when I started living in Philadelphia," said Ramona, "I used to watch the game and get infuriated because the name Guzmán, for example. They [the media] would say GUZman. Now, they say Guzman, and you know that they make an effort to pronounce it correctly, and that for me has been a sign of improvement. They pronounce Ruiz's name correctly, Polanco's name correctly, and Valdez's name correctly, whereas before there was no effort put in." Hank, an African American fan, probably best expressed the change when he exclaimed, "Here in Philly we have broke that barrier and said to hell with that. You don't have to be just white. You don't have to be almost black. You don't have to be this or that. You can be anything."

These changes have an impact on all fans, who valued diversity on the field as symbolic of what we hope to achieve in our communities and our relationships. When talking about the facets of the game that were most important, Paul used a photo of three players celebrating at home plate to bring up the topic of team chemistry. He also pointed out that "two of these guys are Hispanic, Ibanez and Ruiz, and then you got Ross Gload who is Caucasian, so it really does reach across all races." To Paul, who is white, baseball has taught him not just about teamwork, but that good teamwork spans racial differences. Lenny, an African American fan, also commented on how he enjoyed seeing "a group of diverse guys from diverse backgrounds and countries and languages have a really nice collective vibe." Numerous other fans spoke of how they enjoyed seeing players from different ethnic groups and appreciated learning about those players' cultures and histories. Fans learned about teamwork from the players but they also learned about it from the leadership.

Hank noted that Ruben Amaro Jr. “is the first Latino that’s general manager for us and he’s making all the right moves. He got Lee, he got Halladay. I mean this guy is doing yeoman’s work and he’s a Spanish guy.” Hank admitted that in admiring the Hispanic American’s work, he gained more respect for Latinos working in baseball leadership.

Fans commented on the fact that while this rich cultural learning can take place in many sports, baseball is “probably the most racially mixed now that I think about it. I mean think about the Eagles and the Sixers and the Phillies. You have more of a mixture on the Phillies than you do on the other teams.” In a separate focus group, Nam, who is black, added that “thanks to Asia and Latin America, [baseball] is the one sport where you can really find equality.”

Our discussions were not limited to the diverse pool of competitors. A number of focus group respondents also talked about how baseball functioned as a way to bring the city’s residents together, regardless of racial or ethnic divisions. White Philadelphian Tammy stated that “when the Phillies win, the whole city is in a good mood.” In another group, Dave waxed triumphantly that baseball was the greatest sport because when the “team is going good, you got the whole city—even strangers talk to each other. People hold the door for you at Wawa [convenience store].” The other fans in Dave’s group were of various races and ethnicities. This diverse group noted how they could talk about the Phillies with strangers in restaurants, on the subway, and in other public places in the city. The respondents felt that baseball united them with other city residents, rather than divided them. A third group, composed of multicultural fans, felt similarly. Rafael, who identified as Latino, mentioned that this “spirit of Philadelphia” carried over to the players, proudly claiming that it was one of the incentives that caused Cliff Lee to spurn millions from the Yankees.

It is clear that the focus group respondents witnessed positive racial change within the Phillies organization. These changes are important because they serve as symbolic representations of racial equality, both on and off the field. Despite the many positive messages that the game can teach about diversity, fans realized that the game “still has a long way to go” in order to reach true racial equality. They mentioned language barriers, changing demographics, lack of minority representation in key leadership positions, and the lack of minority fans. They also discussed potential biases within the media and within the fans themselves.

As the game has brought in a more diverse player pool, the number of players speaking different lan-

guages has increased. While some saw baseball players bonding across differences, others noticed how they could also be separated by cultural barriers such as language. At a Reading Phillies game, white fan Tommy was watching warm-ups and noticed that “all the American players, white and black, were all together and all of the Latino players kind of separated themselves together.” Tommy also observed that Asian players with translators have a far different experience from Latino players who have to rely on teammates for communication assistance. Like Tommy, other fans discussed how language might actually prevent the type of teamwork-spanning difference that Paul described earlier. They even noted how it could be a barrier to promotion for some players. Many thought Carlos Ruiz was a great leader but worried that his struggles with English would prevent him from becoming a coach or a manager someday. Others agreed that while there were many talented, knowledgeable Hispanic players, they probably “could not get into the booth with an accent.”

In addition to language differences, numerous fan groups discussed the decline of African American ballplayers. Multiple fans were concerned with this issue and believed that MLB should continue programs such as Reviving Baseball in the Inner Cities (RBI) in order to ensure that the game remains a diverse representation of our country. Other fans noticed the corresponding rise in Latino players. Hank sees the impact of Hispanic players on the city. He observed that if you “go to certain [Latino] neighborhoods in North Philly, Latinos have little league for the teams. And those kids can play!”

Despite the changing player demographics, fans largely agreed that opportunity to make the big league hinged more on a player’s ability than his race. They did, however, observe a lack of minority players in key leadership positions on the field. Academic sport researchers refer to this phenomenon as “stacking.”²⁵ In a group of black fans, Hank joked that if you had “a white guy, a Latino guy, and a black guy—tell me who plays second base? The white guy!” In a group of white fans, Paul turned to the group and asked, “Off the top of your head, can you think of any African American starting pitchers other than CC Sabathia?” In nearly all of the groups, fans commented on the abundance of white pitchers and the dearth of minority pitchers. In doing so, they were calling attention to the fact that while baseball has made many advances towards racial equality, there were still some signs that all groups did not have equal opportunities. These fans felt that baseball was truly at its best when the

best athletes were given a shot to be the best at any position. Paul lamented having to imagine a baseball world without the likes of Sabathia, Dave Stewart, and Bob Gibson.

While some fans talked about the composition of teams, others talked about the demographics of other baseball personnel. They noted that there were more minority managers and coaches than in the past but felt that baseball “still had a long way to go.” Marcus, a Puerto Rican fan, felt as if organizations “were not interviewing Hispanic candidates for managing positions at the same rate that they do with whites.” Data published by Richard Lapchick confirm that the number of minorities in high leadership positions has improved, but is still low when compared to whites.²⁶ The fans in other groups stressed that best baseball leaders were the ones who could gain respect of others—regardless of their race. Paul felt that policies encouraging organizations to hire more minorities were helpful because such policies “forced people [owners] to look in a different direction rather than going back to the same pool of candidates, many of whom stunk.”

Just as some fans noticed that full racial equality had not been achieved on the field, another set of fans questioned the ability of baseball to bridge racial divides among fans in the stands. Dave noted that he rarely saw any black fans at Phillies games. Salina, a Latina fan, agreed and stated that she noticed “mostly white men” at Phillies games. She questioned the ability of the team to bring the city together if sports fans were racially polarized and if only certain social classes could afford to attend the games. Many agreed with Salina, showing that fans can have a range of opinions about how a sport can affect a community.

Fans also had differing opinions on how the media deal with race and ethnicity. As stated earlier, many noticed that the amount of racism in the media has decreased over time, though some claimed that was only because broadcasters needed to “be more careful” about what they say and how that say it. Lai, a Chinese immigrant, stated that while broadcasters may not make explicit references to race, he “feels from the tone that it is a little different” when the media discuss players of different races. He gave the example of media coverage of Barry Bonds versus that of Mark McGwire and said that he observed subtle differences in how the players were described and criticized that he attributed to race. In another group, Andrew, who earlier claimed that the media ceased to use overt discriminatory terms, said that he thought racism could still be “hidden in code words.” Andrew felt that



Ryan Howard is one of five African American players to appear on the Phillies roster in 2012.

“there was a little bit of a racist attitude from the sports writers who were reporting on some of the things that Jimmy Rollins did,” such as being benched by his manager for failing to run hard to first on a weakly-hit ground ball. The other fans in this group unanimously agreed that Rollins was in the wrong and should have hustled but they were unsure as to whether or not a white player in a similar situation would have been treated differently than Rollins was.

Phillies fans had varying opinions on how the media treated African American players such as Rollins. They also had a number of opinions on how the fans themselves treated the same group of players. Dick Allen’s case was illustrative of the negative reputation that Philadelphians had regarding African American players during the sixties. The world around baseball has changed drastically since that time, but the negative reputation has lingered. Several days after the Phillies were eliminated from the 2010 playoffs, Philadelphia sportswriter Marcus Hayes was conducting an online interactive chat with fans. During this conversation, Hayes noted how fans did not seem to be too upset with the numerous fielding miscues that Utley had made in the final playoff series while they harshly criticized Howard for striking out looking in the final at-bat. Hayes believed that the fans gave Utley this “free pass” because he was white.²⁷

I asked the fans what they thought about Hayes’s remarks and if they thought fans still treated black and white players differently. Most fans agreed that Howard was criticized more harshly than Utley, and many admitted to being some of the worst critics. A few fans thought that race played a role in this differ-

COURTESY OF THE PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES



Howard has three All-Star appearances and NL MVP award under his belt, but fans feel that there are still not enough non-white players in leadership positions in baseball.

ence—Tommy even confessed that he had “a friend who went on this tirade of racial slurs after that [incident]—like ‘he’s a big monkey’ and ‘blah, blah, blah.’ And I was like ‘Dude, calm down!’” Most other fans believed that criticisms of Howard were due to the fact that he was the highest paid player on the team who failed to come through with a clutch hit. Erica stated that “some fans came down harder on Howard for that [failure], and part of it, I think has to do with his race, and the other part of it has to do with the situation.” In another group, Mike also contended that Howard’s race may have been a partial factor but Mike’s opinion was quickly overwhelmed by the other fans, who attributed the differences entirely to the situation.

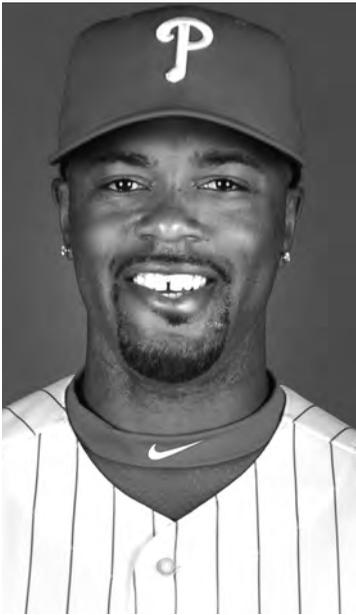
While Hayes was only using Howard’s performance in the playoffs as an example of a larger phenomenon, most fans could not separate their overall opinions about Howard and Utley from their opinions about that particular situation. None of the fans shifted the conversation to a discussion of other examples, perhaps from a less dramatic moment, that might illustrate the feelings of Philadelphia fans towards these two players. The groups focused so much on the situation that they ignored the second part of the question asking whether fans preferred white players over black players, until after they came to the

conclusion that race didn’t matter. At this point, they began to name other situations where race did not play a role rather than thinking about ones where it might. Because most fans believed that baseball players were judged only by their talent and not by their race, I concluded that it was easier for them to find examples of meritocracy rather than examples of racism. Based on my research I have come to believe that those fans who were personally disappointed by Howard’s performance wanted to make it clear that their dissatisfaction was due to the strike-out so that their attitudes were not perceived by other fans as racism.

Baseball is an intricate game and this situation is no different. In this case, Howard’s role on the team, the pressure of the situation, and his race are all plausible explanations for the criticism he received; but sorting through those layers of complexity to isolate the role of race can be very difficult. There was a time in American society where unequal treatment of racial groups was far less

complex; white and dark-skinned players could not play in the same baseball leagues, dine at the same establishments, or ride together on public buses. Since Jackie Robinson’s ground-breaking achievement and the successes of the civil rights movement, many racial barriers have fallen but not all racial issues have fallen away. American society and the game of baseball are both still dealing with the complexities of race and racism. So is Philadelphia.

In these interviews, Philadelphia fans demonstrated that the city is moving away from its sordid racial past. Many fans have adopted more open-minded attitudes and behaviors towards racial issues, though some racial tensions still remain. In the sixties, fans threw batteries at Dick Allen but now they cheer loudly for black players. Despite this change, some still believe that white players remain the true fan favorites of the city. Many minority respondents reported that they felt more welcome and respected as Phillies fans today than they did in the sixties, seventies, and eighties and others still feel out of place among a largely white fan base. Some fans value how diverse groups of players model the cooperation that we hope to achieve in our society while others are skeptical at the lack of diversity in leadership positions and unfair treatment in the media.



Some fans felt that coverage of Jimmy Rollins displayed “a little bit of a racist attitude” by sports writers.

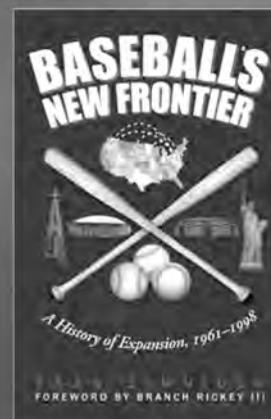
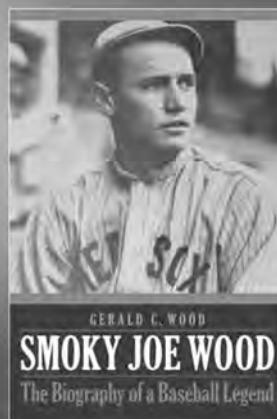
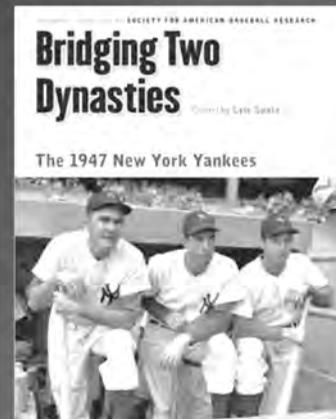
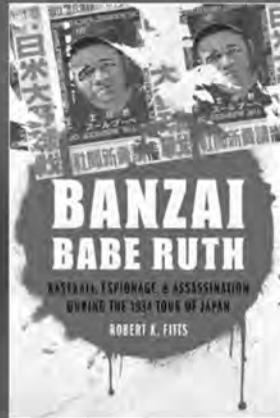
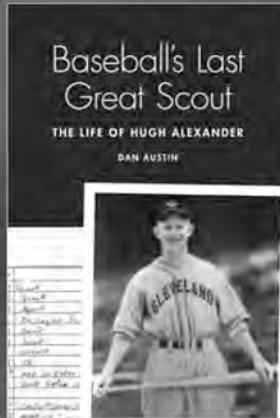
Struggles within the game of baseball have always symbolized larger struggles in our nation and in our cities. Over time, baseball has become multicultural and the US has transformed into a diverse nation, but full equality has still not arrived in either sphere. This trend is reflected in Philadelphia, where baseball fans show that the local game has made great strides but still faces persistent challenges to full racial equality. It is my hope that the game of baseball will continue to serve as a symbol of diversity but more importantly that this wonderful game will also forge ahead in the push for racial justice and equality. ■

Notes

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2. Barry Schwartz and Stephen F. Barsky, “The Home Advantage,” *Social Forces* 55, no. 3 (March 1977): 657.
3. In addition to the American League Philadelphia Athletics, the region also was home to many prominent professional and semi-professional Negro League organizations including the Philadelphia Pythians, Excelsiors, Giants, Stars, and the Hilldale baseball club. For more information on black baseball in Philadelphia, see Jerrold Casway, “Octavius Catto and the Pythians of Philadelphia,” *Pennsylvania Legacies*, May 2007 and Robert Gregg, “Personal Cavaliers: Sports in Philadelphia’s African-American Communities, 1920–1960,” *Ethnicity, Sport, Identity: Struggles for Status*, edited by Andrew Ritchie, 1st ed. Routledge, 2004, 88–115.
4. Harold Parrot. *The Lords of Baseball*. (Praeger 1976)
5. Bruce Kuklick, *To Every Thing a Season* (Princeton University Press, 1993), 148.
6. John Kennedy was the first African American to appear on the Phillies’ major league roster.
7. Kuklick, *To Every Thing a Season*.
8. William C. Kashatus, *September Swoon: Richie Allen, the ‘64 Phillies, and Racial Integration* (Pennsylvania State Univ Pr, 2005).
9. The fans’ poor reputation is not limited to racial issues. According to Kuklick, a gang of fans once mobbed Ty Cobb after an Athletics game at Shibe park and later disconnected the electric cable to the trolley that Cobb attempted to escape on. Additionally, the national media can’t seem to forget that Eagles fans threw snowballs at Santa Claus.
10. Kashatus, *September Swoon; Neil Lanctot, Campy: The Two Lives of Roy Campanella*, 1st Simon & Schuster hardcover ed (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011).
11. Kashatus, *September Swoon*.
12. *Ibid.*, 158.
13. William C. Kashatus, “Dick Allen, the Phillies, and Racism,” *NINE: A Journal of Baseball History and Culture* 9, no. 1 (2000): 151–191.
14. Benjamin Phillips, “Great White High Hopes: Race, Masculinity, and the 1993 Philadelphia Phillies,” *NINE: A Journal of Baseball History and Culture* 19, no. 2 (2011): 61–76.
15. *Ibid.*
16. Richard E. Lapchick, “2012 Racial and Gender (sic) Report Card: Major League Baseball,” 2012, <http://web.bus.ucf.edu/documents/sport/2012-MLB-RGRC.pdf>.
17. Paul Hagen, “Phillies Boost Their Latin Grade,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, May 3, 2011.
18. Max Blue, *Philadelphia Baseball* (PublishAmerica, 2012); David M. Jordan, *Occasional Glory: The History of the Philadelphia Phillies* (McFarland & Company, 2003); Kashatus, *September Swoon*; Kuklick, *To Every Thing a Season*; Christopher Threston, *The Integration of Baseball in Philadelphia* (McFarland & Co Inc Pub, 2003).
19. Alan M Klein, *Growing the Game: The Globalization of Major League Baseball* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006); Adrian Burgos, *Playing America’s Game: Baseball, Latinos, and the Color Line* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007); Rob Ruck, *Raceball: How the Major Leagues Colonized the Black and Latin Game*, First Edition (Beacon Press, 2011); William M. Simons, *The Cooperstown Symposium on Baseball and American Culture 2003* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2003); Sumei Wang, “Taiwanese Baseball: A Story of Entangled Colonialism, Class, Ethnicity, and Nationalism,” *Journal of Sport & Social Issues* 33, no. 4 (November 1, 2009): 355–372.
20. *To Every Thing a Season*, 163.
21. Matthew Frye Jacobson, “‘Richie’ Allen, Whitey’s Ways, and Me: A Political Education in the 1960’s,” *In the Game: Race, Identity, and Sports in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Amy Bass (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 19–46.
22. One of the few published articles about fan opinions was published by Alan Klein, “Latinizing Fenway Park: A Cultural Critique of the Boston Red Sox, Their Fans, and the Media,” *Sociology of Sport Journal* 17, no. 4 (2000): 403–422.
23. The recruitment method was not intended to yield a representative sample of Philadelphians, but to locate individuals who were willing to engage in conversation about baseball. The recruitment did result in a diverse subject pool. Twenty five percent of the participants were women and the remaining seventy five percent were men. Thirty-six respondents listed their racial or ethnic identification: White/Caucasian (14), Black/African American (8), Asian (8), Hispanic/Latino (4), Jewish (1), Afro-Latino (1).
24. Most of the opinions did not differ by racial group; however, I listed each participant self-identified racial or ethnic group to show how these opinions were shared by a diverse group of Philadelphians.
25. Eric Smith and Wilbert M. Leonard II, “Twenty-Five Years of Stacking Research in Major League Baseball: An Attempt at Explaining This Re-Occurring Phenomenon,” *Sociological Focus* 30, no. 4 (1997): 321–331.
26. Lapchick, “2012 Racial and Gender (sic) Report Card: Major League Baseball.”
27. “Phillies Chat with Marcus Hayes,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, October 26, 2010, accessed November 21, 2010, www.philly.com/philly/blogs/phillies/Phillies_chat_with_Marcus_Hayes_102610.html.

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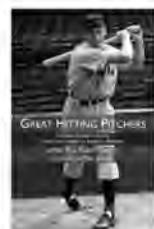
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1915

PHILADELPHIA CLUBS AT HOME

NATIONAL LEAGUE.

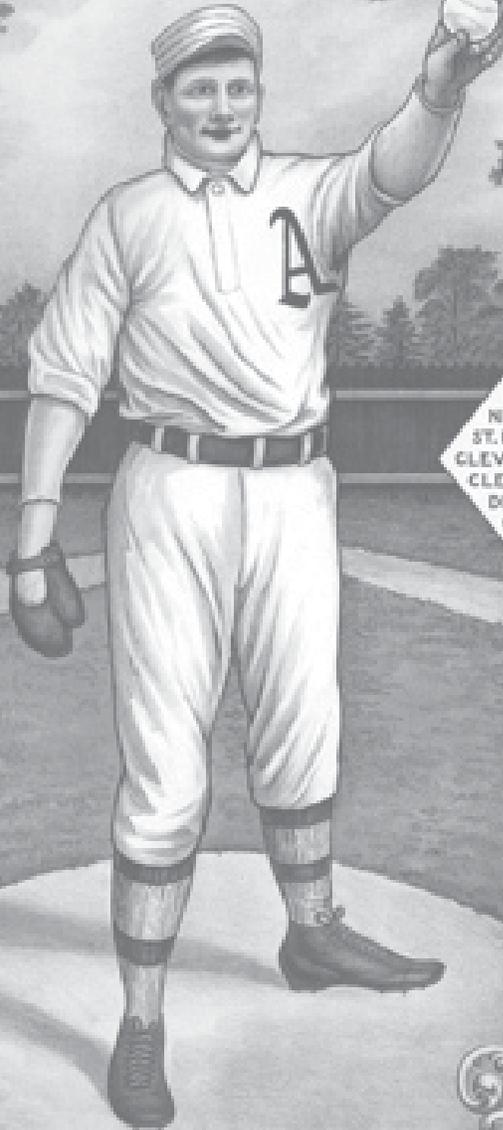
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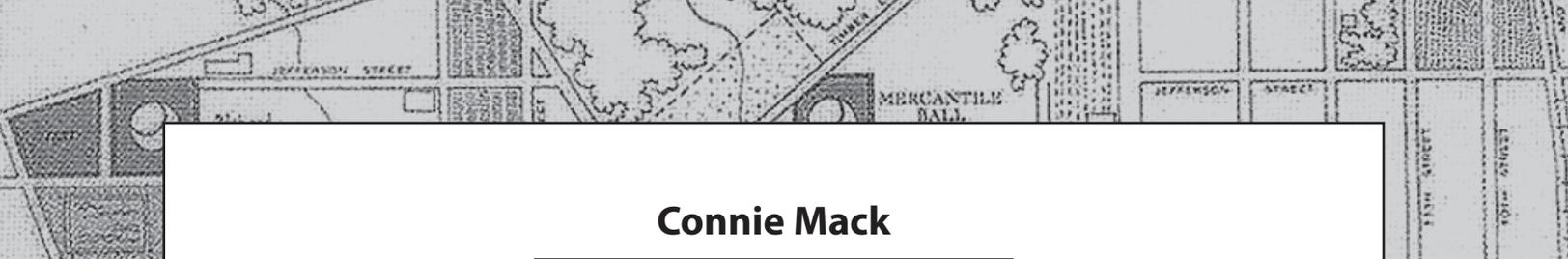
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PITTSBURG	"	11-12-13-14
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CINCINNATI	"	20-21-22-24
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BOSTON	"	30
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ST. LOUIS	"	28-30-31
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BASE BALL SCHEDULE:
THE NATIONAL & AMERICAN LEAGUE
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Connie Mack

Doug Skipper

He was known as “The Tall Tactician” and was baseball’s grand old gentleman for more than a generation. Statuesque, stately, and slim, he clutched a rolled-up scorecard as he sat or stood ramrod straight in the dugout, attired in a business suit rather than a uniform, a derby or bowler in place of a baseball cap. He carried himself with quiet dignity, and commanded the respect of friend and foe. Widely addressed by players and other officials as Mr. Mack, he and the Philadelphia Athletics were so closely linked for 50 years that the team was often dubbed “the Mackmen.”

Connie Mack’s Hall of Fame career spanned 65 major-league seasons as a player, manager, team executive, and owner. He posted 3,731 wins, a mark that exceeds any other manager’s total by nearly 1,000 victories. He guided the Athletics to nine American League championships and won five World Series titles in eight appearances. He was the first manager to win three World Series titles, and the first to win consecutive titles two times. The valleys were as low as the peaks were high: He also endured a major-league record 3,948 losses, and his team finished last in the American League 17 times. He built his dynasties with rising young players, won championships with the stars he developed, and then sold off those stars when he could no longer afford them.

A journeyman catcher who offered more in the way of innovation and creativity than ability during an 11-year major-league playing career, Mack served as player-manager for the National League’s Pittsburgh (the city was actually known as “Pittsburg” from 1890 to 1911) Pirates for three seasons during the rollicking 1890s, and then for four seasons for the Milwaukee Brewers of the Western League, which became the American League in 1900. In 1901, when the circuit declared it was a major league and began to invade Eastern cities, AL President Ban Johnson asked Mack to establish the Philadelphia Athletics. Mack managed the team through 1950, and was a team owner for the franchise’s entire 54-year existence.

In the early years of the Athletics, Mack skipped some of the Deadball Era’s best teams, winning six AL pennants and three World Series in the league’s first 14 years, primarily with players he discovered on school

grounds and sandlots and developed into stars. Faced with financial difficulties because of the onset of World War I and competition for players from the fledgling Federal League, he dismantled his dynasty and endured a decade of miserable finishes. As he advanced into his sixties, many sportswriters and fans suggested the game had passed him by. But he adjusted to the times, opened his checkbook to purchase rising stars from minor-league teams, and built a second dynasty by the end of the Roaring Twenties.

That team won three straight AL championships (1929–31) and a pair of World Series titles, but suffered declining attendance as the Great Depression devastated Pennsylvania’s economy. A pragmatic businessman with no other streams of income other than his ballclub, Mack felt forced to sell off his stars to more solvent teams. Once again, the Athletics tumbled to the bottom of the AL standings, where they would hover for most of the rest of their stay in Philadelphia.

He believed that he would eventually build another winner, and took pride in his ability to discover and develop talented young players. “No other manager in the history of the game ever handled more young players and brought more of them to stardom and to fortune,” the *New York Times* observed in Mack’s obituary. “But it is probable that he will be best remembered for his sensational scrapping of championship machines...”¹

Mack’s enduring legacy is his longevity and his civility. He spent a remarkable 71 years in Organized Baseball, and by the time he left the game, he was a living legend, revered by the public and by those inside the game. Contrary to popular belief, the distinguished old gentleman did swear, and he did yell at his players, but rarely, and usually behind closed doors. He addressed his players by their proper given names; they generally called him “Mr. Mack.”

Sabermetrician and baseball historian Bill James related a story about Mack and Robert “Lefty” Grove, his star pitcher during the glory years of the late 1920s and early 1930s:

Grove was a loudmouth and a hot-head. His manager, Connie Mack, was a quiet, soft-spoken

man who didn't drink, didn't smoke, swear, or raise his voice. In 1932, after a tough defeat, Grove was in the clubhouse raising Cain, throwing chairs, screaming at people and menacing lockers. Finally, Connie Mack came out to try to quiet him down. Grove was having none of it. "The hell with you, Mack," he screamed. "To hell with you." To which Mack responded quietly, as Grove stormed off to the shower, "And to hell with you too, Robert."

Cornelius McGillicuddy was born on December 22, 1862, in East Brookfield, Massachusetts, the third of seven children of Irish immigrants Michael and Mary McKillop McGillicuddy. He arrived one week after Robert E. Lee defeated Union forces at the Battle of Fredericksburg (Virginia), and seven months before the Battle of Gettysburg. At the time, his father, who had worked in cotton mills and shoe factories before the war, was serving in the 51st Massachusetts Infantry, and did not return home until July 1863. As was true of many McGillicuddys, the family was known by Mack, except in legal documents.

Connie, a tall, thin boy dubbed "Slats" by his friends, began to play baseball at an early age. He dropped out of school at the age of 14, worked in a local shoe factory, and became the catcher and captain for the town team. At age 21, he decided that his future was in baseball and embarked on a minor-league career. He debuted at Meriden in the Connecticut State League in 1884. In 1885, he played one game for Newark in the Eastern League, then joined Hartford in the North East Connecticut League. In 1886, Mack caught 69 games for Hartford, which had moved up in class to join the Eastern League.

After the Hartford season ended, the Washington franchise in the National League purchased Mack and three other players for \$3,500. The 6-foot-2 1/2, 150-pound, right-handed batting beanpole catcher made his big-league debut two days later, on Saturday, September 11, 1886, in a 4–3 win over the Philadelphia Phillies before 1,500 fans at Washington's Swampoodle Grounds. Although the Nationals won 13 of 26 games the rest of the way—including four by forfeit—they still finished with the worst record in the eight-team NL at 28–92. Over 10 games, Mack collected 13 hits in 36 at-bats, recorded 88 bare-handed putouts and 22 assists, and was charged with five errors and 10 passed balls.

From 1887 to 1889, Mack was Washington's regular backstop, playing an occasional game at first base, second base, the outfield, and even one at shortstop. He batted

.201 in 1887 and just .187 the next year, though he did smack a career-high three home runs and steal 31 bases. He batted .293 in 1889, when the Nationals again slid back into the cellar after a seventh-place finish in 1888.

Mack was a leader in the players' rebellion against the NL's salary cap and reserve clause that led to the formation of the Players League in 1890. He invested his savings of \$500 in the Buffalo club and caught 123 games for the Bisons, which finished last in the eight-team loop. When the PL collapsed after one season, Mack signed with Pittsburgh in the National League.

He spent the next six seasons in the Smokey City. While there, his wife of five years, Margaret Hogan, died in 1892, leaving him with three infant children. He did not remarry until 1910, when he and Katherine Hallahan began his second family, four girls and a boy.

On the field, he was the NL's leader in catcher fielding percentage in 1891 and 1892. "By that time he had become known as a smart catcher and a reliable batsman in the pinches, though he never was a heavy hitter," the *New York Times* remembered.³ Though not highly skilled, he was creative and competitive. He was one of the first major-league catchers to move up from the backstop to just behind the batter, and among the first to block the plate.

He was also cunning, though he cultivated a clean-cut image. He mimicked the sound of a foul tip and was so proficient at catching them that the NL changed its rule so that a batter was no longer out if the catcher snagged a foul tip with fewer than two strikes. In 1893, he intentionally dropped a popup and turned it into a triple play.⁴ He physically disrupted batters by grabbing or tipping their bats as they swung, and mentally disturbed them by pointing out a flaw or weakness. "Since his minor league days, Connie Mack had continued to work on perfecting the arts of distracting chatter, quick pitches, and bat tipping," Mack biographer Norman Macht wrote, adding that Mack would feign innocence after the act.⁵ Hall of Fame catcher and manager Wilbert Robinson remembered that "Mack never was mean like some of the catchers of the day. But he kept up a string of chatter behind the plate, and if you had any soft spot, Connie would find it. He could do and say things that got more under your skin than the cuss words used by other catchers."⁶

Though he believed in fair play, Mack was able to take pride in his gamesmanship in an era when gaining an edge was a valued characteristic. "Farmer Weaver was a catcher-outfielder for Louisville. I tipped his bat several times when he had two strikes on him one year, and each time the umpire called him out. He got even, though. One

time there were two strikes on him and he swung as the pitch was coming in. But he didn't swing at the ball. He swung right at my wrists. Sometimes I think I can still feel the pain. I'll tell you I didn't tip his bat again. No, sir, not until the last game of the season and Weaver was at bat for the last time. When he had two strikes, I tipped his bat again and got away with it."⁷

Mack was spiked and suffered an ankle injury during the 1893 season while blocking the plate against the Boston Beaneaters' Herman Long. "I was never the same player after that," Mack later told sportswriter Fred Lieb. "I was slower on the bases and couldn't stoop as well behind the plate. It would catch me in the calf, where I had been spiked."⁸ He caught 70 games in 1894. The Pirates started the season with a 53–55 record before Al Buckenberger was dismissed and Mack was named manager at the age of 32. On September 3, the Tall Tactician earned the first of his record-setting 3,731 managerial wins in a 22–1 walloping of his old team, Washington, in a home game at Exposition Park. The next day, Mack tasted the first of 3,948 losses in a road game at the Polo Grounds.

"He was a new type of manager," the *New York Times* observed at the time of Mack's passing. "The old-time leaders ruled by force, often thrashing players who disobeyed orders on the field or broke club rules off the field. One of the kindest and most soft-spoken of men, he always insisted that he could get better results by kindness. He never humiliated a player by public criticism. No one ever heard him scold a man in the most trying times of his many pennant fights."⁹

Pittsburgh posted a 12–10 record the rest of the way and remained in seventh place among the 12 teams in the expanded NL. Never the same after the 1893 injury, Mack appeared in just 14 games as a player in 1895, and though the Pirates finished seventh again, they improved to 71–61 and even led the league briefly in August. But they faded quickly, and on September 6 at the Polo Grounds, the frustrated Mack argued a call at second base, and veteran umpire Hank O'Day tossed him out of the game, the only official ejection of the Tall Tactician's long career. After being thrown out of the game, Mack refused to leave the field. O'Day asked a New York City policeman to remove him, but Mack shook him off and didn't leave until other officers arrived at the scene. He later said he was embarrassed by the incident. Though extremely passionate and highly competitive, the pragmatic Mack managed to maintain his composure through the rest of his career, because he thought it best for his team.

Mack appeared in 33 games in 1896, 28 of them at first base, and participated in his final major-league contest as a player on August 29, 1896 at the age of 33.

The Pirates climbed to sixth place in 1896 with a 66–63 record, but disagreements with the team's owners led to Mack's dismissal.

Mack moved on to Milwaukee, and became manager and 25 percent owner of the city's Western League franchise. Majority owner Henry Killilea told the Tall Tactician, "You're in charge. Handle the club as if it belonged to you. Engage the players you think will strengthen the team without consulting any directors of the club."¹⁰

Mack skippered the Brewers for four seasons. A player-manager during the first three, he took his last turn in the field as a professional player on September 4, 1899. "Once he gave up playing," baseball historian Charles C. Alexander observed, "Mack had managed from the bench in street clothes. His high starched collar was basic male attire at the turn of the century, but many years later, long after it had become unfashionable, he would still be wearing one."¹¹ He would also carry a scorecard for the remainder of his career, waving it to send signals to his players on the field. He relied on his experience and understanding of the skills of both his players and opponents to position his fielders.

Concerned with both wins and the box office receipts, Mack assembled and developed a competitive squad that included a talented but mercurial pitcher, Rube Waddell. In 1900, when league president Ban Johnson transformed the Western League into the American League, the Brewers finished second. When he invaded the eastern cities to compete directly with the NL, Johnson tabbed Mack to establish the Philadelphia franchise that would compete against the Phillies in the nation's third-largest city.

Johnson turned to Charles Somers, the Cleveland owner who had bankrolled several of the other AL entries, to finance the Philadelphia franchise until local ownership could be arranged, and directed Mack to Ben Shibe. Shibe owned the A.J. Reach Company, which manufactured baseball equipment, and a minority share of the rival Phillies. Mack persuaded Shibe to buy 50 percent of the AL franchise from Somers, promising Shibe that Reach would become the sole provider of baseballs for the American League. Mack obtained 25 percent of the franchise himself, and two Philadelphia sportswriters, Frank Hough and Sam Jones, bought the remaining 25 percent, which they sold to Mack in 1912.

The agreement between Shibe and Mack was cemented with a handshake, and wasn't put on paper until 1902. Shibe served as team president and handled the team's business affairs, while Mack served as treasurer and managed baseball matters. The agreement endured

through Shibe's death in 1922, after which Mack worked in partnership with Shibe's sons Tom and John, until their deaths in the 1930s, when Mack became the majority shareholder.

With the partnership in place, Mack needed a place to play as well as players. He solved the first problem by leasing a vacant lot and commissioning construction of Columbia Park. To solve his second problem, Mack turned his attention to his cross-town rivals. With a salary offer of \$4,000, Mack lured Napoleon "King Larry" Lajoie away from the Phillies, and signed pitchers Chick Fraser, Bill Bernhard, and Wiley Piatt.

Mack also signed young New York Giants pitcher Christy Mathewson, but Matty jumped back to the Giants. Although Mack accused Mathewson of renegeing on his contract, he later referred to him as the greatest pitcher ever. The two crossed paths several times during the next two decades.

Although he did not land Mathewson, Mack did acquire players who made an impact in the AL's inaugural season of 1901. Lajoie was the American League's best player, leading the league in batting average (.422), slugging percentage, runs, doubles (48), home runs (14), and RBIs (125). Fraser won 20 games, Bernhard 17, and 25-year-old lefty Eddie Plank won another 17. Mack also added Harry Davis, Socks Seybold, and Lave Cross to the fold. However, the Athletics managed just a 74–62 record and finished fourth in the American League, nine games behind Clark Griffith's Chicago White Sox, and just ahead of John McGraw's fifth-place Baltimore Orioles.

Mack once again set his sights on the Phillies, who had finished second in the NL. This time, he signed away outfielder Elmer Flick, pitcher Bill Duggleby, and shortstop Monte Cross. But before the 1902 season started, the Athletics suffered a severe setback when the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled that Lajoie, Fraser, and Bernhard could not play for any team other than the Phillies. The ruling, which was valid only in Pennsylvania, also affected the three new jumpers. Fraser complied with the order, but Mack made an agreement with Somers, and Lajoie, Flick, and Bernhard chose to sign with Cleveland, staying out of Pennsylvania when the team played there, which allowed them to stay in the American League.

With half his team pulled out from under him on Opening Day, Mack had to rebuild in a hurry. He acquired catcher Osee Schrecongost from Cleveland, picked up second baseman Danny Murphy from Norwich, Connecticut, and mercurial lefthander Rube Waddell, who he had managed in Milwaukee, from the California League. Waddell joined the A's on June 26 and posted a 24–7 record with a 2.05 earned run average

and 210 strikeouts the rest of the way. Plank, a 20-game winner for the first time, and Seybold, who hit 16 home runs, an American League record that stood until Babe Ruth hit 29 in 1919, led the Athletics to their first AL pennant.

The flag was the first for the City of Brotherly Love since 1883, and helped the Mackmen win the battle of the box office. The Athletics drew 420,078 to Columbia Park, more than double what they had drawn during their inaugural season, while the Phillies, jilted by the three men who would win the new league's first five batting championships (Lajoie in 1901 and '03–04, Ed Delahanty in 1902, and Flick in 1905), attracted just 112,066 to the Baker Bowl (which was called Philadelphia Base Ball Park in 1902). The Mackmen would outperform and outdraw the Phillies for the next 13 years.

NL champion Pittsburgh owner Barney Dreyfuss declined an opportunity to play in what would have been the first "modern" World Series, and manager John McGraw, who had jumped from the AL's Baltimore Orioles to the NL's New York Giants during the season derisively labeled the Athletics "a White Elephant," a term generally used to describe an ornate, impractical, and burdensome possession. Rather than consider it an insult, Mack immediately adopted the pachyderm as the team's symbol, and attached a white elephant patch to the Athletic uniforms from 1903 to 1928.

The two leagues reached a "peace agreement" in January 1903, which effectively ended the player raiding between them. The Mackmen finished second that season, as Boston earned the right to play in the first modern World Series. Philadelphia finished 14 1/2 games back despite 20-win seasons by Plank and Waddell, and 17 from newcomer Chief Bender. The Athletics closed the gap to 12 1/2 games in 1904 but finished fifth despite 26 wins from both Plank and Waddell.

With largely the same team, the Athletics outdistanced the Chicago White Sox by two games in 1905. Waddell won 26, Plank won 25, youngster Andy Coakley won 20, and Bender added 16. In addition to the strong pitching, the Athletics led the American League in hitting and runs scored.

As fate would have it, the Mackmen faced the New York Giants and Mathewson in the World Series. As luck would have it, the Athletics were without Waddell, who had been injured. Mathewson tossed three shutouts, including a six-hitter in Game 5 to wrap up the series, and McGraw, who had clad his squad in new black uniforms, earned his first world championship. The Athletics scored just three runs in the series, all in Chief Bender's 3–0 Game 2 win.

The A's slipped to fourth in 1906, finished one-and-a-half games behind Ty Cobb's Tigers in 1907, and a distant sixth in 1908. But during that season, Mack began to build his first dynasty, providing playing time for 21-year-old second baseman Eddie Collins, 21-year-old shortstop Jack Barry, and 22-year-old third baseman Frank Baker.

With the three youngsters in the starting lineup and the Athletics playing their home games at newly finished Shibe Park, Philadelphia finished second as the Tigers won their third straight pennant in 1909.

The Mackmen returned to the top in 1910. Jack Coombs won 31 games, Bender 23, and the 34-year-old Plank won 16 as Philadelphia steamrolled first the American League, and then the Chicago Cubs, four games to one in the Fall Classic. Coombs won three games and Bender one to give Mack and Philadelphia their first World Series championship.

Coombs, Plank, and Bender combined to carry the Athletics to a second straight championship in 1911, and 20-year-old first baseman Stuffie McInnis stepped into the starting lineup, along with Collins, Barry, and Baker, to complete what would become known as "the \$100,000 infield." Once again, Mack squared off against McGraw's black-clad Giants. This time, the Athletics prevailed as Baker hit two key home runs and earned the moniker of "Home Run" Baker. Bender won twice and Coombs and Plank each picked up a victory in the 4-1 series triumph.

The Athletics slipped to third in 1912, but bounced back to finish 6 1/2 games ahead of Walter Johnson's Washington Senators in 1913. Once again the World Series matched Mr. Mack and Muggsy, and for the second time, the Athletics won, this time by a four-games-to-one margin as the 37-year-old Plank out-dueled Mathewson in the finale and Bender won two more World Series games.

With three World Series wins in four years, two over McGraw, Mack had earned his reputation as "The Tall Tactician." Philadelphia cruised to its fourth AL title in five years in 1914 behind the \$100,000 infield and the pitching of Bender, Plank, 21-year-old Bullet Joe Bush, 23-year-old Bob Shawkey, and 20-year-old Herb Pennock. The Athletics, like their manager, were efficient. But as tranquil as the season was in Philadelphia, there were storm clouds on the horizon. Like a cyclone, the Boston Braves, mired in last place on July 18, arose in the summer heat, stormed past the rest of the National League, and demolished the Athletics in a stunning World Series sweep.

Mack later claimed his team lost because it had been splintered by the specter of Federal League money. Unwilling and unable to match its lucrative salaries, Mack

watched the Federal League lure away Plank and Bender, released Coombs (who had missed two seasons because of illness and injury) and sold Eddie Collins to the White Sox because owner Charles Comiskey could afford a high salary to keep Collins out of Federal League hands.

He refused to renegotiate a three-year contract Baker had signed in 1914, and Baker retired to his family farm and sat out a year before the equally stubborn Mack traded him to the New York Yankees.

Mack's 1950 "autobiography," most likely penned by a ghost writer¹², justifies his actions:

"After giving the crisis much careful thought, I decided the war had gone too far to stop it by trying to outbid the Federal moneybags. Nothing could be more disastrous at this time than a salary war. There was but one thing to do: to refuse to be drawn into this bitter conflict, and to let those who wanted to risk their fate with the Federals go to the Federals. The first to go were Bender and Plank. I didn't get a nickel for them. This was like being struck by a hurricane. Others followed. There was only one way to get out from under the catastrophe. I decided to sell out and start over again. When it became known that my players were for sale, the offers rolled into me. If the players are going to 'cash in' and leave me to hold the bag, there was nothing for me to do but to cash in too. So I sold the great Eddie Collins to the White Sox for \$50,000 cash. I sold Home Run Baker to the Yankees. My shortstop, Jack Barry, told me he wanted to go to Boston, so I sold him to the Bostons for a song. "Why didn't you hang on to the half of your team that was loyal and start to build up again?" This question has often been asked me. My answer is that when a team starts to disintegrate it is like trying to plug up the hole in the dam to stop the flood. The boys who are left have lost their high spirits, and they want to go where they think the future looks brighter. It is only human for everyone to try to improve his opportunities."¹³

When the 1915 season started, Mack hoped that Bush, Shawkey, and Pennock could offset the loss of his veteran pitchers. They weren't ready. Although the three would combine for 636 wins over their careers, they went just 14-29 for the Athletics in 1915. Before the season ended, he sent Shawkey to the Yankees and Pennock and Barry to the Red Sox. The scuttled squad managed to lose

109 games, and finished 58 1/2 games behind the Red Sox, even though Lajoie, at age 39, returned to the fold. A year later, Larry closed out his career on an even more dismal Athletics squad, one that finished just 36–117. The Mackmen placed last for seven straight seasons, including the final five of the Deadball Era. In 1919, the A's finished 52 games back and the cross-town rival Phillies finished 47 1/2 back in the NL in a dismal baseball year for the City of Brotherly Love.

In the early 1920s, as Mack neared and passed his 60th birthday, baseball writers and fans openly suggested that the old timer should surrender his spot on the bench to a younger man. But Mack was busy building his next dynasty. The Mackmen finally escaped the cellar in 1922, when they finished seventh. They improved one more place each year between 1922 and 1924, and then jumped to second place in 1925. Shibe Park attendance, which had bottomed out in 1918 at 177,926, jumped to 869,703 in 1925, and Mack plowed his profits right back into the team. By the end of that year, Mack had added future Hall of Famers Al Simmons, Jimmie Foxx, Mickey Cochrane, and Robert “Lefty” Grove—all purchased from minor-league clubs—to his roster, which now also included Eddie Rommel, Rube Wahlberg, Jimmy Dykes, and Max Bishop. The Mackmen slipped to third in 1926, then finished second to the “Murderer’s Row” New York Yankees in 1927.

They finished second again in 1928, and Mack managed three hitters who each had collected more than 3,000 hits. Both Tris Speaker and Ty Cobb closed out their Hall of Fame careers that summer in Philadelphia uniforms. Speaker collected the final 51 of his 3,514 career hits, and Cobb, who had joined the Athletics in 1927, knocked out the final 114 of his 4,189 safeties. Eddie Collins, who had returned to the Athletics in 1927, managed three hits in 1928, raising his career total to 3,314, and would add number 3,315, his last, with a pinch-hit single in 1930. The three made up half of the six players who had reached the milestone by that time—Lajoie, who had spent two stints with Mack, Cap Anson, and Honus Wagner, made up the rest of the exclusive club. (Mack also managed some near misses. After a long NL career, Zack Wheat played his final season in Philadelphia in 1927 and finished with 2,884 hits. Simmons was on his way to 2,927 career safeties.)

The following year, the Athletics embarked on one of the greatest three-year runs in baseball history, winning 313 games in that span, three AL pennants, and a pair of World Series titles.

The 1929 Athletics posted 104 victories, finished 18 games ahead of the Yankees, and crushed the Chicago

Cubs four games to one in the World Series. Surprise Game 1 starter Howard Ehmke delivered a complete-game 3–1 victory, and the Athletics, trailing 8–0 in Game 4, rallied for 10 runs in the bottom of the seventh inning to win, 10–8. Mack later called Ehmke’s performance “my greatest thrill.”¹⁴ Cochrane, Foxx, Simmons, Dykes, Mule Haas, and Bing Miller all batted .300 or better, while George Earnshaw, who Mack had purchased a year earlier from the minors, posted 24 wins, Grove 20, Wahlberg 18, and Rommel 12.

Philadelphia won 102 games in 1930, finished eight games ahead of the runner-up Washington Senators and 16 ahead of the Yankees, and downed the St. Louis Cardinals four games to two in the Fall Classic behind a pair of wins each from Grove and Earnshaw, two homers each from Cochrane and Simmons, and a game-winner from Foxx. Grove won 28 games during the regular season and Earnshaw 22, Foxx homered 37 times and drove in 156 runs, and Simmons hit 36 homers and drove in 165.

In 1931 they were even better during the regular season. The Athletics posted 107 wins to finish 13 1/2 games ahead of the Yankees. Grove posted a 31–4 record, Earnshaw and Rube Walberg each won more than 20, Foxx hit 30 home runs, and Simmons hit 22. But Johnny “Pepper” Martin, the “Wild Horse of the Osage,” collected 12 hits, ran wild, and willed the Cardinals to victory in a seven-game Fall Classic rematch, the finale being a 4–2 win at Sportsman’s Park.

It was the last time that Mack managed a World Series game, as the second Athletics dynasty ended much like the first. This time it was the Great Depression that devastated the city of Philadelphia’s economy. Attendance plummeted while the Athletics had the highest payroll in the league. Mack sold off his stars to owners with deeper pockets, and his team returned to the nether regions of the American League.

The descent started slowly. Foxx smashed 58 home runs and drove in 169 runs, and the Athletics won 94 games in 1932, but finished 13 games behind the Yankees, as New York returned to dominance after the three-year interruption. The Athletics had drawn 839,176 to Shibe Park in 1929, and though they had won three straight pennants, attendance fell to just 405,500 by 1932. In September, Mack sold Simmons, Dykes, and Mule Haas to the Chicago White Sox for \$100,000. Two months later, he released Rommel.

In 1933, Mack served as the AL manager for the first All-Star Game, meeting and beating the ailing John McGraw for the last time, when Babe Ruth homered to give the junior circuit the win in Chicago. Mack had missed the opportunity to manage Ruth earlier in his

career, turning down a chance to purchase the rookie pitcher from Baltimore owner Jack Dunn in 1914, insisting he had no money to do so.

The A's slipped another spot in 1933, finishing third. In December, Mack dealt Grove, Walberg, and Bishop to the Boston Red Sox for two journeyman players and \$125,000, swapped Cochrane to Detroit for \$100,000 and pitcher Johnny Pasek, and packaged Pasek and Earnshaw in a deal with the White Sox that netted \$20,000 and another journeyman player.

The Athletics fell to fifth the next year, and dove all the way to the cellar in 1935, when they attracted just 297,138 to Shibe Park. In December, Mack completed the dismantling of his dynasty when he traded Jimmie Foxx in a four-player trade that brought back \$150,000 in cash.

Between 1935 and 1946, the Athletics finished last nine times in 12 years. Mack, who turned 75 after the 1937 season, missed the final 34 games of that campaign and 91 more in 1939 because of illness. His son Earle, who had played five games for Philadelphia's pennant-winning teams in the 1910s and managed in the minors before he joined his father as a coach and heir apparent in 1924, served as the interim manager. Many thought that once the Grand Old Man retired, Earle would become manager and his half-brother Connie Mack Jr., would manage the team's business affairs. It never happened. Earle served a Prince Charles-like apprenticeship, serving 27 years as bench coach, with just the two interludes, before he was reassigned as chief scout in 1950.

By the late 1930s, Tom and John Shibe, who partnered with Mack after their father's death, had also died, and the Tall Tactician purchased shares from John Shibe's estate that gave the Mack family a majority ownership. Named team president in 1937, he was unwilling to give up the responsibility for baseball operations and ran the ballclub like a small business. With baseball as his primary business, Mack never had the money to compete against owners who had become wealthy through other financial endeavors, but he continued to aspire to make his team more profitable and rebuild another dynasty. In 1938, he reached an agreement with the Phillies to share Shibe Park, embracing his box office rivals as a tenant. In 1939, he added lights, and the Athletics became the first AL team to play night games at home.

They may have been better off in the dark. The Athletics continued to finish last in the early 1940s as the United States entered World War II, though Al Simmons became the latest in a legion of former players to rejoin Mack as a coach, a list that included Ira Thomas, Danny Murphy, Eddie Collins, Eddie Rommel, and Jimmy Dykes.

In 1943, the Athletics suffered through a 20-game

losing streak on their way to another eighth-place finish. But in 1944, a season that saw most able-bodied young men in military rather than baseball uniforms, the St. Louis Browns won their only AL pennant, and the Mackmen climbed to sixth place.

They slid back into the cellar the following year, and the two after that, before making Mack's modest last hurrah. The Athletics posted a winning record in all three seasons between 1947 and 1949, finishing fifth twice and fourth in 1948. Attendance, which ran as low as 233,173 during the lean seasons, spiked to a three-year average of 891,052. Bolstered by the box office receipts, Mack at long last had cash to spend. But while he may have dreamed of another dynasty, his age, financial situation, unwillingness to embrace and build a minor-league system, and a reluctance to add minority players (because he believed Philadelphia fans wouldn't accept them) doomed the dream to failure.

After three straight winning seasons, Mack optimistically embarked on the 1950 campaign, but at the age of 87, suffered through a 50–102 season. The Athletics drew just 309,805 to Shibe Park, while their tenants, the Whiz Kid Phillies, won the NL title and attracted more than a million fans for the fifth straight year.

Mack endured lapses of memory, napped during games, and made bad coaching decisions that his assistants quietly reversed during the 1950 season. Despite his vow that he would not step down, he was too old to physically carry on, and, despite their promise in August that he would not have to, his sons, Earle and Roy, urged him to surrender his spot in the dugout. On October 18, 1950, at the age of 87, Connie Mack retired as manager of the Philadelphia Athletics, with a tally of 3,731 wins (3,582 with Philadelphia) and 3,948 losses (3,814 with the A's), both major-league records. Mack said, "I'm not quitting because I'm getting old, I'm quitting because I think people want me to."¹⁵

Jimmy Dykes, one of many former players who had returned to serve as a coach for Mack, and who had replaced Earle as the top assistant, was named manager. Dykes guided the team to fifth- and fourth-place finishes the next two years, but the Athletics slipped to seventh in his final season, 1953, and finished last under Eddie Joost in 1954.

Mack stayed on as team president, though his sons took on more and more of the duties as he aged. Roy and Earle (his sons from his first marriage) had acquired nearly 80 percent of the franchise's stock by August 1950, including shares from Connie Mack Jr. (his son from his second marriage) after considerable squabbling among the children from the two marriages (the turmoil had

resulted in a temporary separation from his second wife, Katherine in 1946–47).¹⁶ To acquire the shares, Roy and Earle heavily mortgaged the club through the Connecticut General Life Insurance, and the debt-laden club once again faced financial difficulty as attendance continued to fall. “Toward the end he was old and sick and saddened, a figure of forlorn dignity bewildered by the bickering around him as the baseball monument that he had built crumbled away,” veteran sportswriter Red Smith wrote.¹⁷

Though his legacy and career winning percentage had been eroded by the string of last-place finishes, Mack was revered by those in the game, and the public. Shibe Park was renamed “Connie Mack Stadium” in 1953 and continued to house both the Athletics and the Phillies, who were still winning the battle of the box office between the two. The other AL owners, unhappy about their share of the low gates at Philadelphia—just 362,111 in 1953 and a paltry 304,666 in 1954—urged the Macks to sell or move the team.

The Macks resisted, but Roy and Earle were pressured by the New York owners to sell the team to Arnold Johnson, a Chicago vending machine magnate who owned the Yankees farm team in Kansas City. When Earle and Roy finally agreed to sell, the other AL owners unanimously voted to accept the deal. Upon hearing the news that the Athletics would move away from Philadelphia, the 91-year-old Connie Mack collapsed.

He bounced back and endured the summer of 1955, his first outside of organized baseball since he embarked on his playing career in 1884. In early October, he fell and suffered a hip fracture that required surgery and was using a wheelchair when he celebrated his 93rd birthday on December 22. In early February, he fell ill while at his daughter’s house.

Connie Mack died in Philadelphia on February 8, 1956, at the age of 93 “of old age and complications from hip surgery.”¹⁸ Hundreds of fans, friends, former players, and baseball executives turned out for the funeral at St. Bridget’s, his parish church. He was buried at Holy Sepulchre Catholic Cemetery in Philadelphia. He was survived by Katherine, four daughters, three sons, and 24 grandchildren and great-grandchildren. One grandson, Connie Mack III, the son of Connie Mack Jr., served in the US House of Representatives from 1983 to 1989, and represented Florida in the US Senate from 1989 to 2001. One great-great-grandson, Connie Mack IV, also served Florida in the US House of Representatives from 2005 to 2013.

Mack received many honors during his long career. He was proudest of the Bok Award, which was presented to him for his service to the city of Philadelphia in 1929.

The honor had always gone to someone prominent in the arts or professions. In 1941, the City of Philadelphia and State of Pennsylvania both declared May 17 “Connie Mack Day.”

In December 1937, 13 years before he retired as the Athletics manager, Mack was selected for induction into Baseball’s Hall of Fame, along with his old nemesis, McGraw, and old ally, Ban Johnson. In June 1939, Mack was honored at the dedication of the Hall of Fame Museum at Cooperstown. His plaque there called him “Mr. Baseball.”

Decades after both he and his beloved Athletics departed, The City of Brotherly Love continues to honor the Mackmen legacy. Mack was posthumously inducted into the Philadelphia Sports Hall of Fame in 2004, and was among the inaugural group selected for the Philadelphia Baseball Wall of Fame. The Wall stood inside Veterans Stadium—where the Phillies moved when they left Connie Mack Stadium after the 1970 season—until 2004, when they moved into Citizens Bank Park. There, a new Wall includes only Phillies contributors, and the names of the Athletics’ honorees now appear on the base of a life-sized statue of Connie Mack, attired in a business suit, waving his rolled up scorecard, outside the ballpark. It is a fitting tribute to the man who meant so much to baseball in Philadelphia. ■

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12. Connie Mack. *My 66 Years in the Big Leagues, The Great Story of America’s National Game* (Philadelphia: Universal House, 1950), 35–36. According to Philadelphia Athletics historian Bob Warrington, “Dick Armstrong,” the Athletics director of public relations when the book was published, acknowledged years later that he was the ghostwriter of Mack’s “autobiography.” Mack, struggling with mental deterioration by 1950, certainly needed considerable assistance in telling the story of his life. Whether Mack actually uttered these words or they sprung from the fertile mind of Armstrong is open to question. “Departure Without Dignity: The Athletics Leave Philadelphia,” *Baseball Research Journal*, 39 (Fall 2010), 113.
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The Early Years of Philadelphia Baseball

Rich Westcott

The Philadelphia area is the birthplace of the United States flag as well as America's first modern bank, zoo, electronic computer, volunteer fire company, farmers' market, trade union, magazine, stock exchange, and professional surgery.

It is where the Declaration of Independence was signed, it was the nation's first capital, and is the home of the world-famous Philadelphia Orchestra, the internationally renowned Museum of Art, Fairmount Park, the largest inner-city park in the nation, and the legendary Mummer's Parade. Soft pretzels, cheese steaks, scrapple, and carbonated water originated in the region. Andrew Wyeth, Bill Cosby, Louisa May Alcott, Mario Lanza, Betsy Ross, John Bartram, Will Smith, Ethel Barrymore, George McClellan, Marian Anderson, Bobby Rydell, Thomas Eakins, Margaret Mead, Grace Kelly, and Benjamin Rush were all born in the area.

Philadelphia also has played a major role in the history of America's national pastime. Baseball, or an early version of the game, has thrived in the city for nearly two centuries, and has been prominent in the evolution of the sport. Indeed, Philadelphia and baseball are unequivocally linked in a relationship that is as tight as anything else in the city. And that is a statement that cannot be taken lightly.

The city that's been around since William Penn arrived in 1682 and is often referred to as "The Cradle of Liberty," featured horse racing in the mid-1700s. By then, rowing was also a major sport in the area. Boxing was popular as far back as the 1850s, tennis took hold in the city in the 1880s, and golf began to become fashionable in the 1890s. There was even professional auto racing on city streets in the early 1900s.

By then, though, baseball was firmly entrenched as Philadelphia's most popular sport. And it wasn't just professional baseball. Hundreds of club teams were scattered throughout the area, having long replaced cricket as the preferred bat-and-ball game. Even college baseball, dating back to 1867 when the University of Pennsylvania fielded its first team, had a large following. Unquestionably, baseball was the most dominant sport in Philadelphia, and for the most part, it would hold center

stage in the area right up to the present.

Although a game distantly related to a form of baseball had been played in Philadelphia as far back as the mid-1700s, and soldiers played a "game of ball," as they called it, during the Revolutionary War, the sport that was a forerunner of today's game really began to be taken seriously in the city in the 1820s. Called "town ball," "cat ball," or "rounders," the game's first known local team was founded in 1831 as the Philadelphia Olympic Club.

Originally comprised of players 25 years of age or older, Olympic Club members claimed it was the first baseball club in America. Because of what were then known as blue laws, a term that was used to describe a law in Pennsylvania that prevented sports and other activities from being performed on Sundays, the club was forced to play its games in Camden, New Jersey, where no such laws existed. Accordingly, a group of 15 to 20 players would board a ferry at the bottom of Market Street in Philadelphia and travel across the Delaware River to Camden to meet other club teams.

In 1833, the Olympic Club merged with an unnamed club team made up mostly of graduates of Central High School to form the Olympic Town Ball Club of Philadelphia. A clubhouse was built at Broad and Wallace Streets, a constitution with bylaws and membership requirements was written, and within a few years as many as 100 young men had become members of the club.

While making their own bats and balls and playing in Camden on fields where no rent or permission was necessary, the Olympics attracted crowds that grew increasingly larger as time went on. And as baseball's popularity grew, so did the number of teams playing in the area. By the Civil War, the city's population numbered more than 500,000, and as many as 100 club teams, many formed initially as alcohol-drinking social groups, were scattered throughout the area—all areas of Philadelphia, but also in surrounding towns including Chester, Norristown, Ardmore, Wilmington, and Camden. They carried names such as Keystone, Mercantile, United, Winona, Minerva, and Benedict.

In the mid-1800s, Philadelphia teams began to play a more modern form of baseball known as "the New York

Game.” Unlike its predecessor, “the Massachusetts Game,” the New York Game featured an infield diamond, canvas-covered bags, rounded bats, and nine players on a side. The pitcher stood 45 feet from home plate, and a thrown ball hitting the batter did not count as an out.

One of the earliest games in Philadelphia in which there were recorded results took place in 1860 when a team called Equity beat the Pennsylvanias in anything but a pitchers’ duel, 65–52. Unlike today, the scores in those days were usually high. In another game in 1866, the Athletics trounced the Alert Club, 67–25, with slugger Lipman Pike hitting six home runs, including five in a row.

The 1860s proved to be especially important in the history of Philadelphia baseball, which by then was attracting as much interest to the game as were the teams in New York. Although there had been other fields where baseball was played—most notably at Camac Woods at 12th Avenue and Berks Street—the first real ballpark was opened in 1860. Called Recreation Park, it could hold as many as 6,500 spectators and was located in North Philadelphia on an oddly shaped block boarded by Columbia and Ridge Avenues and 24th and 25th Streets.

The park featured strange dimensions. It was 300 feet down the left-field line, 331 feet to straightaway center, and 369 feet to right-center before the wall tapered to 247 feet down the right-field line. There were no dugouts, benches sufficed, and no locker room. In later years, when professional teams played there, visiting players dressed in the nearby hotels where they stayed and rode horse-drawn carriages to the ballpark.

Although used initially only for baseball, Recreation Park took on another dimension during the Civil War when it became an encampment for Union soldiers. During their idle moments, the soldiers played baseball on the part of the field that was not in use.

1860 was also the year that the Athletic Club began. Often described as “the first real baseball team,” it was led by Colonel Thomas Fitzgerald and played other than Sunday games at Columbia Park at 15th Street and Columbia Avenue. Eventually, the club was said to have 1,000 members.

The Athletics attracted the best players to the team, which included raiding other area teams of their top players. The club thrived throughout the 1860s, playing not only local teams, but exchanging visits with clubs from other cities such as New York, Brooklyn, and Newark, New Jersey. In 1858, these and other teams formed the National Association, a loosely connected group of squads from New York. Within a few years, the confederation comprised 55 teams, including

40 from Philadelphia, plus others from Pittsburgh, Easton, Johnstown, and West Chester. By 1866, the NA membership totaled 201 teams.

In 1865, Al Reach, a man whose name would become indelibly etched in the annals of Philadelphia baseball history, became one of the game’s first professional players when he signed with the Athletics for a salary of \$1,000 for the season. A left-handed second baseman who was born in England, Reach had played for the Brooklyn Eckfords before becoming Philadelphia’s first pro baseball player.

Eventually, the Athletics, who by then were practicing four days a week, paid other players, too—as much as \$25 a week. With teenage pitcher-shortstop Dick McBride, slugger Levi Meyerle, and Reach leading the way, the team became one of the top squads in the nation. So good were the Athletics that in one game they slaughtered the first rendition of the Nationals of Washington, 87–12. In 1865, they played a game against the Atlantics of Brooklyn with an estimated 20,000 people crammed into Columbia Park or sitting on rooftops, in trees, and on the tops of carriages. Then in 1866, the Athletics were scheduled to meet the Atlantics again in what was billed as the “true” baseball championship. With 30,000 fans storming the gates, there was such chaos that the game had to be cancelled.

In 1866, Philadelphia became the birthplace of another landmark event when the city’s first African American team, the Excelsior Club, was formed. Later that season, another black team called the Pythian Base Ball Club, surfaced. Led by Octavius V. Catto, the club’s promoter, second baseman, and captain, the Pythians would become one of the city’s most noteworthy African American teams, and in a era of strict segregation in sports, the first black team to face an all-white squad. In 1869, the Pythians met the white Olympic Club, losing in a slugfest, 44–23, before an orderly crowd estimated to number 5,000.

Two years later, Catto, a former Army officer in the Civil War, a teacher at the Institute of Colored Youth (later to become Cheyney University), and a civil rights activist who fought successfully to integrate the city’s streetcars and for the passage of the 15th Amendment—which allowed black males to vote—was murdered by a white segregationist as he walked to his home in South Philadelphia. The Pythians floundered after his death. Other African American teams flourished, however, and in the mid-1880s, the first black professional squads were formed and various leagues began, including one called the National Colored Baseball League. For the rest of the nineteenth century, African American baseball proliferated in Philadelphia with dozens of teams playing throughout the city.

Meanwhile, quickly becoming the top hitter on the Athletics, Reach was named first-team All-American by the New York *Clipper* in 1868. Three years later, he was still one of the top players on his team when the Athletics joined the new National Association of Professional Base Ball Players (NA), a nine-team circuit that would be the sport's first professional league. Each team paid \$10 to join the league.

The Athletics played at 25th and Jefferson Streets at Jefferson Park (sometimes called Athletic Park), one of nine fields in North Philadelphia that were now used for baseball. Jefferson Park was not only the city's first fully enclosed field, it was the home of the first team in the nation to win a championship of a professional league.

With Meyerle hitting .492 to become the first batting champion in professional baseball and tying for the league lead with four home runs, Reach recording a .353 batting average, and McBride posting an 18–5 mark on the mound, the Athletics captured the pennant in their last game of the season with a 4–1 victory over the Chicago White Stockings. The Athletics had a final record of 21–7, finishing with a one-game lead over the Boston Red Stockings.

In 1872, the Athletics added a hot young player named Adrian “Cap” Anson, who would play four seasons with the Athletic team, hitting well above .300 each year and once as high as .415. But the team did not finish higher than third in the four remaining years of the NA, while Harry Wright's Red Stockings won four straight championships.

Along the way, the Athletics stopped having Philadelphia to themselves. In 1873, they were joined in the league by a new team called the Philadelphia White Stockings. The White Stockings not only argued their way into using Jefferson Park, too, they raided the Athletics of some of their players. In their first year, the White Stockings finished in second place, well ahead of the fifth-place Athletics.

In 1874, in an attempt to introduce baseball to the cricket-minded British, the Athletics and Red Stockings toured England together, meeting in 14 games, seven baseball and seven cricket. The US team won every game. “Our British friends didn't understand the game and didn't seem to be anxious to learn it,” Anson said later. “But they fell all over themselves in their effort to make us feel at home.”

That season, the Philadelphia White Stockings changed their name to Pearls and finished fourth, one place behind the Athletics. In a move that spread attendance thinner for each team, the Athletics and Pearls were joined by a squad called the Centennials, that

played its home games at Recreation Park (or Centennial Grounds, as some called it) in what had become a 13-team league.

On July 28 that year, the Pearls' Joe Borden, recently signed as a 21-year-old amateur and playing under the assumed name of Joe Josephs so his father wouldn't know that he was playing professional baseball, became the first pro pitcher to hurl a no-hitter. Throwing from a spot that was then 45 feet from home plate and with the rule that a pitcher's arm had to be below his belt when he threw, Borden blanked the White Stockings, 4–0, in what would be the only no-hitter pitched in the five years of the National Association.

Borden's feat was easily the highlight of the season and provided one last gasp for the fading National Association. The Athletics were third and the Pearls fifth. The Centennials, plagued by dissension among the players, disbanded before the end of the season. That fall, with attendance dwindling and a new league about to begin, the NA folded. Many of its better players would jump to the new National League (NL), while the Athletics, Pearls, and Centennials continued to play as independent semipro teams. The National League started with eight teams, each paying a \$100 entrance fee. The league ruled that each team had to represent a city with at least a 75,000 population.

The first National League game took place, appropriately, in Philadelphia on April 22, 1876, at Jefferson Park during a year in which the city staged a historic Centennial celebration to commemorate the nation's 100th birthday. Ironically, Borden, a native of Yeadon in suburban Philadelphia, who was now pitching for the Boston Red Caps, beat the Athletics, 6–5, before an estimated crowd of 3,000. Incredibly, two days later, the Athletics whipped Borden and Boston, 20–3. Before the end of the season, Borden was released. He stayed in Boston as a groundskeeper before eventually returning to Philadelphia to work in Reach's factory.

The Athletics team was made up of some players from the Athletics squad of the NA, including Meyerle, plus some new, younger players from the Philadelphia area and other NA teams. In a game in June, the Athletics defeated Cincinnati, 20–5, with George Hall and Ezra Sutton each hitting three triples, the only time that two players from the same team have ever done that.

The Athletics, however, did not finish the season. Having at one point during the season taken nearly three weeks off to rest at Cape May, New Jersey, team officials decided not to send the team on its final road trip, contending that they had no money to pay for travel expenses. The team finished with a 14–45 record. That

December, the Athletics were expelled from the league by a unanimous vote of the six other teams. Subsequently, much of the squad played as an independent team, facing other Philadelphia sandlot clubs.

In 1882, a new league called the American Association of Base Ball Clubs (AA) (also called the Beer and Whiskey League because many of the team owners were involved in the booze business) was formed. A third team called the Athletics was one of six ballclubs to join the circuit. Among the new Athletics owners was Charlie Mason, an ex-player and owner of a saloon and bookie joint, and Lew Simmons, a minstrel show producer and performer. Bill Sharsig, a theatrical producer who had formed a semipro team in 1880 that he called the Athletics, was another team leader, and later in the decade also became the team's manager.

After starting at Oakdale Park at 11th and Cumberland Streets, the Athletics moved following their first year to Jefferson Park. The team finished second in the first year, then in 1883 won the league championship, posting a 66–32 record and edging the St. Louis Browns by one game. Among the members of that Athletics club was a 5-foot-3 second baseman named Cub Stricker. Another member of the Athletics was Harry Stovey, who won his second of five major-league home-run titles that year, and would go on to become an early superstar in the city, and one of the great hitters in early baseball. Stovey played seven seasons with the Athletics and was the first major leaguer to reach 100 career home runs while twice batting over .400.

One year later, yet another new league was formed. While competing with the two other leagues, it was called the Union Association and was considered by its backers to be a “major league.” It consisted of eight teams, including the Philadelphia Keystones, who played in what they named Keystone Park at Broad and Dauphin Streets in North Philadelphia. The site was originally the grounds of the Forepaugh Circus and would later be called Forepaugh Park. But the Keystones, lacking funds and good players, failed to finish the season, disbanding in August with a 21–46 record. At the end of the season, the whole league, losing both players and lawsuits to teams from the other leagues, folded.

By then, though, baseball in Philadelphia had taken a turn that would forever affect the city's connection with the sport. Starting in the 1883 season, Philadelphia was back in the National League after a six-year absence. Started by Reach and playing at Recreation Park, within a few years the Phillies would become the most prominent team in Philadelphia. In 2013, 131 years after they began, the Phillies were still around, holding a spot as the city's

premier sports team and owner of the longest consecutive, one-city, one nickname franchise in baseball history (see more about the Phillies starting on page xxx).

As the 1880s progressed, baseball was played on virtually every corner of the city. Males ranging from young boys to middle-aged men played the game. And if you were a pro and couldn't find a team in Philadelphia, you'd leave and play somewhere else. Such was the case with Ned Williamson, a Philadelphia native who played with the Chicago White Stockings. In 1884, Williamson knocked 25 home runs, many over the short right-field fence at Chicago's Lark Front Park, setting a record that was not broken until Babe Ruth smacked 29 homers in 1919.

Another Philadelphian was Matt Kilroy, a pitcher with the American Association's Baltimore Orioles. In 1886, Kilroy hurled a no-hitter against the Pittsburgh Alleghenys. A few years later, he came home and established a bar across from the right-field corner of Shibe Park at 20th Street and Lehigh Avenue. Kilroy's was a hugely popular venue that before, during, and after games catered to legions of fans for more than half a century (it was later called Quinn's Tavern).

Another player of some note in that era was Athletics pitcher Frank Chapman from Newburgh, New York. His whole big-league career consisted of just one game and five innings in 1887 in which he allowed eight hits and four runs. But Chapman was just 14 years old at the time, the youngest player ever to perform as a major leaguer.

Philadelphia, which had experienced the presence of three professional teams once before, did it again in 1890 when a group of players, who had formed a union because of their dissatisfaction with the league's \$2,500 salary cap, jumped from the NL and AA and formed an eight-team Players (or Brotherhood) League. A number of key players, including Ed Delahanty, left the Phillies and the Athletics to join the new league. The Philadelphia team was called the Quakers, and it also played at Forepaugh Park.

With the Phillies now playing at Philadelphia Base Ball Park (or Huntington Grounds) at Broad Street and Lehigh Avenue, and the Athletics taking the field for one more year at Jefferson Park, all three teams played home games within about one mile of each other in North Philadelphia. Although each team had its own set of fans, the competition for the spectators' dollars was fierce. Those dollars didn't just fly around at the entrance gate, either. Betting in the stands was extremely popular among fans, who would wager not only on final scores, but sometimes on runs scored in an inning or even whether the pitch would be a ball or a strike.

The Players League folded and the AA and the Athletics were in trouble, too. Never again serious contenders for the title after their 1883 crown, the Athletics stayed at Forepaugh Park in 1891. At the end of the season, the whole AA disbanded and four of its teams joined the NL. The Athletics merged with the Phillies, with outstanding A's Gus Weyhing, Lave Cross, and Bill Hallman playing for the Phils.

For the rest of the century, the Phillies were Philadelphia's only major-league team. As the twentieth century approached, though, major changes were in the works. One happened in 1894 in Pittsburgh when the Pirates moved their catcher into the manager's job late in the season. It was the start of a 57-year managerial career for Cornelius McGillicuddy, later to be called Connie Mack. In 1897, Mack became manager of Milwaukee in the Western League. A few years later, he moved to Philadelphia.

Shortly afterward, the reason for the move became obvious. Western League owners desiring a major league to compete with the National League, hired Byron "Ban" Johnson as president and changed its name to the American League in 1900. Naturally, he wanted to place a team in Philadelphia, and Mack was his personal choice to make that happen.

Mack's job was to put together a team and find a place for it to play. He recruited Reach's business partner, Ben Shibe, to become majority owner of the team (Mack wound up owning 25 percent and—incredibly by today's standards—local sportswriters Sam "Butch" Jones of the Associated Press and Frank Hough of the Philadelphia *Inquirer*, who had helped Mack form the team, would each own 12.5 percent). Mack also signed players and had a ballpark built at 29th Street and Columbia Avenue in North Philadelphia. Also called Columbia Park, the ballpark was built at a cost of \$35,000 and had a seating capacity of 9,500.

The American League played its first season as a major league in 1901. A sixth Philadelphia team called the Athletics was one of its inaugural members. Mack would go on to serve as the team's manager for 50 years. The last rendition of the Athletics remained in the city through 1954, along the way winning nine pennants and five World Series. The Athletics, whose presence guaranteed that there would always be a big-league game going on in the city, were the dominant team in Philadelphia until the Phillies won the National League pennant in 1950.

Long before then, however, Philadelphia's rich baseball history had been indelibly established. Whether it was the Phillies, the Athletics, notable Negro League teams such as the Philadelphia Giants, the Hilldale

Daisies, and the Philadelphia Stars. Or whether it was great players, managers, and executives, or the many other clubs that dotted the city's landscape, Philadelphia holds a special place at the top of the baseball kingdom.

Hall of Fame pitcher Robin Roberts, who spent nearly 14 years with the Phillies, profoundly summarized that view. "I loved playing in Philadelphia," he once said. "Playing in Philly always meant something very special to me." ■

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Philadelphia Phillies

Rich Westcott

As a franchise that began 130 years ago, the Philadelphia Phillies have made an indelible mark not only on the city where they play but also on the whole sport of baseball.

This is a team that has maintained the same name longer than any other team in professional sports. And with some of the game's finest players—from Ed Delahanty to Chuck Klein to Richie Ashburn to Mike Schmidt, from Grover Cleveland Alexander to Robin Roberts to Steve Carlton to Roy Halladay—the Phillies can lay claim to a vibrant history.

Although their recent seasons have produced the greatest era in team history with five straight trips to the playoffs and back-to-back appearances in the World Series, the Phillies have experienced the highs and lows, the ups and downs, and the good and the bad as much as any baseball team ever did. While they have not always been successful, the Phillies are undeniably one of baseball's most colorful franchises: one that has often been last, but seldom dull.

For more than 13 years, the Phillies had a left-handed catcher named Jack Clements. Around that time, the team's shortstop, Bill Hulen, was also left-handed. Third baseman Hans Lobert once raced a horse around the bases. Outfielder Sherry Magee kayoed an umpire with a punch after being called out on strikes. Later, Magee became an umpire.

Once, Mike Schmidt tried to escape the wrath of the fans by wearing a wig onto the field. John Kruk rebelled when a woman called him “an athlete,” saying, “I ain't an athlete, lady, I'm a baseball player.” For his rookie initiation, Scott Rolen was forced to wear skimpy women's clothes when he left the ballpark. And Ryan Howard claimed that he first knew he was an exceptional power hitter when his mother told him as much at eight years of age.

Richie Ashburn once hit the same woman twice with foul balls during the same at-bat. And when first called up to the Phillies while on a road trip with the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre Red Barons, Chase Utley was put off the bus and had to sit for nearly an hour on a curb in a parking lot along an interstate highway in upstate New York, waiting for a car to pick him up and transport him to Philadelphia.

World-famous evangelist Billy Sunday played briefly with the Phillies. So did Pro Football Hall of Famer Earle “Greasy” Neale, the greatest coach in Philadelphia Eagles history. Future manager Casey Stengel also played with the Phils. Stan Baumgartner pitched for the Phillies' 1915 pennant-winner and covered the club's next National League champs in 1950 for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Jimmie Foxx pitched in nine games with the Phillies. Five professional basketball players—Frankie Baumholtz, Howie Schultz, Dick Groat, Gene Conley, and Ron Reed—wore the uniform of the Phillies.

The Phillies have been guided by 51 managers. One (Harry Wright) is called the Father of Professional Baseball on his tombstone. The group also includes a one-time ticket-taker who later became the team's president (Billy Shettsline), a former medical student (George Stallings), a practicing dentist (Doc Prothro), a college professor (Eddie Sawyer), a future vaudeville singer (Red Dooin), and the owner of major league baseball's highest single-season batting average of .440 (Hugh Duffy). Fourteen Phils pilots held the job for four years or more, 16 skippered the team for one year or less, 22 played with the Phillies, 38 had no prior big-league experience, and 33 never managed in the big leagues again after leaving the Phillies. Charlie Manuel was the winningest manager in Phillies history with 727 victories (569 losses) by Opening Day 2013, which far surpassed the marks of the previous leaders, Gene Mauch (645), Wright (636), and Danny Ozark (594).

Woodrow Wilson was the first sitting US President ever to attend a World Series when he came to Philadelphia in 1915 to watch the Phillies play the Boston Red Sox in Game 2. In 1921, at Pittsburgh, the Phillies took part in the first major-league game broadcast on the radio. They also participated in the first big-league night game, which was played in 1935 at Crosley Field in Cincinnati. Pitcher Hugh Mulcahy was the first major-league player drafted into World War II. In 1946, the Phillies hired Edith Houghton as baseball's first full-time female scout.

The Phillies have a reputation for often acquiring the wrong brother. These signings included Irish Meusel, Vince DiMaggio, Ken Brett, Mike Maddux, Frank Torre, Juan Bell, and Mark Leiter. Of course, the Phillies did

sign Delahanty, Granny Hamner, and Allen in addition to their less-successful siblings. But they also did themselves no favors by trading away future Hall of Famers Ferguson Jenkins and Ryne Sandberg. Yet, with Bob Boone and David Bell they had two of the three players in baseball history who were members of three-generation baseball families who performed in the big leagues.

Since they were formed, the Phillies have played in seven World Series, winning two, and have appeared in postseason play in 14 years. More than 30 people connected with the club as players, managers, or executives are members of the Hall of Fame. Phillies players have won or tied for 28 home-run crowns, eight batting titles, seven Most Valuable Player awards, seven Cy Young awards, four Rookie of the Year awards, and 47 Gold Gloves.

Conversely, the Phillies have finished in last place 31 times and sixth or below 50 times. The Phils are the only team in American professional sports to have lost 10,000 or more games representing a single city (other than the Washington Generals). They have lost 100 or more games in a season 14 times. It has indeed been a highly varied run for a club that has been in existence far longer than any other professional team in Philadelphia.

The Phillies joined the National League in 1883, taking the spot previously held by the Troy club.

NL president Colonel A. G. Mills realized he was in charge of a league with no teams in the nation's two biggest cities, New York and Philadelphia. He contacted an old friend, Al Reach. Would he be interested in a team in Philadelphia?

Since his playing days had ended in 1875, Reach, a left-handed second baseman born in England, and one of baseball's first professional players, had become a highly successful businessman. Originally, he had operated a cigar store. Then, noticing the increasing demand for baseballs, bats, and other sports equipment, he opened a sporting goods store. Soon, Reach decided to launch a sporting goods manufacturing company, and took in a partner named Benjamin F. Shibe, a leather expert and a manufacturer of horse whips. The business was soon flourishing, and with many clients, including professional baseball teams, Reach and Shibe (later the first owner of the Philadelphia Athletics) were becoming exceedingly wealthy.

Mills had no trouble convincing Reach to start a baseball team. Enlisting Colonel John I. Rogers, a lawyer and member of the governor of Pennsylvania's staff, as his partner, Reach entered the team in the National League. The Phillies name was said to identify the team with the city in which it played. Although over the years the team

would sometimes be called by other nicknames, the name was officially always the Phillies, and more than a century later, it would rank as the longest continuous, one-city nickname in professional sports history.

Reach received no players from the defunct Worcester franchise. He recruited almost an entirely new squad, including local players and some from other pro teams. He also had to find a ballpark. Reach located an old ball field in North Philadelphia that had previously been called Recreation Park. Although it had been used by numerous Philadelphia baseball teams and served as an encampment for Union soldiers during the Civil War, it had become neglected and rundown, with overgrown weeds and deteriorating grandstands blighting the landscape. Some of the park had even been used as a horse market.

The new owner had to restore the ballpark, leveling and re-sodding the playing surface, building wooden grandstands, and generally rebuilding the ballpark into a 6,500-capacity stadium with up-to-date accouterments.

The Phillies held their first spring training at Recreation Park. In their first game there, they beat a semipro team from Manayunk called the Ashland Club with John Coleman pitching a no-hitter. The Phillies' first NL game was played on May 1, 1883, at Recreation Park against the Providence Grays. Facing Charles "Old Hoss" Radbourne, who would go on to win 48 games that year, the Phillies took an early 3-0 lead, but a four-run Grays rally in the eighth inning gave the visitors a 4-3 victory.

The Phillies would go on to lose games by scores of 29-4 to Boston and 28-0 to Providence. Manager Bob "Death to Flying Things" Ferguson was fired after the team lost 13 of its first 17 games, and the Phillies went on to finish their first season with a 17-81 record, with Coleman losing 48 games, an all-time major-league record.

Better days, though, were just around the corner. In 1884, Reach hired Harry Wright as the team's manager. Wright, who had piloted the Cincinnati Red Stockings in 1869 when they became baseball's first openly all-professional team and was the skipper of four Boston Red Stockings National Association championship teams, quickly turned the franchise around. From 1885 through 1895, the Phillies finished in the first division every season.

Along the way, they also moved into a new ballpark. Mindful that Recreation Park could not hold the increasingly large crowds that came to watch Phillies games, Reach built a new stadium at Broad Street and Lehigh Avenue at a total cost of \$101,000. Called Philadelphia Base Ball Park or Huntingdon Street Grounds, the park was erected on the site of a dump with

a creek running through it. When it opened in 1887, the ballpark held 12,500, although the capacity was later increased to 18,800. Originally, regarded as the finest stadium in the nation and a magnificent showplace, the ballpark was noted for its short right-field wall, which initially stood 272-feet down the line, and its clubhouses in center field.

Despite several catastrophes—one in 1894 when a destructive fire forced the Phillies to play six games at the University of Pennsylvania's field and required much of the park to be rebuilt, and one in 1903 when 12 people were killed and 232 injured when a balcony collapsed—the Phillies played there until midway through the 1938 season.

From 1891 through 1895, Delahanty, Billy Hamilton, and Sam Thompson played together, giving the Phillies the only Hall of Fame outfield in baseball history. While playing with the Phillies, Delahanty, whose career batting average of .346 ranks as the fourth-highest in big-league history, hit over .300 for 10 years in a row while exceeding .400 three times and winning one batting crown. Hamilton led the league in hitting twice on the way to a career batting average of .344, and Thompson, who hit the second-most home runs (126) in the nineteenth century, won two home-run crowns while finishing with a .331 career batting mark. In 1894, all three hit over .400, as did reserve outfielder Tuck Turner.

Prior to the turn of the century, when the Phillies also had future Hall of Famers Nap Lajoie and Elmer Flick in the lineup, they could never quite make it to the top. They came close several times under manager Shettsline. But Reach sold the team in 1903 for \$170,000, and with a succession of owners, team presidents, and managers following, the Phillies had an inglorious run topped by the 1904 season, during which they posted a 52–100 record and finished 53 1/2 games out of first place.

In 1910, Magee won the league batting title with a .331 mark. The same year, the Phillies bought the contract of Alexander for \$750 from Syracuse of the New York State League. In his first season with the Phillies, Alexander posted a 28–13 record. Then in 1911, the Phillies picked up 30-year-old Gavvy Cravath from the minor-league Minneapolis club.

Also in 1912, Phillies president Horace Fogel, a former sports editor of a local newspaper, was banned for life from baseball for making derogatory comments about baseball, one in which he said that year's pennant race was fixed. Former New York City police commissioner William Baker bought the team and gave the ballpark a new nickname: Baker Bowl. He would prove to be an ultra cheapskate, but also one with unsound baseball judgment,

making some terrible trades over the years and destroying a successful franchise.

Before that happened, though, the Phillies captured their first National League pennant in 1915. With Alexander winning 31 games and Cravath leading the league in home runs (24) and RBIs (115), the Phillies finished seven games ahead of the defending world champion Boston Braves. In the World Series, however, after Alexander and the Phillies won the first game, the Boston Red Sox came on to win four straight games by one run, including three in a row by 2–1 scores. After winning their first pennant in 33 seasons, the Phils would not win another flag for 35 more years.

Alexander won 33 games, 16 of them shutouts, in 1916 and 30 games the following year, and the Phillies finished second both times. But Baker, fearing that Alexander would be drafted now that World War I was underway, traded him and catcher Bill Killefer to the Chicago Cubs for \$55,000 and two players who would play a combined total of 46 games in Phillies uniforms. The deal was considered one of the worst in Phillies history.

To make matters even uglier, the Phillies soon fell into an abyss from which they wouldn't escape for more than three decades. Starting in 1918, the Phillies went 31 seasons with just one first division finish (fourth in 1932). During those ultra-lean years, the club finished in last place 16 times and in seventh place eight times. They lost 100 or more games in 12 seasons. In one of those seasons (1930), the Phillies had a team batting average of .315—then the third-highest mark since 1900—but lost 102 games, finishing 40 games out of first. The pitching staff had a combined ERA of 6.71.

There were a few bright spots. Cravath became baseball's premier home-run hitter in the years leading up to Babe Ruth, with six home-run crowns over a seven-year period. In late 1917, the Phillies made a trade that landed Cy Williams, who collected three home-run titles, including one that set a National League record of 41 in 1923. Klein came to the Phils in 1928, and on his way to the Hall of Fame won four home run championships, one batting title, a triple crown, and one MVP Award. Klein in right field and Dick Bartell at shortstop were both starters in the first All-Star Game in 1933.

But the bad days far outnumbered the good. The Phillies lost a 26–23 decision to the Chicago Cubs in 1922, an all-time major-league record for most runs in one game. They had pitchers with nicknames such as Boom Boom (Beck), Losing Pitcher (Mulcahy), and Weeping Willie (Willoughy). Hurler Hal Kelleher once allowed 12 runs in one inning. Once, after losing 11 straight games, the Phils had to wear Brooklyn Dodgers away uniforms in

a game at Ebbets Field because theirs had been lost. They won the game, then proceeded to lose 12 in a row.

The Phillies traded key players, including future Hall of Famers Dave Bancroft and Eppa Rixey, and in the 1930s, star players such as Bartell, Klein, Ethan Allen, Claude Passeau, and future MVPs Bucky Walters and Dolph Camilli, in most cases getting very little in return. In the 1930s, after outfielder Johnny Moore hit over .300 in four straight seasons, he was sold to the highest bidder—a minor-league team.

The 1930s deals were the work of Gerry Nugent, a former Phillies business manager and chief aid to Baker during the 1920s. After Baker's death in 1930, Nugent and his wife Mae, an executive with the club, wound up owning 51 percent of the club's stock in 1936. Nugent became president in 1932, taking over a team that was in dire financial straits.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the Phillies drew single-season crowds of more than 300,000 only three times. Four times they attracted less than 200,000 fans for a season. Games often drew as few as 1,500. Baker Bowl had deteriorated to such a low point that it had become the laughing stock of baseball, called names such as the "toilet bowl" and "a bandbox." At one point, the Phillies finances had dropped so precipitously that, in the absence of groundskeepers, they had to hire three sheep to trim the grass on the field.

Midway through the 1938 season, the Phillies finally accepted Connie Mack's long-standing offer and relocated to Shibe Park, the home of the Athletics, which had been built in 1909 and stood at 21st Street and Lehigh Avenue, just seven blocks from Baker Bowl. While escaping the deplorable conditions of Baker Bowl eventually helped at the gate, Phillies teams remained terrible. They lost more than 100 games in each season from 1938–42, including a club-record 111 in 1941. Second baseman Danny Murtaugh said that "if the Phillies ever won two games in a row, it might be grounds for a Congressional investigation."

The Phillies reached the bottom of the barrel in 1942, when National League commissioner Ford Frick forced Nugent out of the league and took over management of the penniless team. That season, there was one highlight, however, as Danny Litwhiler became the first major leaguer to play 150 or more games in the outfield without making an error.

Later that year, Frick found a new owner in New York lumber dealer, William Cox. The inexperienced Cox headed a 30-member syndicate. His term, however, lasted less than one year as, toward the end of 1943, he was found to have bet on Phillies games and was banned

for life from baseball by Commissioner Kenesaw Landis.

Subsequently, the wealthy Carpenter family, which had ties to the DuPont Company in Delaware, bought the team for a reported \$400,000 and installed 28-year-old Bob as president. The youngest club president in National League history quickly named former pitching standout and Boston Red Sox farm director Herb Pennock as the team's general manager.

Like his predecessors—Fogel, who wanted to change the team's nickname to "Live Wires" and Lobert, who thought "Phils" would sound better—Carpenter was convinced that the team needed a new image to erase the scars caused by the "Phillies" moniker. He ran a contest in local newspapers asking fans to submit suggestions. There were 5,064 entries, with Blue Jays declared the winner. But, despite the use of a Blue Jay logo on caps, pennants, stationery, and other team items, the club never officially changed its name, and after several years, Blue Jays was dropped as a nickname.

Almost immediately after Carpenter took the reins, the Phillies began signing young players. While they already had Del Ennis and Andy Seminick in the system, they added youngsters such as Roberts, Ashburn, Curt Simmons, Granny Hamner, and Willie Jones. Eventually joining this group were veterans including Dick Sisler, Jim Konstanty, Bill Nicholson, and Eddie Waitkus, who would be shot in a Chicago hotel room by a deranged woman. With this mixture of young players and veterans, the Phillies were on the way up, and in 1949 finished in third place.

Nicknamed the Whiz Kids, the team followed that by winning the pennant in 1950. Although holding a six-game lead at the end of August, the Phillies went into a tailspin and had to go to the final game of the season to clinch the flag, winning it when Sisler's three-run, 10th-inning home run defeated the second-place Brooklyn Dodgers, 4–1. Making his third start in the last five days, Roberts went the distance to get his 20th win, the Phils' first 20-game winner since 1917.

The Whiz Kids, who were sometimes called The Fightin' Phils, met the New York Yankees in the World Series, but with the exhausted Roberts unable to pitch, Manager Sawyer named reliever Konstanty as the club's starter in the first game. Konstanty had won 16 games and saved 22, all in relief, but he lost the opener, 1–0. The Phillies then dropped the next three games, losing two more by one run and dropping Game 4, 5–2.

That year, Konstanty, who often worked out with an undertaker during the offseason, was named the league's Most Valuable Player, the first reliever ever to win the honor. Meanwhile, the Phillies became the favorite team

of Philadelphia baseball fans, replacing the Athletics, who had ruled for many years, but had become largely ignored and in 1954 would move to Kansas City.

The Phillies were expected to rank among the league's elite teams in the 1950s, but it never happened. They tumbled all the way to fifth place in 1951, and were never a contender for the rest of the decade, despite six straight seasons with 20 or more wins by Roberts, including a 28–7 mark in 1952 and a record 28 straight complete games, batting championships in 1955 and 1958 by Ashburn, and the yearly performances of Ennis as one of the league's premier power hitters.

Although they had been signing African American players since 1952, the Phillies became the last National League team to put a black player in a major-league game when infielder John Kennedy made a few appearances with the team in 1957. That same year, shortstop Chico Fernandez, a medium-dark-skinned Cuban, was incorrectly described as the first black player to appear in the Phillies' regular lineup.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Phillies roster featured some young and talented players such as pitchers Jack Sanford and Dick Farrell, first baseman Ed Bouchee, and outfielder Harry Anderson. Future Hall of Fame manager Sparky Anderson was the second baseman in 1959, his only year as a major-league player. Sawyer, who had been fired in 1952, returned in 1958, in the midst of four straight last-place teams.

When Sawyer quit after the first game of the 1960 season, saying, "I'm 49 years old and I want to live to be 50," Gene Mauch was hired as manager. But the Phillies remained at the bottom of the league, hitting an all-time low in 1961 when they lost 23 consecutive games. In the following years, though, bolstered by the presence of young stars who were products of the team's farm system, such as Allen and pitchers Chris Short, Art Mahaffey, and Jack Baldschun, plus players who came to the club in trades, like Jim Bunning, Tony Taylor, Johnny Callison, Tony Gonzalez, and Cookie Rojas, the Phillies' fortunes were seemingly considerably increased.

Then disaster struck. In one of the most catastrophic collapses in sports history, the Phillies blew a six-and-a-half game lead with 12 games left to play, losing 10 straight and sending a whole city into mourning. Despite Bunning's perfect game—the first in Phillies history—Callison's game-winning three-run homer in the All-Star Game, and Allen's sparkling rookie season, the 1964 debacle was one that has forever encumbered the minds of all those who were around at the time.

It took the Phillies a decade to recover, as mediocre teams cluttered the landscape. In 1970, the team played

its last game at Connie Mack Stadium (Shibe Park until the name was changed in 1953), and the following year moved into Veterans Stadium, a multi-purpose venue that was built at a cost of \$52 million and had a capacity of 56,371 for baseball. In 1972, Ruly Carpenter replaced his dad, Bob, as team president.

By then, the Phillies had again plunged heavily into the practice of signing young players. Greg Luzinski, Larry Bowa, Bob Boone, Dick Ruthven, and Larry Christenson were among the best of the lot. They were joined by a former switch-hitting shortstop who had planned to become an architect, and whose favorite sport was basketball. Little did anyone know at the time that Mike Schmidt would some day win seven home-run titles and tie for another, capture three MVP awards, win 10 Gold Gloves, and be named to 12 All-Star teams while becoming the greatest all-around third baseman in history and a member of the Hall of Fame.

In addition to the home-grown players, the Phillies landed Steve Carlton in 1972 in the last trade engineered by general manager John Quinn. Controversial at the time because the Phils gave up popular star pitcher Rick Wise, the trade was justified when Carlton posted a 27–10 record with 15 straight wins for a last place team that won only 59 games. He would go on to win four Cy Youngs while recording five seasons of 20 or more wins. It was said that hitting against Carlton "was like drinking coffee with a pitchfork."

The Phillies also acquired other outstanding players like Dave Cash, Richie Hebner, Garry Maddox, Jay Johnstone, Bake McBride, Manny Trillo, Tug McGraw, and Jim Lonborg. These trades were executed by general manager Paul "The Pope" Owens, a brilliant and fearless wheeler-dealer who had previously been a minor-league manager and farm system director with the Phillies.

Once they began bringing in top players again, the Phillies headed back up the ladder. In 1974, under manager Danny Ozark, the team finished third in the Eastern Division. The following year, they were second and the team's most successful era up to that point was underway.

The Phillies won East Division titles in 1976, 1977, and 1978, posting identical 101–61 records in the first two years. Each time, however, they were defeated in the League Championship Series, getting swept in three games in 1976 by the Cincinnati Reds and losing in each of the next two years, three games to one to the Los Angeles Dodgers. The '77 series was particularly distressing. The Phils lost the third game after a controversial call by umpire Bruce Froemming, who ruled Davey Lopes safe at first in what would have been the last out of the game. Replays showed

he was out. Lopes then scored the winning run. The next night, in a game played almost entirely in a steady rain, the Phils lost the series.

In 1979, the Phillies were out of contention, and during the season Dallas Green replaced Ozark as manager. The high point of the year had been when the team signed Pete Rose as a free agent. Rose would become the club's sparkplug, driving the Phillies in 1980 to their first pennant in 35 years.

With Schmidt leading the league in home runs (48) and RBIs (121), and Carlton posting 24 victories, the Phillies had won 19 of 26 games when they clinched the East Division title in the next-to-last game of the season, with a 6–4 win over the Montreal Expos.

The Phillies captured the pennant in a storied five-game series with the Houston Astros, with four of the games going extra innings. In the deciding game, the Phils overcame a 5–2 eighth-inning deficit against Nolan Ryan to win it in the 10th, with Maddox's double driving home the winning run. Trillo was the series MVP.

Then, facing the Kansas City Royals, the Phillies won their first World Series, triumphing in six games. Only the final game was decided by more than two runs as the Phils clinched the Series with a 4–1 victory behind the pitching of Carlton and McGraw. Carlton won two games in the series, while McGraw posted a 1–1 mark with two saves. Schmidt was named World Series MVP after hitting .381 with two homers and seven RBIs. Two days after the Series ended, more than two-million fans lined Broad Street to watch the Phillies victory parade.

The team returned to postseason play in the strike-shortened 1981 campaign after being declared the first-half champion of the East Division. In the opening series, the Phils lost to the Expos, the second-half winner, three games to two. After the season, Green resigned and became general manager of the Chicago Cubs, and the Carpenter family sold the team for \$30 million to a syndicate led by the highly creative vice president Bill Giles, who was named team president.

Two years later, Owens stepped down from the GM post at midseason to become manager. The Phillies—with a team that included former Cincinnati stars Rose, Joe Morgan, and Tony Perez—and was called the Wheeze Kids because of the advanced age of many members of the roster—won the East Division title with Schmidt lashing 40 homers, then beat the Dodgers in four games in the NLCS as Carlton won two. Gary Matthews was named the series MVP after lacing three home runs and driving in eight. The Phillies then bowed to the Baltimore Orioles in the World Series in five games with Cy Young Award winner John Denny capturing his club's only victory.

The Series ended what had been a glittering run for the Phillies. They had posted a 791–612 (.564) regular-season record from 1975 through 1983 and appeared in six postseason playoffs and two World Series. It would be 10 years before the team returned to postseason play, even though many fine players, such as Juan Samuel, Von Hayes, Glenn Wilson, Mickey Morandini, Shane Rawley, and 1987 Cy Young winner Steve Bedrosian, dotted the roster.

In 1993, the Phils went from last place the previous year to the World Series with an exciting team led by Darren Daulton, John Kruk, and Lenny Dykstra in the field, and Curt Schilling, Tommy Greene, Terry Mulholland, and Mitch Williams on the mound. Called “Gypsies, Tramps, and Thieves,” by Daulton because the team was largely composed of players traded away by other teams, the Phils were led by veteran manager Jim Fregosi.

The Phillies captured the NLCS against the Atlanta Braves, coming from a two games to one deficit that included a 14–3 loss to win the best-of-seven series in six games. In the finale, the Phils beat Greg Maddux, 6–3, with Dave Hollins lacing a two-run homer and Greene getting the win. Williams saved two games and won two, and Schilling was voted MVP of the series.

It was a vastly different story in the World Series against the Toronto Blue Jays. The Phils won Game 2 on Jim Eisenreich's three-run homer, but trailed in the Series as the fourth game unfolded. In an incredible game, the Blue Jays overcame a five-run eighth-inning deficit to capture a 15–14 win. Dykstra hit two homers and drove in four runs as the teams combined for a Series record 32 hits. The following day, Schilling hurled a five-hitter to give the Phillies a 2–0 win.

But two days later, in one of the most infamous games in Phillies history, Joe Carter's three-run ninth-inning home run off Williams gave Toronto a stunning 8–6 victory and the world championship.

The loss was followed by another bleak period during which the Phillies dropped out of contention while fashioning seven straight losing seasons, including three with more than 90 losses. But at the start of the twenty-first century, with the team now under the leadership of president David Montgomery, the picture brightened considerably. General manager Ed Wade laid the groundwork, and his successor Pat Gillick applied the finishing touches. The Phils had some stars in Bobby Abreu, Scott Rolen, and Jim Thome, who won a home run title in 2003.

Guided by new manager Bowa, the team posted two second- and two third-place finishes. And in 2004,

it moved into Citizens Bank Park, a sparkling, strictly baseball stadium that cost \$345 million to build and had a seating capacity of 43,651. Over the years, the ballpark would cater mostly to large crowds, which at one point reached 257 straight sellouts.

In 2005, the Phillies hired Manuel as their new manager. He would guide a team led by shortstop Jimmy Rollins, second baseman Utley, and first baseman Howard, each one of the best players at his position in Phillies history. Howard (2006) and Rollins (2007) won MVP awards with Howard claiming two home-run crowns, including 2006 when his 58 four-baggers set an all-time Phillies record. Joining this trio during at least part of the run were outfielders Jayson Werth, Shane Victorino, and Pat Burrell, and catcher Carlos Ruiz. During all or parts of the era, the pitching staff was anchored by a group of outstanding starters in Halladay, Cole Hamels, and Cliff Lee, and reliever Brad Lidge.

After three straight second-place finishes, the Phillies returned to the playoffs in 2007 for the first time in 14 years, winning the first of what would become five straight East Division titles as Howard smashed 47 home runs and Hamels posted a 15–5 record. The Phils overcame a seven-game Mets lead, winning 23 of their last 34 games while the New Yorkers lost 12 of their final 17. The Phils, however, were swept in three games by the Colorado Rockies in the NLDS.

In 2008, with Howard clouting 48 homers, the Phillies overcame a 3 1/2-game lead by the Mets in mid-September, winning 13 of their last 16 games (while New York lost nine of its final 15) to finish first in the East Division. The Phillies won the NLDS, three games to one, over the Milwaukee Brewers with Burrell blasting two homers and Joe Blanton getting the win in the clinching game. The team then won four out of five over the Dodgers in the NLCS, as Hamels got two wins and Lidge three saves. During the season and throughout the postseason, Lidge had been virtually unstoppable, saving 48 games in 48 opportunities.

The Phillies laced the Tampa Bay Rays in five games in the World Series. Hamels was named the Series MVP, after also getting the NLCS MVP, with a combined total of three wins. Howard's two homers and five RBIs in a 10–2 win in Game 4 proved to be the biggest offensive performance of the fall classic. The Series clincher was a 4–3 victory that took three days to complete. Heavy rain had halted play on the first night of the game. Then, after another day of rain, the game was finally completed with reliever J.C. Romero getting his second win of the Series. Once again, a crowd of more than two million was jammed along Broad Street to watch the Phillies victory parade.

In 2009, Ruben Amaro Jr. became the Phils general manager. With Howard belting 45 homers, Raul Ibanez 34, and Utley 31, the club finished first during the regular season, six games ahead of the second-place Florida Marlins. They beat Colorado in the NLDS, 3–1, and the Dodgers in five games in the NLCS behind three homers from Werth. This time in the World Series, though, the Phillies lost in six games to the Yankees, despite two wins by Lee and two homers by Utley in a 8–6 Phils win in Game 5.

The Phillies returned to postseason play in 2010, garnering 97 wins during the regular season for their highest total since 1993. During the offseason, they had acquired Halladay in a trade with the Blue Jays. The ace right-hander went on to pitch a perfect game against the Marlins, and posted a 21–10 record to win the Cy Young Award. In the playoffs, Halladay twirled a no-hitter in the first game of the NLDS against the Reds, and the Phillies swept the series in three games. The Phils, however, were downed by the San Francisco Giants, four games to two, in the NLCS.

But, they were back again in 2011. With Halladay, Hamels, Lee, and Roy Oswalt forming a starting rotation that was labeled “The Four Aces,” the Phillies led the division for all but one day during the regular season and finished the campaign with a team-record 102 wins and a 13-game lead over the Braves. Halladay won 19 and Hunter Pence batted .324 with the Phils after his midseason arrival. The postseason, however, was short as the Phillies lost the NLDS, three games to two, against the Cardinals.

From 2004 through 2011, the Phillies posted a 732–564 (.565) record while finishing second three times in a row, then winning five straight division titles, and appearing in two consecutive World Series, winning one. It was unquestionably the greatest era in Phillies history.

There would be halt to the run in 2012, when, plagued by injuries to Howard, Utley, and Halladay, the Phillies fell to third place. During the season, they traded away key players Victorino, Pence, and Blanton. Standout hitting by Ruiz and the pitching of Hamels and free-agent signee Jonathan Papelbon were the top performances of the season.

In 2013, the Phillies took the field with a vastly different team. The starting lineup still featured Rollins, Utley, and Howard, the best players at their positions in the club's history. Halladay, Hamels, and Lee led a starting rotation that was among the finest in the league on paper. But many changes had been made to the roster, producing a degree of uncertainty. Regardless of the outcome of the season, though, one thing was certain: Now in their 132nd year, the Phillies have been a team with an extraordinary history. ■



William T. Stecher: Ignominious Record Holder, Community Servant

Jonathan Frankel

0-10, 10.32 That is the major-league career line for one William T. Stecher of Riverside, New Jersey.

If you look it up, the record book tells you that Stecher also holds the records for the “most career games by a pitcher who lost all his games (0–10)” and “most career innings by a pitcher with an ERA above 10.00 (68 innings, 10.32).” Not flattering records for any player to hold. But how did Stecher come about this line and these records in his single season in the majors with the 1890 American Association Athletics of Philadelphia? How did he get the opportunity to set the records? And what happened to Stecher after his brief moment in the sun?

Like many players, there is more to this man than his stat line. This article highlights Stecher’s baseball career and his post-career accomplishments, and introduces some of the amateur teams in the Philadelphia and New Jersey areas that Stecher played for and opposed.

William T. Stecher was born in Riverside, New Jersey on October 9, 1869, the fourth of four children of Rudolph and Paulina Stecher. Rudolph had originally come to the US in 1847 from the hot springs town of Baden-Baden and settled in Riverside in 1854. He was one of the organizers of the new township of Delran in 1880 and was to serve as poundkeeper, hotelkeeper, constable, and overseer of the poor (many simultaneously).

STECHEER’S AMATEUR BASE BALL BEGINNINGS

There is little record of Stecher’s early years, but he was apparently a good enough athlete at age 17 that in 1887 he was pitching for the local Riverside amateur team, according to the August 7, 1887 *Philadelphia Record*. He was hit hard (10–1) in the only game that was found, against the Ontario team. His brother, Frank played in the game as well. William also played for the Burlington club later in the year.

In 1888, the Riverton club signed him in early May. In his first game, on May 5, he was opposed by Mike Kilroy, and the game was umpired by Kilroy’s more famous brother, Matt. The May 17, 1888 *Philadelphia Record* quoted Matt as saying that Stecher “was the most promising youngster he had ever seen.” He had mixed success with Riverton, winning his first game by a score

of 20–8 in a six-inning affair versus Richmond, but also later losing to the Young America squad by a 10–2 score.

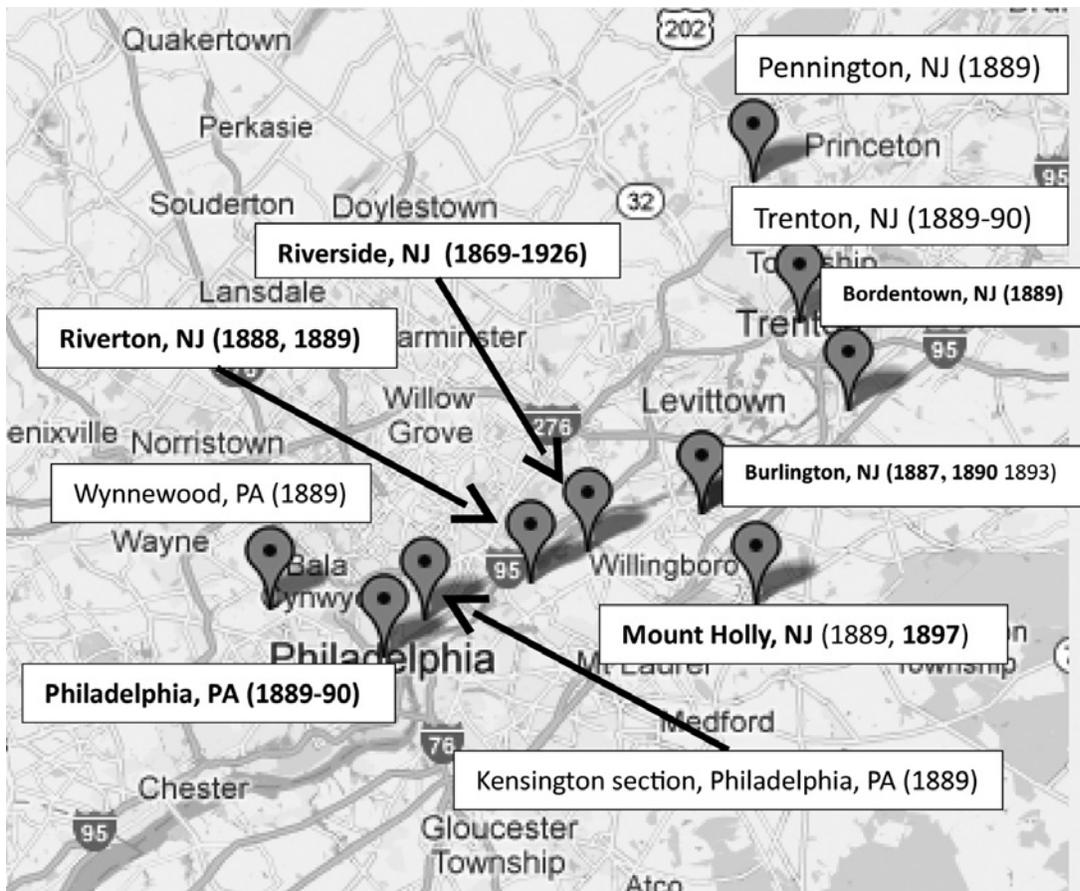
STECHEER WITH BORDENTOWN

Nineteen-year-old Stecher started the 1889 season with a local amateur team in Bordentown, New Jersey, known as B.A.A. (Bordentown Athletic Association).

He debuted on Saturday, April 20, Opening Day, against the Royal Smyrna club of Philadelphia. He allowed six runs in five innings, while striking out four and walking three, resulting in a 6–4 deficit. He was swapped with “Mickey” McLaughlin, who allowed only one run the rest of the way as the Bordentown club came back to win 9–7.

Stecher pitched in a number of other games for Bordentown:

- May 11: Won, 15–1, versus the Perseverance club of Philadelphia; struck out 11.
- May 16: Pitched the first three innings against the Middle States League Philadelphia Giants, allowing five runs. The game ended up going 15 innings, with McLaughlin swapping positions with Stecher again (Stecher going to center field), and pitched 12 shutout innings. The game lasted three hours!
- May 18: Beat the Rising Sun club of Philadelphia (formerly the “Wunders”), 7–1, allowing only three hits, and walking and striking out six.
- May 22: Played center field in a 9–1 walkover of “The Bristols.”
- May 25: Combined with McLaughlin on a 7–3 win over the Clark’s Pottery team of Trenton. The Clark team wore “bright new uniforms (of) blue trousers, striped shirts, and red hose.” Stecher struck out 12 during his stay on the mound.
- June 8: Combined again with McLaughlin to beat the Kensington club, 11–1.
- June 18: Lost to the Pennington club, 7–6. Pennington is “a village somewhere up in Mercer County.” Stecher struck out 10 in his first documented loss.
- June 22: Played center field in a 9–3 win over the Wynnewood club.



Some local cities that Stecher played for or against (bold = played for).

- June 27: Beat Mount Holly, 8–4, striking out nine.
- June 28: Beat Mount Holly again, this time in a 21–0 trouncing. Stecher allowed only four hits and had three of his own while striking out seven.
- July 1: Combined with Plummer (who started in at catcher) in a 14–7 thumping. Stecher rang up seven more strikeouts.
- July 9: Lost, 2-0, to the Cuban Giants of Trenton of the Middle States League.

Stecher’s unofficial record with Bordentown was 7–2 and he established a reputation of striking out large numbers while having some control issues.

STECHER WITH HARRISBURG

Stecher signed with the Middle States League Harrisburg Ponies in mid-February of 1889, but did not start the season with them. His strong amateur showing with Bordentown apparently convinced the Harrisburg club to give Stecher a try. Stecher made his first pro appearance on July 16, 1889, at Norristown. It resulted in a 4–2 win in which he allowed nine hits and three walks in nine innings while striking out five.

He subsequently won a convincing 13–1 game versus York on July 25, recording nine strikeouts. The *Harrisburg Patriot* noted, “His curves, ups, downs, ins and outs, are

very effective.” York returned the favor four days later, knocking him out after five in a 10–4 loss. After two more wins versus Shenandoah in early August, the highlight of Stecher’s baseball career occurred.

On August 9, 1889, he pitched a no-hitter versus the Cuban Giants, issuing five walks and striking out three. Hall of famer Frank Grant was in the lineup for the Giants that day. After the game, Stecher went home to spend time with his mother.

Stecher is found pitching for the Riverton amateur team later in August, beating Rising Sun and losing to Manayuk. Throughout Stecher’s 1889 Harrisburg campaign, he showed control problems—over six walks per nine innings—with occasional strikeout ability, including games of seven, seven, and nine strikeouts.

In 1890, Harrisburg became part of the Eastern Interstate League and Stecher remained on the team. In early April, he pitched in three exhibition games against major-league American Association teams from Rochester and Syracuse, giving him his first taste of that level of competition. After losing his first two games to Rochester, 7–3 and 3–0, Stecher won his final exhibition against Syracuse by a 12–3 score, scoring two runs himself. Once the regular season began, Stecher acquitted

himself well, producing an 8–5 record. He continued to show flashes of his good curveball, resulting in games of seven, 10, and 13 strikeouts. But against the stronger competition of the EIL, he also showed his propensity for walks, perhaps due to the more advanced hitters' ability to lay off his curves. His last game with Harrisburg was on June 26. Stecher is found pitching for Burlington against Bordentown on July 19 and August 10. Even though he was not dominating in the Eastern Interstate League, fortune was about to smile upon him as he had the opportunity to join a team in desperate need of any bodies that could play. Stecher happened to be in the right place when the American Association's Athletics turned to him for help.

THE ASSOCIATION ATHLETICS IN 1890

In 1890 there was a great deal of turmoil in baseball, with three major leagues: the existing National League and American Association, and the upstart Players League. This, no doubt, resulted in a great thinning of talent across the leagues, and hit the weak American Association especially hard. New franchises in Rochester, Syracuse, and Toledo replaced teams in Cincinnati (to the NL), Kansas City, and Baltimore. The 1889 Brooklyn Association team also joined the NL and was replaced with a new Brooklyn franchise. The Players League brought competition in eight cities, including Philadelphia (that team also was known as the Athletics). This gave the City of Brotherly Love three major-league teams competing for the crank's quarter or fifty cents.

The Association Athletics started off fairly well, in spite of losing six regular games to the Player League Athletics. In fact, they led the league as late as July 17 with a 43–27 record. They had solid starters in third baseman Denny Lyons (OPS+ of 193), outfielder Curt Welch (OPS+ of 121), and pitcher Sadie McMahon (29–18). However, things began to fall apart and by the end of August, the team found itself in sixth place at 51–49 after an 8–22 interval.

At the end of August, Denny Lyons was suspended and subsequently sold to the St. Louis Browns, as he had been a nuisance in various ways to manager Bill Sharsig. His replacements—Henry Meyers (.158), Al Sauter (.098), and pitcher/infielder Ed Green (.117) among the main ones standing out near third base—created a huge black hole in order. At the same time, two of their pitchers were let go: Mickey Hughes was given his notice of release and Ed Seward asked to be “laid off” for the rest of the season due to his fatigued arm. This left the Athletics with only McMahon as a starter, and Stecher was one of the new pitchers brought in to fill the void.

In addition, a season-long shift continued at

shortstop: Ben Conroy (.171) to start the season, followed by Harry Easterday (.147), Joe Kappel, and finally George Carman (.172).

By mid-September, catcher Wilbert Robinson, first baseman John O'Brien, left fielder Blondie Purcell, center fielder Curt Welch, and right fielder Orator Shafer were released due to the team's financial shortcomings (they were broke!) and were replaced by a litany of no-names and amateurs, most hitting under .200. The newly reborn Baltimore Orioles were the main recipients of these castoffs, including McMahon.

All of these movements created the opportunity for Stecher and simultaneously doomed him. What follows is a game-by-game summary of his stay with the Athletics.

STECHEER WITH PHILADELPHIA

GAME 0: SEPTEMBER 2, 1890—EXHIBITION

Stecher's first appearance for Philadelphia was in an exhibition game on September 2, versus the St. Louis Browns in Wilmington, Delaware. Stecher won this game, 3–2, allowing only five hits in an agreed upon eight-inning contest, according to the September 3, 1890 *Philadelphia Record*.

GAME 1: SEPTEMBER 6, 1890

Matchup: Athletics vs. Louisville, Jefferson Street Grounds

Score: 0–7

Stecher's Line: 8 innings, 10 hits, 7 runs, 5 earned runs, 5 walks, 4 strikeouts

Game notes: In his official major-league debut, Stecher gave up four runs in the first two innings, but then “settled down,” scattering five hits with his curves, according to the September 7, 1890 *Philadelphia Press*. The curve was apparently the calling card that got Stecher to the Athletics. Unfortunately, it would not fool the American Association hitters. Stecher batted eighth in the lineup, as he would a great deal during his stay with Philadelphia. From the September 8, 1890 *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, came the classic words of every prospective player: “With a little more experience and judicious coaching, he will no doubt develop into a good twirler.” This was not to be.

GAME 2, SEPTEMBER 13, 1890 (GAME 2)

Matchup: Athletics at Baltimore, Oriole Park II (SW corner of 29th & Greenmount)

Score: 6–18

Stecher's Line: 7 innings, 13 hits, 18 runs, 8 walks, 4 strikeouts

Game Notes: This game was called after seven innings

due to darkness. Baltimore scored in each of the seven frames, including a seven spot in the seventh for good measure. Stecher's control issues continued with eight more walks. According to the account in the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, "The way they punish his curves was a caution." This leads one to wonder if he should not have bothered with his curve at all. The 1890 Baltimore Orioles entry had only recently joined the AA, rejoining the league on August 27 to replace the Brooklyn franchise. Prior to this, the Orioles had a team in the Atlantic Association and ran away with that league's pennant. A good number of the Atlantic Orioles continued on with the Association Orioles. Baltimore was one of three teams to exist in two leagues (one major league) in the same season, the others being the 1884 Virginia franchise (Eastern League/American Association) and the 1891 Milwaukee franchise (Western Association/American Association).

GAME 3: SEPTEMBER 20, 1890 (GAME 2)

Matchup: Athletics at Louisville, Eclipse Park I (Elliot Park)

Score: 0–10

Stecher's Line: 8innings, 15 hits, 10 runs, 3 walks, 1 strikeout

Game Notes: Louisville was in the midst of their only championship season in major-league ball (AA and NL), sporting an 88–44 record and taking it to the Athletics in the doubleheader on the 20th. To go with the second game woes, Louisville also pasted pitcher Green in a 22–4 beating in game one. Only two of the "original" Athletics went West on the road trip, and each player that did go had to sign an agreement to play for \$5 per game and expenses, according to the September 18, 1890 *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*.

GAME 4: SEPTEMBER 21, 1890 (GAME 2)

Matchup: Athletics at Louisville, Eclipse Park I (Elliot Park)

Score: 3–16

Stecher's Line: 7innings, 15 hits, 16 runs, 10 walks, 2 strikeouts

Game Notes: Stecher was brought back a day later to take more abuse at the hands of the powerful Colonels. This resulted in another late-inning pounding, as he allowed six runs in the seventh and final inning before the game was called due to darkness.

GAME 5: SEPTEMBER 26, 1890

Matchup: Athletics at St. Louis, Sportsman's Park I (Grand Avenue & St. Louis Avenue)

Score: 3–7

Stecher's Line: 5innings, 10 hits, 7 runs, 5 walks, 0

strikeouts

Game Notes: This game and the next were two of Stecher's "closer" games, but again, a combination of not enough run support and poor pitching led to a shortened game loss. The game was mercifully ended after five innings so that the Athletics could catch a train for Toledo.

GAME 6: SEPTEMBER 28, 1890 (GAME 1)

Matchup: Athletics at Toledo, Speranza Park

Score: 9–11

Stecher's Line: 4innings, 6 hits, 7 runs, 6 earned runs, 6 walks, and 3 strikeouts

Game Notes: Stecher lasted only four innings in game one of the doubleheader at Toledo. This was his closest final score, though it was 7–3 when he departed after four innings. Stecher swapped positions with third baseman Green in the fifth inning.

GAME 7: SEPTEMBER 28, 1890 (GAME 2)

Matchup: Athletics at Toledo, Speranza Park

Score: 1–15

Stecher's Line: 7innings, 14 hits, 15 runs, 6 earned runs, 6 walks, 0 strikeouts

Game Notes: With a thin pitching staff, manager Sharsig brought Stecher back for game two, with worse results than game one as Stecher got pounded for 15 runs as a result of 14 hits, six walks, and five team errors in this seven-inning affair.

Game 8: October 1, 1890 (Game 2)

Matchup: Athletics at Columbus, Recreation Park II

Score: 0–14

Stecher's Line: 9innings, 14 hits, 14 runs, 12 earned runs, 7 walks, 2 strikeouts

Game Notes: Another stinker for Stecher, with seven walks, although he did hit a triple in three at-bats. He allowed 10 of the runs in the last four innings. Coincidentally, this ball field would host the first home football game of The Ohio State University less than a month later, a 64–0 loss to Wooster on November 1.

GAME 9: OCTOBER 4, 1890 (GAME 2)

Matchup: Athletics at Syracuse, Star Park II

Score: 1–6

Stecher's Line: 5innings, 7 hits, 6 runs, 6 earned runs, 3 walks, 0 strikeouts

Game Notes: Three runs in the first inning by the Stars put this one away as the Athletics continued their non-support of Stecher, scoring just two runs scored in three games. Fewer than 100 people showed up for this dreary doubleheader (Philly won the first game 8–7), that was mercifully called after five innings due to rain and darkness.

GAME 10: OCTOBER 9, 1890

Matchup: Athletics vs. Rochester, Jefferson Street Grounds

Score: 4-10

Stecher's Line: 8 innings, 7 hits, 10 runs, 7 walks, 2 strikeouts

Game Notes: Stecher finished out his major-league career with his sixth game of 10 runs or more allowed, although five Athletic errors did not help him. According to the *Public Ledger*, he "was not hit hard, but was wild in his delivery." Rochester scored five in the second to take a 5-2 lead, then added three runs in the seventh and two in the eighth.

In the end, Stecher lost all 10 games he pitched, allowing 111 hits, 110 runs, and 60 walks while striking out only 18. He had a grand total of 27 runs of support during his stay (2.7 runs per game). To lend some perspective, the Athletics as a team lost their last 22 games and were 2-26 once Stecher officially joined the "rotation," allowing 10 or more runs 17 times!

BACK TO THE AMATEUR RANKS

Stecher went back to his hometown of Riverside in 1891, pitching for the local amateur team. He married Lizzie Kellock in July of that year, and they would go on to have three daughters. He pitched regularly for Riverside through 1894, mostly hitting leadoff and not having the success that he had enjoyed in his earlier amateur days. He was still striking out a lot of hitters, but he was still apparently infected from his Athletic days, as he lost of great deal of the games he started. His travels in the New Jersey amateur ranks took him to such towns and cities as Camden (where he also pitched in 1893 and 1895), Beverly, Media, Millville (Farmer Steelman batted against him), Salem, and even venturing as far as Hagerstown, Maryland. His responsibilities with the Riverside team seemingly exceeded just playing by this time, as there is a notice in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* in 1895 for the team looking for players with W. Stecher listed as the contact.

There is a Stecher that shows up as pitcher in 1897 for Mount Holly, although it does not explicitly identify him as William, it would make sense that it could be. While with Mount Holly, Stecher pitched against such local amateur teams as the Lehigh A.A., the Scholastic A.A., New Egypt, Germantown, and Burlington. It also appears that he may have pitched for Sunbury of the Central Pennsylvania League during the same time.

Advertisement for Burlington County elections.

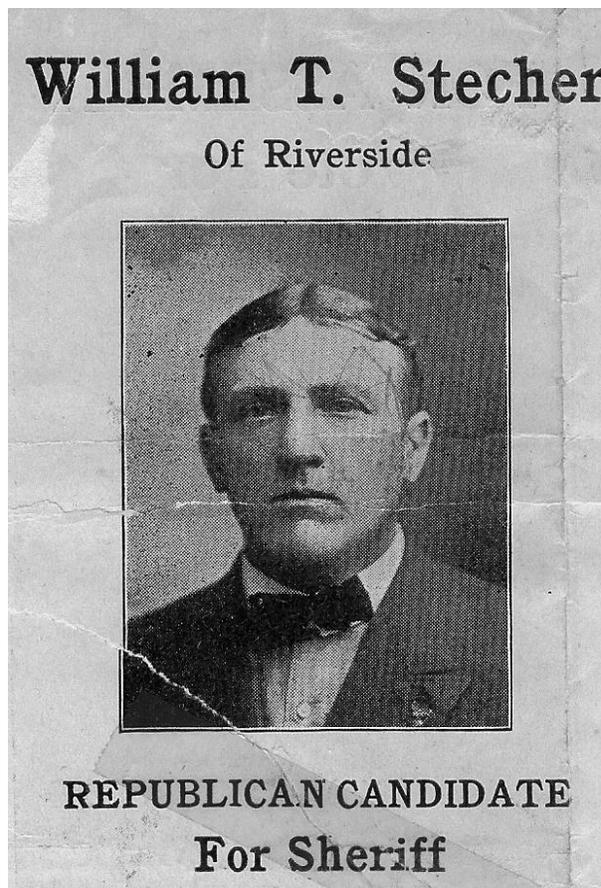
Stecher was back with the Riverside team in 1898 (he was only 28 at this point), while also serving as the town's tax assessor.

POST CAREER: BUSINESSMAN, COMMUNITY SERVANT

Towards the end of his playing days, like his father, Stecher became involved in the local community. He was Riverside's tax assessor in the late 1890s, and was elected Sheriff of Burlington County (New Jersey) in 1914 after being defeated in 1908 and 1911. He ran a local cigar store and owned and ran several racehorses during this time. He also served as a committeeman, board of education member, director of the Riverside Building and Loan, and township clerk. In his later years, he had a successful real estate business in Riverside.

There is a Stecher road in current-day Riverside, though it is unknown whether this is connected to him, his father, or any of his family. But, based on his family's strong local political and community roots, there is a good chance that it is associated with his family in some way.

On December 26, 1926, Stecher was killed at a train crossing in Riverside, failing to notice the oncoming train as he crossed in his auto. He was 57. The obituary heralded him as "one of the most popular officials that this (Burlington) county has had." He was buried in his



hometown Riverside Cemetery.

To most baseball fans, William T. Stecher is just a passing entry on Baseball-Reference.com or in a baseball encyclopedia—one who had an inglorious one-year career in which he set records for career futility. But how he got there and his post-baseball life tells a much more textured life of success and service. ■

NOTE: The game-by-game statistics provided here are from the ICI logs. While researching the games, I discovered several variances in individual statistics from each other as well as ICI, very typical of the era. One other note needs to be made regarding earned runs documented here and those in the “record.” Not all games have “official” earned runs. As Pete Palmer told me, “ICI did not have earned run data for all games, so what they did was take the percentage of runs earned in the games they had and applied it to the games they didn’t. They claimed that have at least 50 percent of the runs accounted for every team, but I am not sure they did. The 1969 Mac had the estimated ERA in italics, but this got lost in future editions.”

SOURCES

Bordentown Register, Philadelphia Inquirer, Harrisburg Patriot, Philadelphia Press, Philadelphia Public Ledger, Sporting Life, and Seamheads.com article by Cliff Blau on the 1890 Athletics.

Acknowledgements: I wish to give special acknowledgement to Ed Morton for helping pull game accounts and digging other important information from non-Internet based sources. I would also like to thank Alice Smith, president of the Riverside Historical Society for her help.



Baseball's Deadliest Disaster: "Black Saturday" in Philadelphia

Robert D. Warrington

"From the lips of a frightened little girl came a cry of terror yesterday afternoon that lured hundreds of panic-stricken men to death and injury at the Philadelphia Base Ball Grounds." So begins the front-page story in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* newspaper describing the deadliest disaster ever to occur at a major league ballpark. On August 8, 1903, part of the top left-field bleacher balcony at the Philadelphia Phillies' ballpark collapsed, hurling hundreds of people headlong to the pavement below. Twelve people died and 232 were injured. The tragedy, its aftermath, and the far-reaching effects it had on ballpark design and construction are examined in this article.

TOWARD THE MODERN BALLPARK ERA

The Phillies' first ballpark—Recreation Park—was characteristic of nineteenth century ballparks. Hastily constructed in 1883 after Philadelphia had been awarded a National League franchise, Recreation Park was built entirely of wood and held just 6,500 people.¹ Phillies owner Alfred J. Reach quickly became aware of the inadequacies of his ballpark: Wood was susceptible to fire and decay, and the seating capacity of a single-decked wooden ballpark could not accommodate the number of fans eager to attend games.² "We are having difficulty finding space for all the people who want to pay to see us play," Reach noted.³ Watching patrons turned away from Recreation Park because they could not be seated, Reach would seek to build a larger and more grandiose facility for the club.

Built at a cost of \$101,000 and with a seating capacity of 12,500, Philadelphia Base Ball Park was considered the finest ballpark in the nation when it opened in 1887. Brick was used throughout the structure in place of commonly used wood, and it was the first such facility to offer pavilion seating for customers.⁴ The massive brick pavilion at the main entrance—dominated on the outside by a central turret 165 feet high and two end turrets 75 feet high—was as revolutionary in ballpark construction as it was medieval in appearance. The double-decked grandstand between first and third bases held 5,000 seats, while 7,500 additional customers could be accommodated

in the bleachers that extended down the left- and right-field lines. There were no seats in the outfield.⁵

The ballpark still contained a great deal of wood in its construction, however, the drawback of which became apparent on August 6, 1894. That morning, the Phillies were preparing for an afternoon game against the Baltimore Orioles when at 10:40 A.M. one of the players noticed a fire in the grandstands. The fire quickly spread and largely consumed the ballpark. Its cause was never determined, although various theories included sparks from a passing locomotive and a torch that a plumber was using to make repairs.⁶ Although there were no fatalities and only minor injuries, the fire destroyed the ballpark with the exception of part of the outer brick wall that enclosed it.⁷

"THE FIRST MODERN BALLPARK"

Determined to avoid such catastrophes in the future, Reach planned a new ballpark at the same location that would be elaborate, elegant, and fireproof. Constructed mostly of steel and brick at a cost of \$225,000,⁸ the new structure contained no wood except for the floors and seats of the stands.⁹ It also was the first ballpark to feature cantilever construction, a radical new architectural technique in ballpark design.¹⁰ Using cantilevered concrete supports and iron girders, architects could eliminate most of the columns supporting the upper deck and roof that made for so much "obstructed view seating" at ballparks.¹¹

Christened National League Park¹² when it opened in 1895, and seating 18,800 people, the ballpark's construction was a defining moment for the future of baseball.¹³ According to baseball historian Michael Gershman, Reach "created the first modern ballpark."¹⁴ Seeking to reassure fans that ballpark conflagrations were now a thing of the past, Reach wrote in an invitation to Opening Day, "The new structure is mainly of brick and steel, containing no wood or other inflammable material except the platform and seats."¹⁵

Reach's foresight and willingness to embrace improved building materials and innovative architectural features in his new ballpark moved baseball decisively away from



Taken on Labor Day in 1902 during a doubleheader between the Phillies and Chicago Orphans, the photo shows the edge of the grandstand and bleachers along the third base line where the collapse would take place less than a year later. (Author's Collection)

the small, crowded firetraps that had previously housed ball clubs. Preventing fire from consuming ballparks as it had in the past propelled the dramatic step forward that occurred when National League Park opened its doors. Al Reach's new structure, moreover, was intended to be a lasting part of Philadelphia's architectural landscape. Brick and steel endured while wood decayed. Reach had this sense of permanence in mind when he wrote that his new ballpark "adds so novel and unique a structure to the many other ornamental edifices of our beloved city."¹⁶

Reach was right in assuring fans that his new park did not pose the fire hazard previous structures presented. No fires occurred, and the most modern ballpark of its era stood without any major architectural changes for nearly a decade.¹⁷ Potential catastrophe was the furthest thing from Phillies' patrons' minds when they came to the ballpark to cheer on the hometown crew.

THE DEADLIEST DISASTER EVER

Although National League Park had remained essentially unchanged when the 1903 baseball season started, ownership of the Phillies had not. Reach and his partner John Rogers sold the team for \$170,000 following the 1902 season to a coterie of "millionaires" from Philadelphia and Cincinnati who together had formed the "Philadelphia Base Ball and Entertainment Company." James Potter, the chief stockholder, became the club's president and led the new owners—numbering a remarkable 24 in total. Reach and Rogers, however, retained ownership of the ballpark itself.¹⁸ This

arrangement would become important in sorting out the torrent of lawsuits, verbal recriminations, and accusations of responsibility and liability that were to follow in the disaster's wake.

A doubleheader was scheduled between the Phillies and Boston Beaneaters on Saturday, August 8, 1903. A crowd of some 10,000 saw the Braves take the first game in 12 innings, edging the Phillies by a score of 5–4. In the second game, the teams were locked in a 5–5 tie in the fourth inning. At 5:40 P.M., the Braves' Joe Stanley was at the plate with two outs. However, the attention of fans that had each paid 25 cents for seats in the bleachers down the left-field line was drawn to an incident occurring below on 15th Street outside the ballpark.¹⁹

Two drunken men were walking slowly down the street followed by a small group of boys and girls who were teasing them. Suddenly, one of the men turned toward the children and grabbed one of the girls by the hair. In doing so, he stumbled and fell on top of her. The child, who was later identified as 13-year-old Maggie Barry, shrieked in terror as did her companions. They cried, "Help!" and "Murder!" The commotion drew people in the ballpark to the top of the bleachers to see what was happening below.²⁰

They congregated on an overhanging wooden balcony at the top of the outer wall that ran along 15th Street and continued around the corner on Lehigh Avenue. The balcony was seven-to-eight feet wide and protruded beyond the wall by about three feet. It was intended as a footway for people to use for entering and exiting the

grandstand and bleachers. The balcony had a handrail but was not independently braced underneath. Instead, the same joists that were used to support the grandstand and bleachers held up the balcony. The joists extended through the top of the wall to provide support. The wall itself was approximately 14 inches thick. According to newspaper accounts of the time, an estimated 300 people jammed onto the balcony to witness the incident that was unfolding approximately 30 feet below on 15th Street. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* described what happened next in a headline story that ran the following day:

*Suddenly, jammed with an immense, vibrating weight, the balcony tore itself loose from the wall, and the crowd was hurled headlong to the pavement. Those who felt themselves falling grasped those behind and they in turn held on to others. Behind were thousands still pushing up to see what was happening. In the twinkling of an eye the street was piled four deep with bleeding, injured, shrieking humanity struggling amid the piling debris.*²¹

The crash was as horrifying as it was deadly. In an instant, 15th Street was piled high with more than 200 “bleeding, injured, and shrieking” individuals. More people continued to fall off the balcony as those still in the bleachers—hearing the noise and screams—pressed forward to see what the commotion was all about. One of the first police officers on the scene, Sergeant Bartle, told reporters:

*There must have been one hundred men and boys, and every one of them was covered with blood. Some of them had their clothing almost torn from their bodies, while others were so bespattered with blood and mud as to be almost unrecognizable. Under the debris were the forms of those who were unconscious. You could not tell whether they were dead or alive. Timber, rubbish, and bricks were piled everywhere.*²²

Policeman Robinson who was on duty outside the ballpark, saw the disaster, and immediately sent out a call for help. Within minutes, patrol wagons and ambulances were rushing to the ballpark, but the extent of the calamity was simply too great for them to handle. Streetcars were emptied of passengers and loaded with the injured. Delivery wagons and automobiles were commandeered by police to rush victims to local hospitals. The injured were taken initially to Samaritan and St. Luke’s Hospitals.

When they became overwhelmed, victims were sent to the Jewish Hospital.²³

Back at the accident scene, the best and worst of humanity were on display. Neighbors opened their houses to the wounded, Good Samaritans tried to give comfort to the fallen, and doctors rushed to the ballpark when they heard of the disaster. At the same time, pickpockets sought to loot the injured and dying while curiosity-seekers simply looked on without offering any relief to those in need.²⁴

The game stopped immediately when the calamity occurred. Shock quickly turned to panic as people in the left-field bleachers started jumping onto the field fearing that additional sections of the ballpark would collapse.

*The sound of the breaking timbers and the cry of those caught in the fall gave rise to a belief that the whole of the stand was about to fall. With wild cries of fear, the crowd rose and made a rush for the field. They clambered over the seats and over one another, screaming, swearing, striking and fighting for precedence in the mad rush for safety. They tore at one another’s clothing and behaved like insane men.*²⁵

Some players armed themselves with bats to keep from being overwhelmed by the wild stampede. The game was canceled.²⁶

THE DEADLY TOLL

The break started along the bleachers about 50 feet from the ballpark’s main entrance at 15th and Huntingdon Streets, continued north along 15th Street, and stopped at the point the stands curved toward Lehigh Avenue—a distance of approximately 150 feet. Once the victims had been removed, ballpark employees were ordered to remove the debris and clear the site. This was done by 7 P.M.²⁷ Even the jagged ends of the timbers that once supported the balcony and still jutted out from the wall were cut off and taken away.²⁸ While the clean-up was in progress, a city building inspector named John H. Kessler—in whose district the ballpark was situated—arrived on the scene, secured pieces of the joists and specimens of the brick and mortar, and took them with him to City Hall. They were impounded as evidence to be used in the inquiry that was sure to follow to determine the cause of the disaster and affix responsibility for it.²⁹

The final count showed that 12 had been killed and 232 injured in the catastrophe, and it remains Major League Baseball’s deadliest disaster. The youngest fatality was William J. Graham, age 24, who lived with his

parents. His 18-year-old sister had died of illness in May, and the double blow left the family prostrated by grief. The oldest victim was Edward Williamson, a 63-year-old Civil War veteran who had been wounded at the Battle of Antietam and endured the misery of incarceration at the Confederacy's notorious Andersonville Prison.³⁰

It was customary during the era for people—adults and children—to wear hats to baseball games, and over a hundred were gathered up and placed in the window of a grocery store on 15th Street waiting for their owners to reclaim them. Some never would.³¹

What about the drunks? Efforts were made to find them once an investigation into the accident began. There were at least four versions of the drunken-men story circulating, and authorities wanted to talk to the individuals whose actions had started the ruckus that drew the spectators to their fate. Neighbors said that after the accident they saw the two men lying in an alley near 15th Street. The police, however, were so busy tending to the needs of victims that they paid no attention to the drunks. During the excitement the men apparently recovered sufficiently to amble off and disappear into the black hole of history. They were never identified.³²

FINGER-POINTING AND LAWSUITS COMMENCE

As often happens when disaster strikes, protestations of innocence and accusations of guilt abound amongst those seeking to avoid and affix blame. This calamity was no different.

Phillies Business Manager William Shettsline was in charge of ballpark operations when the disaster struck. In its immediate aftermath, according to newspaper accounts, he “was so badly prostrated by the shock that he could scarcely tell a coherent story.”³³ By the next day, Shettsline had recovered sufficiently to issue a statement in which the owners of the club asserted their claim of having no culpability in the matter. While expressing sympathy for the victims, the statement explained:

*The accident was in no way due to any lack of proper precautions or neglect on the part of officials of the club . . . When the present management assumed control of the grounds, the pavilion and stands were in perfect condition, and, for the purposes intended were safe and reliable, but the simultaneous rush of several hundred persons to one concentrated point weakened the structure and precipitated several hundred unfortunate persons to the street below . . . Over-anxiety on their part resulted in the regrettable accident.*³⁴

Club President Potter was vacationing in Saratoga, New York but returned to Philadelphia quickly when informed of the disaster by telegraph. Accompanied by National League President Harry Pulliam, Potter appeared before the press on August 10 and echoed the defense offered the day before by Shettsline. The statement he read said in part, “I feel that no precaution was omitted on the part of the company to protect the patrons of the ground. It was one of those unfortunate accidents that occur when large numbers of people, actuated by a common impulse, do something they are not expected to do.”³⁵

Colonel John I. Rogers, co-owner of the ballpark along with A. J. Reach, also returned hastily from a vacation in Cape May, New Jersey. He released a lengthy statement to the press in which he recounted the ballpark's construction and noted that it was inspected each spring by “experienced mechanics” to confirm its soundness and ensure the safety of patrons. Rogers observed:

*The inspection usually lasted for weeks, and always entailed a large expenditure for maintenance and replacement. Three years ago we appointed an experienced carpenter as our park superintendent, so that inspections could be daily instead of annually, and we firmly believed that nothing of doubtful strength or fitness escaped his attention. The new club owners who took possession on March 1 followed, as Mr. Shettsline informs me, the same rule last spring and spent a large sum for maintenance and repair before their opening game. One thing is certain, that the mad rush of an excited crowd suddenly jumping to the balcony and pushing everything irresistibly before it, would have crushed any similar structure, no matter how strongly or recently built. It was a football center rush, multiplied indefinitely, that few, if any, walls could have withstood.*³⁶

Rogers also commented that R. C. Ballinger & Co. had done the original construction of the ballpark, and he emphasized that “all the details were left to their superior skills and judgment.” He added, in an apparent effort to distance himself and Reach from any blame for the accident, “They submitted outline plans to the Building Inspectors and to us, and went ahead with their tasks and on their own responsibility, just like every other first-class firm.”³⁷

R. C. Ballinger immediately shot back in a comment to newspaper reporters stating, “The fault, if it lies anywhere, is theirs; not mine.” He praised the quality of the original construction but also cautioned that eight



An aerial view of the Phillies' ballpark taken in 1928. (Author's Collection)

years had since passed, and that “the best timber, when subjected, unprotected, for eight years to the effects of the sun, wind, snow and rain may become rotten.” Ballinger declared emphatically, “My responsibility ended when the grounds were opened and the tests made.”³⁸

“Rotten timbers!” was Philadelphia Mayor John Weaver’s opinion of the cause of the balcony crash when he inspected the site along with other city officials two days after the accident. He opined, “I am not a builder, but it looks to me as if the construction of the balcony was faulty.” When asked who was responsible for the rotten timbers, Weaver replied, “The people whose duty it is to keep the stand in repair.” With an eye toward insulating the city from any culpability, Weaver commented that under present law, “Building inspectors were not under obligation to inspect buildings, except theaters, after they had been completed unless some complaint was made.” He further noted that the city did not have enough building inspectors to inspect all such structures regularly.³⁹

Weaver’s observation was echoed by Alexander Colville, Philadelphia’s assistant director of public safety, who offered his own explanation for the collapse:

*Waterlogged and decayed timber. The debris found on the pavement showed that the timbers which had projected from the walls and on which the walk was laid which gave way under the weight of the sudden strain by the crowd upon it were rotten. They were built into the wall and had iron braces extending outward but none upward. The wall was about 10 or 15 years old. No such construction could be possible nowadays.*⁴⁰

Charges about the decrepit condition of the balcony’s support structure became common currency in the days following the accident. Reporters at the scene detected the problem at once. One wrote:

*A cursory glance at the debris before its removal by the ball park employees showed that much of the timber was in a badly decayed state. While the main body of the wall looked firm, the bricks about the top, where the joists protruded, were loose and some of them looked as though the mortar had been worn out or washed away.*⁴¹

The efforts by Potter, Rogers, Ballinger, and Weaver to absolve themselves from any fault can be well understood. The first lawsuit filed as a result of the accident was submitted on August 10. Attorney John R. K. Scott, as counsel for Walter Mariner and Harry Quigley—two of the men injured in the collapse—issued summonses from Courts of Common Pleas Nos. 1 and 5, respectively, against the Philadelphia Base Ball Club and Exhibition Company (Potter’s group) to recover damages for the injuries they sustained. It was alleged in the statements of claim “that the defendant company was negligent in maintaining the overhanging promenade in a condition which was unsafe for the patrons of the ballpark.”⁴²

Another lawsuit—the third one filed—asked for \$5,000 in damages for James E. Dwyer, who was among the injured.⁴³ The suit alleged that the Philadelphia Base Ball Club and Exhibition Company was negligent in not providing a safe passageway for patrons, and that the company further rendered itself liable by not providing

a sufficient number of “special officers” at the ballpark to control the crowds.⁴⁴

As the days passed, additional lawsuits were initiated, and eventually, more than 80 were filed.⁴⁵ Later suits were expanded to also include the Philadelphia Base Ball Club, Limited—the company headed by Reach and Rogers—which owned the ballpark and from which Potter’s group leased it for Phillies games. Estimates were made that claims for damages filed in lawsuits could reach \$1,000,000.⁴⁶

CLAIMS AND COUNTERCLAIMS AT THE CORONER’S INQUEST

Coroner Thomas Dugan began his inquest into the accident on August 18.⁴⁷ It lasted two days and all six members of the jury were builders.⁴⁸ The first witness called was R. C. Ballinger, whose company had erected the balcony and bleachers at the ballpark. He said the balcony had been constructed only to accommodate those fans passing to and from the bleachers. It was not intended, he explained, to “withstand a mob.” Ballinger noted that the supporting joists were built of the “best yellow pine lumber,” with an average life of seven-to-nine years.⁴⁹ He also observed, “I can’t see where any one has any reason to blame any one but himself. If an accident of the sort had happened while they were seated, then they might have complained.”⁵⁰ The foreman in charge of the ballpark’s construction, David S. Lockwood, appeared on the stand and testified that the building materials and construction quality were good, and that the structure had been subjected to extensive testing before the park was opened in 1895.⁵¹

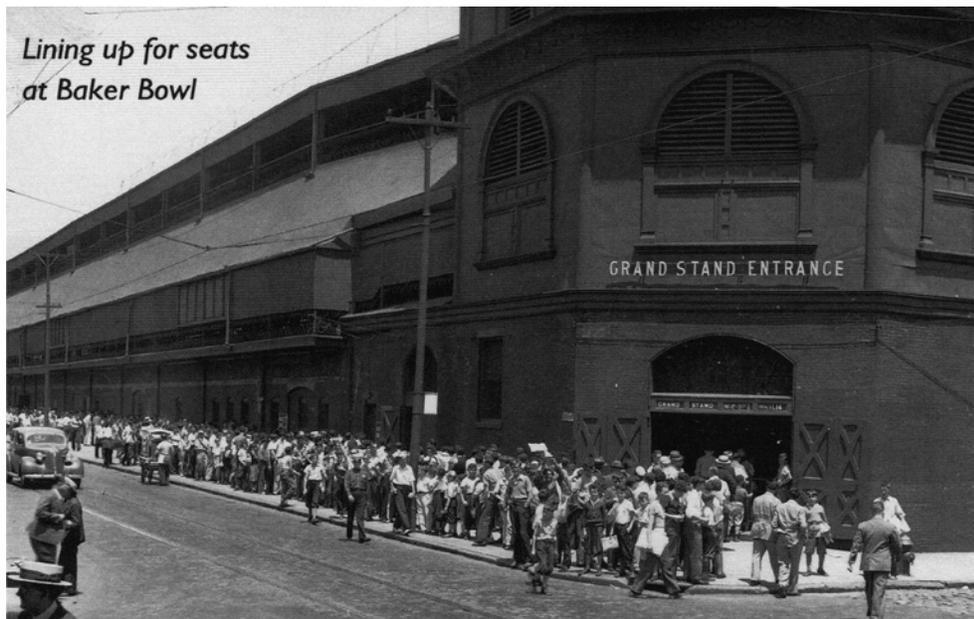
Colonel Rogers appeared, as well, and described in

great detail the story of the ballpark’s construction. He emphasized that there had been no indication that the timbers extending from the wall to support the balcony—which had been covered in tin for protection when put in place—had rotted.⁵² Shettsline appeared next and said that the special officers on duty at the ballpark had done their best to control the crowd and return the curious to their seats but had been simply overwhelmed by the mob.⁵³

Finally, James Potter took his place on the witness stand and testified that when his corporation took over the Phillies in February 1903, Colonel Rogers assured him that the stands were the strongest and safest in the world.⁵⁴ Furthermore, according to Potter, when he inquired if anything needed to be done to improve the conditions in the grandstands, Rogers replied, “You cannot spend a cent in the way of repairs, for no repairs are needed.”⁵⁵

A newspaper reporter offered this interpretation of the cumulative testimony of the first day’s witnesses: “The impression seemed to prevail that the fatal balcony might have withstood ordinary usage for some time, but the great weight of the mob that rushed upon it on the day of the accident was too much for even an iron-braced balcony.”⁵⁶

The most sensational commentary during the second and final day of testimony came from Edward Clark, an engineer of the Bureau of Building Inspection who had examined the accident scene. He found that 50 of the wooden support joists in the area where the balcony had collapsed were “rotten and worthless;” 10 were 75 percent bad; and 14 were 50 percent bad. Only two of the joists were in good condition. Disputing Ballinger, Clark said



*Lining up for seats
at Baker Bowl*

The main entrance of National League Park—informally known as Baker Bowl. An overhanging wooden balcony that fans used to enter and exit the grandstand and bleachers is clearly visible in the photo. The balcony had been redesigned to strengthen its support by the time this photo was taken in 1938, the last year the Phillies would call the ballpark home. (Author’s Collection)

that the lumber used for the joists was hemlock—not pine—and that water seeping through nail holes created when the tin capping was affixed to the joists had rotted the timber over the years.⁵⁷

The chief of the Bureau of Building Inspection, Robert C. Hill, corroborated Clark's testimony and pointed out that under current law inspectors had no right to enter a building following the completion of its initial inspection except on complaint. Hill confirmed that since the ballpark's 1895 opening, it had not been inspected by the bureau.⁵⁸ He also condemned the use of hemlock in building construction noting, "From what I have seen in the last two weeks, I would not consider an application for a permit for any stand of a permanent character in which hemlock forms the main foundation or its component parts."⁵⁹

The Coroner's jury deliberated for two-and-a-half hours after the second day's testimony had concluded and announced three principal findings:

The jury finds that the falling of a balcony on the left field stand on 15th Street which caused the deaths of Joseph Edgar and eleven others at the Philadelphia Base Ball Park was due to the rotten condition of the supporting timbers. We further find that the Philadelphia Base Ball Club, Limited (Rogers and Reach) were responsible in not having a thorough examination made of those timbers throughout the time of their ownership, and in stating at the time of the transfer (to Potter's group) that the buildings on the grounds were in first-class condition.

We also find it our duty to recommend that the staff of the inspectors for the Bureau of Building Inspection should be increased, and that a number of inspectors should be assigned whose sole duty it should be to inspect all places of amusement, ball parks, race-track pavilions, external fire escapes, etc., and that they should be empowered to enter upon the premises of any place at any and all times to make such inspections as should insure the safety of the patrons or employees thereof; and that a permit be issued and publicly posted stating when the inspection was made and the condition of the place. The jury also recommends that the Bureau of Building Inspection allow no hemlock lumber to be used in the stands of a permanent nature or in buildings where big assemblages congregate.

*The jury also recommends that there shall be no seating capacity allowed under any stand of wood construction unless a permit is first secured from the Bureau of Building Inspection.*⁶⁰

Reacting to the findings of the jury and noting the foreman's declaration that the verdict was "founded on Mr. Potter's testimony," Rogers issued a lengthy statement on August 24 in which he disputed Potter's recollection of their conversation on February 28, 1903—the day the sale of the Phillies was concluded—about the condition of the ballpark. Regarding the statement that "you cannot spend a cent in the way of repairs," that Potter attributed to Rogers, the latter retorted:

*He (Potter) swore, according to his belief, founded on his memory, which, so far as I am concerned, is unreliable. If anyone else used such language it was not I. If such language was used at any time by anyone else connected with the club it could not have been applied to repairs in view of the heavy annual expenditures for that purpose . . . So Mr. Potter is mistaken, at least, as to anything said by me on this point in dispute.*⁶¹

Rogers continued that Potter made no inquiries as to the condition of the stands when he purchased the Phillies, and that if he had, "I (Rogers) would have expressed my opinion that to the best of my knowledge and belief they were in good condition." He also noted that Potter's corporation became responsible for annual maintenance of National League Park as part of the deal to purchase the Phillies, and that it "had spent many dollars for repairs" to offset "the wear and tear of the winter months" and get the ballpark ready for the 1903 season.⁶²

Stressing the enormous and expensive efforts undertaken every year to keep the ballpark in good condition, Rogers observed, "We certainly, and I—on whom most of the burden fell—particularly, did everything that mortals not gifted with foresight could to do insure the comfort and safety of our patrons during the entire time of our ownership."⁶³

Rogers took the opportunity to also refute the testimony of Ballinger, whose company built National League Park. He claimed that Ballinger stated that tin covering the joists "would protect indefinitely from moisture and decay the timber resting on the wall." Dismissing the notion that the timbers should have been inspected to ensure rot had not set in, Rogers commented:

Now it is said that, in addition to care and precautions we did take, we ought to have guessed that under the paint that was meant to preserve the outriggers over the pavement there was a dry rot at the core, and under the tin that was supposed to be a protective roof for that portion of the joists resting on the wall, that the moisture had somehow through nail-holes or otherwise, penetrated and lay there rotting the wood. This, contrary to all rule, all advice, all experience and all reason, we ought to have guessed, and because we didn't so guess, what none of the jury would in all probability have guessed, we are morally censured because the timbers, which were daily getting weaker, yielded to an irresistible rush of an excited crowd.⁶⁴

Rogers' contention about the "irresistible rush of an excited crowd" was a point he would return to repeatedly in denying any responsibility for the collapse. Opining that it probably would "have lasted for years while used for its legitimate purposes," a crowd of "five times as many people" on the balcony than it was designed to hold created pressure "before which even brick walls and iron doors must fall."⁶⁵

THE DISASTER'S LEGACY

One reporter correctly forecast about the lawsuits, "It may be safely predicted that there will be enough litigation to last all parties in interest a lifetime; and that in the long run nobody will get anything out of it except, perhaps, a few lawyers."⁶⁶ The lawsuits wound languidly through the court system for six years, reaching all the way up to the US Supreme Court. The Court largely accepted the defense offered by the owners of National League Park and the Phillies, ruling that an extraordinary number of fans had congregated at a location where many of them should not have been, and consequently, that neither the ball club nor the ballpark's landlords were responsible for the accident. Both were absolved of all blame and financial responsibility.⁶⁷

The Phillies' 1903 season changed abruptly because of the accident. Shettsline attempted to restart games at the ballpark on August 10, saying that the left-field bleachers would be roped off and only the grandstand and right-field bleachers would be used to seat fans. City officials blanched at the proposal until the entire ballpark could be thoroughly inspected. Potter canceled all future games until an inspection could be done and repairs made.⁶⁸ A conference was held on August 17 between Potter and Ben Shibe, the president of the American

League's Philadelphia Athletics. It was agreed that until the Phillies' ballpark was ready to reopen, the team would continue its season by playing at the Athletics' home field—Columbia Park.⁶⁹ Forebodingly, a continuous rain forced nine straight postponements of Phillies' games at their temporary location.⁷⁰ When the team finally did get to play, it posted a 6–9–1 record at Columbia Park before returning to National League Park.⁷¹

The legacy of "Black Saturday," as the 1903 disaster came to be known, included a profound influence on the future of ballpark construction. In its wake appeared the classic American ballparks that would dominate the twentieth century, and their arrival coincided conveniently with the use of reinforced concrete as a building material.⁷² The first and most notable of these palaces was Shibe Park—the home of the Philadelphia Athletics—which opened in 1909.⁷³ The souvenir program sold at the inaugural Opening Day provided a detailed description of the ballpark's construction, and the unmistakable influence of the 1903 tragedy was apparent in the text:

In the construction of the seating provisions of previous ballparks the use of wood was general. Several unfortunate accidents called serious attention to the need of something more durable than wood for the safety of the enormous crowds which thronged parks where winning baseball was being played ... In the evolution of building construction vast strides have been made, and daring builders experimented with various materials to overcome the corrosive influences of time and the elements. Up to the present time nothing has been contrived which form a more lasting combination than wrought steel and cement. Technically it is known as reinforced concrete ... The bleachers and grandstand and walls (at Shibe) are solid beds of concrete.⁷⁴

Philadelphia's building inspection laws also were fundamentally affected by the disaster. Taking up the recommendation of the Coroner's jury, Mayor Weaver called immediately for more rigorous and extensive inspections of buildings in which the public gathered, declaring, "I shall insist that provisions be immediately made that hereafter all places where crowds congregate shall be thoroughly inspected."⁷⁵ A newspaper editorialized at the time that Mayor Weaver's admonitions, coupled with the recommendations of the jury, were "expected to revolutionize the existing laws on building inspection."⁷⁶ They did. The staff of inspectors at the Bureau of Building



By 1948, only the low outer wall of National League Park remained. Taken at the ballpark's main entrance located at 15th and Huntingdon Streets, the photo shows 15th Street where the dead and injured fell 45 years earlier. (Author's Collection)

Inspection was increased significantly, and legislation was soon enacted that made those inspections more rigorous, frequent, and intrusive than heretofore had been the case for public buildings in Philadelphia. The most visible evidence of these changes was the requirement that owners of establishments where the public gathered post openly the permits they had received from the inspection bureau attesting to the soundness of the structure and limiting the number of people allowed within it at one time.⁷⁷

FINAL THOUGHTS

Although regarded by baseball historian Gershman as the first modern ballpark, National League Park was more of a transitional structure when it opened in 1895. It symbolized a far-reaching step away from baseball's wooden structures, but remained short of the modern ballparks that would emerge in the early twentieth century. Concerns over fire, in part, pushed baseball's owners away from entirely wooden structures, but it was collapse—not conflagration—that provided the final proof of wood's unsuitability for ballpark construction. From the debris and death on 15th Street emerged Shibe Park, Forbes Field, and other steel-and-concrete palaces.

Progress is often the offspring of disaster, but calamity's true measure is gauged in human terms. This sad and all-too-obvious point is highlighted in the fate of Joseph Edgar, one of the fatalities at National League Park on that hot August day in 1903. As described in a newspaper account:

Edgar had been in poor health and went to the game at the advice of his physician, who advised open air recreation as a remedy for his ailment. In starting for the base ball park he invited his son Robert, aged 15 years, to accompany him, but the boy had an engagement and did not go. The death of Joseph Edgar leaves a widow and five children destitute.⁷⁸ ■

ENDNOTES

1. Rich Westcott, *Philadelphia's Old Ballparks* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 11. Westcott's book provides the finest comprehensive history of Philadelphia's old ballparks.
2. Frederick G. Lieb and Stan Baumgartner, *The Philadelphia Phillies* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1953), 23.
3. Rich Westcott and Frank Bilovsky, *The Phillies Encyclopedia*, Third edition (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), 395.
4. Lawrence S. Ritter, *Lost Ballparks: A Celebration of Baseball's Legendary Fields* (New York: Viking Studio Books, 1992), 9.
5. Westcott, *Old Ballparks*, 28-29.
6. *Ibid.*, 75.
7. The fire that consumed Philadelphia Base Ball Park was a fate common to many ballparks of that era. See Ritter, *Lost Ballparks*, 10.
8. Frances C. Richter, "Black-Letter Day For Philadelphia," *Sporting Life* 41 (August 15, 1903).
9. Westcott, *Old Ballparks*, 75.
10. Ritter, *Lost Ballparks*, 10.
11. A cantilever is a beam supported only on one end. The beam carries the load to the support where it is resisted by moment and sheer stress. Cantilever construction allows for overhanging structure without external bracing.
12. The ballpark continued to be referred to as "Philadelphia Base Ball Park" and, less frequently, "Huntingdon Street Grounds" by fans and in the newspapers.
13. Westcott, *Old Ballparks*, 75.
14. Michael Gershman, *Diamonds: The Evolution of the Ballpark* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1993), 57.
15. *Ibid.*, 59.

16. Westcott, *Old Ballparks*, 76.
17. *Ibid.*
18. David Jordan, *Occasional Glory: A History of the Philadelphia Phillies* (Jefferson: McFarland & Co., 2002), 28–29.
19. "Crowd Rushed to Rail at Little Girl's Cries," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 9, 1903.
20. *Ibid.*
21. "Nearly Two Hundred Hurt, Three Dead, Following Crash at Base Ball Park," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 9, 1903.
22. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 9, 1903.
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.*
25. Richter, *Sporting Life*, August 15, 1903.
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 9, 1903.
28. "City Officials will Begin Today to Investigate Saturday's Awful Crash," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 10, 1903.
29. *Ibid.* It is amazing that Phillies' workmen were permitted to clean up the scene, removing key evidence that would be crucial in understanding the cause of the collapse. No one in authority who was present stopped them, however, and had not the building inspector seized some of it, no debris taken from the scene where the accident occurred would have been available for use in the later investigation. Coroner Dugan requested that no debris be removed from the site so it could be examined as part of the investigation, but that was not until two days after the accident had occurred.
30. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 10, 1903.
31. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 9, 1903.
32. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 10, 1903.
33. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 9, 1903.
34. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 10, 1903.
35. "Rotten Beams Caused Crash, Says the Mayor," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 11, 1903.
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Ibid.*
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.*
40. Richter, *Sporting Life*, August 15, 1903.
41. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 9, 1903.
42. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 11, 1903.
43. "Builders to Help in Fixing Blame," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 12, 1903.
44. Lee Lowenfish, *The Imperfect Diamond: A History of Baseball's Labor Wars* (New York: De Capo Press, 1980), 72. Although a pittance compared to the claims in personal injury lawsuits today, \$5,000 was a great deal of money in 1903. For example, the average annual salary for a major league ballplayer in 1903 was less than \$2,500.
45. Westcott, *Old Ballparks*, 78.
46. Richter, *Sporting Life*, August 15, 1903.
47. "Ball Park Inquest will Begin To-Day," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 18, 1903.
48. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 12, 1903.
49. "Erection of Fatal Balcony Described," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 19, 1903.
50. *Ibid.*
51. *Ibid.*
52. *Ibid.*
53. *Ibid.*
54. Frances C. Richter, "The Verdict In The Inquest On The Great Disaster," *Sporting Life* (August 29, 1903): 41.
55. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 19, 1903.
56. *Ibid.*
57. "Censure for the Lessons of Base Ball Park," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 20, 1903.
58. *Ibid.*
59. *Ibid.* Clark's and Hill's testimony directly contradicted Ballinger's regarding the wood used in the joists. The latter claimed it was yellow pine, while Clark and Hill asserted it was hemlock. Suspicions should have arisen that inferior wood had been used in the ballpark's construction—perhaps to cut owners' costs, increase builders' profits, or both—and that its use had contributed to the accident, but the matter was never pursued at the inquest nor subsequently in the lawsuits that were filed by victims.
60. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 20, 1903.
61. Richter, *Sporting Life*, August 29, 1903.
62. *Ibid.*
63. *Ibid.* Rogers also released figures showing how much had been spent on a yearly basis in ballpark repairs and replacements: 1896 - \$1,214.82; 1897 - \$842.12; 1898 - \$977.14; 1899 - \$3,073.11; 1900 - \$3,026.03; 1901 - \$2,295.28; 1902 - \$928.99.
64. *Ibid.*
65. *Ibid.*
66. *Ibid.*
67. Westcott, *Old Ballparks*, 78.
68. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 10, 1903.
69. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 18, 1903.
70. This remains the longest series of consecutive rainouts in Phillies' history.
71. Westcott and Bilovsky, *Phillies Encyclopedia*, 399.
72. Also referred to as "ferro-concrete." It consists of framing the weight-bearing portions of a structure in wood, pouring concrete into the frame, and then inserting steel rods in the concrete while it is still soft. Once the concrete has hardened, it can only be blasted apart. See Edward G. White, *Creating the National Pastime: Baseball Transforms Itself, 1903-1953* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 24–25.
73. Westcott, *Old Ballparks*, 105–108.
74. "Opening of Shibe Park," *Souvenir Program*, April 12, 1909, 3.
75. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 11, 1903.
76. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 20, 1903.
77. *Ibid.*
78. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 10, 1903.



The Great Philadelphia Ballpark Riot

Robert D. Warrington

The Phillies and their fans hated New York Giants manager John McGraw. This fact must be clearly understood if readers are to truly appreciate the story that follows.

JOHN MCGRAW

Nicknamed “Muggsy” and “Little Napoleon,” John McGraw was an easy man to detest. Sportswriter Grantland Rice observed, “There were many who hated John McGraw and to many of these he gave reason . . . He was the leader with the rasping, cutting voice that so often poured sarcasm and invective upon umpires, the enemy and his own players.”¹ Others agree. “His personality was indeed that of a ‘Little Napoleon:’ arrogant, abrasive and pugnacious. He outgeneraled his opponents while abusing them verbally and, sometimes, with his fists.”²

A man who ruled his New York Giants with an iron hand, McGraw was quoted as saying, “With my team I am an absolute czar. My men know it. I order plays and they obey. If they don’t I fine them.”³ His rationale for such a tyrannical approach to managing was simple, “Nine mediocre players pulling together under one competent head will do better work than nine individuals of greater ability without unified control.”⁴

FEUDING WITH THE PHILLIES

McGraw had tempestuous relations with all league opponents, but it was particularly fractious with the Philadelphia Phillies.⁵ In his book *Mack, McGraw and the 1913 Baseball Season*, Richard Adler acknowledges, “No love was ever lost between McGraw and the Phillies.”⁶ Multiple violent encounters punctuated Giants-Phillies games, most of them involving McGraw. During a 1906 game in Philadelphia, for example, McGraw and Phillies infielder Paul Sentell began fighting on the field.⁷ Both were ejected but resumed fisticuffs under the stands.⁸ So enraged were fans that they tried to attack Giants players leaving the ballpark to return to their hotel. Punches were thrown and some minor injuries sustained, with one player—Roger Bresnahan—having to barricade himself inside a grocery store until rescued by police.⁹

Mutual ill will continued to smolder over the years. In 1913, the Giants and Phillies were scheduled to play 22 times—11 games in each other’s city. Opportunities abounded for barely suppressed hostility to erupt into a riot, causing violence on the field, in the stands, and beyond the ballpark. Only a spark was needed.

THE FIRST SKIRMISH

The Giants came to Philadelphia for a four-game series starting June 30, 1913, with the Phillies holding a precarious half-game lead over New York in the standings. The first game was hotly contested as the Phillies jumped on top early, but the Giants came back to take the lead 10–6 after batting in the top of the seventh inning. The Phillies scored three runs in the bottom of that frame and then tied the score in the bottom of the eighth. The Giants, however, managed to squeeze out an 11–10 victory in the 10th.¹⁰ As exciting as the game was, what followed would be far more memorable.

“A feeling of bitterness was noticeable during the game today,” wrote one sportswriter who witnessed the affair. “The Philadelphia players and fans say that all the time the New York manager was on the coaching line he was chiding the players on the bench.”¹¹ Another account similarly notes, “McGraw, in the coaches’ box at third, lost no opportunity to exchange ‘greetings’ with the Phillies’ players on the bench.”¹²

When the game ended, McGraw walked to the clubhouse, which was located in center field at National League Park, with Phillies captain Mike Doolan.¹³ Just ahead of them was Phillies pitcher Addison “Addie” Brennan, who “took an active part in the stream of repartee with the New York manager” during the game.¹⁴ Differing accounts appeared the next day in New York and Philadelphia newspapers as to what then occurred. From the Philadelphia perspective, McGraw pointed at Brennan and said in a loud voice, “That’s the fellow I am after and I am going to get him.”¹⁵ Quickening his pace, he approached Brennan and:

Addie, hearing the talk of McGraw, turned around, and seeing Muggsy’s warlike attitude

*wasted no time, but just waded in and cuffed the Giants' battlelike leader a smash on the jaw that sent him down on the soft sod. It is likely that McGraw figured that Brennan would pitch today and picked on him with the purpose of getting him rattled ahead of time. But in picking Brennan for his pecking McGraw picked the wrong man and had to take the count.*¹⁶

The fracas was over in an instant with McGraw on the ground and Phillies player Otto Knabe virtually dragging Brennan toward the clubhouse.¹⁷ Fans that saw what happened were eager to join in the fisticuffs and gathered on the street around the clubhouse exit waiting for McGraw and his players to emerge. But police shooed the incensed fans away, and the New Yorkers were able to leave the ballpark without incident.¹⁸

Once in the Majestic Hotel where the team was quartered, Giants Road Secretary John B. Foster told the press that McGraw had been knocked unconscious and had a severe cut on the back of his ear. The manager was in his room and under the care of a physician.¹⁹ Foster continued:

*We intend to investigate this matter fully and demand that the man who attacked Manager McGraw be punished. It is one of the dirtiest things ever pulled ... McGraw was walking with Doolan and discussing the game. It certainly looked like a frame-up, for without any warning Brennan rushed at him and hit him.*²⁰

McGraw himself declared he had said nothing to justify being attacked. While acknowledging there was a

lot “loose talk” between the two teams during the series, McGraw asserted, “I cannot recall a thing that I said to Brennan, except to ask him how many times he was knocked out of the box this season.”²¹

New York newspapers portrayed McGraw as the innocent victim of an unprovoked attack, noting that the manager was talking with Doolan when he was attacked from behind by multiple assailants who punched and kicked him repeatedly.²² The *New York Times* initially reported that a mob of fans and Phillies players attacked McGraw, but quickly revised its rendition of the incident by naming Brennan as the only offender.²³

The McGraw-Brennan dust-up was a front-page story the next day in Philadelphia and New York newspapers. Although umpires made no mention of the altercation in their report of the game—they probably left the field before it happened—National League President Thomas J. Lynch learned of the matter through newspaper accounts and announced an investigation would be initiated.²⁴

Lynch visited Philadelphia on July 2 and interviewed McGraw, Foster, Doolan, Brennan, and Phillies manager Charlie Dooan.²⁵ Later that same day he announced his decision: McGraw and Brennan would each be suspended five days and Brennan would pay a fine of \$100. Lynch reasoned that both men “indulged in personalities during the game, and that the feeling aroused thereby was the direct cause of the happenings when the players were leaving the field.” The suspension would commence on July 4, and both men would be eligible to return on July 9.²⁶

The Phillies and Giants howled over the punishment. Giants President Harry Hempstead telegraphed Lynch to protest McGraw’s suspension, stating that the club’s



Addison Brennan, the Phillies’ pitcher who decked John McGraw with a punch to the jaw following the game on June 30, 1913. (Library of Congress)

manager was “the object of an attack by a Philadelphia player, not even being given an opportunity to defend himself.”²⁷ The Phillies’ ire was directed at the fact that Brennan was suspended and fined while McGraw was only suspended. Dooin stated that his pitcher had been provoked and that McGraw was as much to blame for the rumpus as Brennan. Punishment should be the same for both men.²⁸ These objections notwithstanding, McGraw and Brennan served their suspensions and the fine was paid.²⁹

Phillies fans were not prepared to let bygones be bygones, however, and the Giants would return to Philadelphia.

AN UMPIRE’S CONTROVERSIAL DECISION

The race between the Phillies and Giants for the 1913 NL pennant was close early in the season. But the Giants had established a considerable lead by the time they returned to Philadelphia in late August. New York’s record stood at 82–36 and the Phillies at 67–45 when the two clubs met for a three-game series beginning on August 28. The Phillies staked their claim as pennant contenders by winning the first two games, 7–2 and 3–2, in 10 innings. Only the third game was left to be played on August 30.³⁰

The Giants jumped out to an early 6–0 lead, pummeling Grover Cleveland Alexander—a rare occurrence in his otherwise brilliant season.³¹ George Chalmers came on in relief in the fourth inning and held McGraw’s crew scoreless through the eighth. Meanwhile, the Phillies got to Giants starter Christy Mathewson, chipping away at the lead by scoring five runs in the sixth inning, two more in the seventh, and adding one more tally in the eighth to give the hometown crew an 8–6 lead.³²

Then, the Giants came to bat in the top of the ninth inning and all hell broke loose.

With Chalmers still pitching for the Phillies, Moose McCormick came up to the plate as a pinch hitter for first baseman Fred Merkle. He grounded a ball to second baseman Otto Knabe who flipped it to first baseman Fred Luderus for the first out. As he was going back to the dugout, McCormick shouted at home plate umpire Bill Brennan (not to be confused with Phillies pitcher “Addie” Brennan) that spectators in the center-field seats had blinded him at the plate while he was batting.³³

(As noted earlier, the clubhouse at National League Park was located in center field. Seats were placed in front and on top of the clubhouse, and they were opened to the public only when the rest of the ballpark was sold out. On this day, it was filled to capacity with 22,000 fans.)³⁴

The following sequence of events then took place, as reported by the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Umpire Brennan

walked out to the center-field bleachers and ordered the fans sitting there to vacate the section.³⁵ He was met with a thundering chorus of jeers and catcalls. Brennan walked back to the infield, approached Mickey Doolan, and ordered him to have the fans removed. The Phillies captain laughed and said there was nothing he could do.³⁶

Growing exasperated, Brennan walked over to the Giants’ dugout and conferred with McGraw. The umpire yet again walked to center field and confronted a Philadelphia police officer who was stationed along the outfield wall. Brennan demanded that the officer remove the spectators sitting in center field. He refused and Brennan then asserted, “You are under my orders.” The officer replied, “I’m under no orders except from my sergeant or captain.”³⁷

With the crowd growing increasingly unruly, Brennan’s officiating partner, Mal Eason, suggested to Brennan that the remainder of the game be played under protest. Brennan again journeyed to the Giants’ dugout to confer with McGraw. The New York manager rejected Eason’s suggestion. Brennan walked over to the grandstand area and announced in a loud voice, “The game is forfeited to New York, nine to zero.”³⁸

Philadelphia sportswriters claimed the Giants protested that white shirted-spectators in the stands had prevented them from seeing the ball clearly. They belittled the charge and wondered out loud why New York hadn’t complained about the problem earlier in the game—choosing to do so only after the Phillies had taken the lead.³⁹

McGraw, however, attributed the forfeit to the disruptive conduct of unruly patrons. He claimed, “I took advantage of the occasion to ask to have the crowd removed from the seats in center field because the crowd there was in direct line with the batters, waving their hats and coats and using glasses to reflect the sun’s rays in the eyes of my men.” He put blame for the incident squarely on the Phillies’ shoulders, stating that had the seats been cleared the game could have continued.⁴⁰

Brennan also attributed the forfeit to the antics of center field fans—not their attire—and wrote in a report to NL President Lynch explaining his decision, “All started to wave papers and coats and it was impossible for me to see a ball that was pitched.”⁴¹

A RIOT ERUPTS IN THE STANDS ...

While differences exist over what prompted the forfeit, there is no dispute over what happened once it was announced. The lead story on the front page of the next day’s *Inquirer* offered a vivid description of what took place:

Bedlam cut loose at that instant. Screaming in rage the bleacherites by thousands poured over the low rail into the playing field. In the grand stand men rose in wild excitement and hoarsely shouted "robber. thief."

A second later a cushion struck the arbitrator in the face as he was walking toward the exit under the grand stand leading to his dressing room. His walk turned into an undignified run. The bleacher crowd had first tried to stop the New York players who butted their way to safety. Then they turned toward Brennan. He was near the exit then, but they were coming rapidly. The line of police stationed round the bleachers threatened with drawn revolvers in vain.

Over the exit hundreds of grandstand spectators were crowded with any missile they could lay their hands upon. As Brennan got below they cut loose. A cushion seat struck his shoulder; a pop bottle grazed his head.

"Help, they're killing me," Brennan shouted, bending low and dodging under the stand.

"Outside to the player's exit," came the shout in the crowd. "We'll head him off there." A few minutes later the ball park was deserted while a mob raged along Fifteenth Street, Lehigh Avenue, and Broad Street.⁴²

... AND SPILLS OUT INTO THE STREETS

McGraw, his players, and the umpires faced the daunting challenge of traversing the four blocks between National League Park and the North Philadelphia Station of the Pennsylvania Railroad to catch a train back to New York. The Giants manager and his men were the first to emerge from the ballpark, and as they started their journey, Phillies fans converged upon them hurling objects of various sorts. Philadelphia police officers managed to insert themselves between the ballplayers and the crowd and escorted the Giants to the railroad station. McGraw, however, somehow got ahead of his players during the ruckus, and the crowd got between them and started chasing the manager with vengeance on its mind. "A wild chase" to the railroad station ensued as McGraw sought to evade his pursuers.⁴³

But the fans had not forgotten Brennan. The greatly despised umpire and his partner, Eason, emerged from the ballpark and were immediately set upon by angry fans. A cordon of police escorted them toward

the station, but as they crossed the railroad bridge waiting fans unleashed a volley of missiles and spikes; fortunately, none found their mark. But just as Brennan, Eason, and their escort reached the railroad station, police saw McGraw and his players being chased by the angry mob. The officers abandoned the umpires to rescue the manager and his men, which gave fans the opportunity to attack Brennan. "They jumped upon him by the dozens. He was beaten to the ground, rose, was beaten down again, and finally rose again, breaking away and fleeing into the station."⁴⁴

Brennan managed to reach the station just as McGraw did. With police, guns drawn, covering their escape, luck was on the side of McGraw and Brennan. An extra-fare express train from Pittsburgh to New York was just leaving the station as the two men entered, and both jumped aboard with the angry mob closing in. The train departed, much to the disappointment of those fans seeking to settle a score with the manager and the umpire.⁴⁵

What of the Giants players? McGraw, in his ignominious flight to safety, left them behind. They had to huddle in a corner on the platform at the station protected by police for 15 minutes until the regularly scheduled train to New York arrived. The crowd jeered and hurled insults but did not harm them in any way. The players boarded the train and left. Phillies fans milled around for a while, denouncing Brennan's decision and demanding justice, but they eventually dispersed peacefully.⁴⁶

Despite the multitude of objects and fists thrown, casualties were slight. Tillie Shafer was struck on the head with a brick but not seriously injured, while fellow infielder Buck Herzog sported a large scratch on his face. Someone snatched catcher Larry McLean's straw hat off his head and absconded with it.⁴⁷

THE BLAME GAME

Yet again, Philadelphia and New York newspapers reflected sharply differing perspectives on fixing blame for the melee. Philadelphia sportswriter James Nasium held Brennan and McGraw responsible, accusing them of conspiring to steal a game the Phillies had justly won. He commented caustically, "It marked the most disgraceful feature of a season of disgraceful umpiring and the second time (the June confrontation with Phillies pitcher Brennan being the first) in as many visits to Philadelphia that John McGraw has been a party to initiating a riot on the Broad and Huntingdon streets grounds."⁴⁸

Repeating his earlier accusation that center-field fans only became a problem once the Giants fell behind, Nasium castigated Brennan as "a mongrel in the guise

Miller Huggins, John McGraw and Umpire Bill Brennan before a game between St. Louis and New York in 1913. (Library of Congress)



of an umpire,” and condemned McGraw for refusing to continue the game under protest (Eason’s suggestion). He concluded his diatribe against the men by asserting:

*The mere throwing out of this game or playing it over will not suffice. The game belongs to the Phillies. And even if the game is ultimately decided in favor of the Phillies, nothing can now remove the smirch that Brennan and McGraw’s action has made upon the national sport save the removal of the former and the disciplining of the latter. If this game is to be kept clean, let it be kept clean by those who are at the head of it. You can’t expect a clean house from a filthy tenant.*⁴⁹

New York newspapers were contemptuous of Philadelphia’s outrage, noting glibly, “Naturally, Philadelphia is excited. They get stirred up every so often about baseball, anyway.”⁵⁰ Phillies fans, furthermore, were accountable for starting the trouble.

*The fans made a lot of noise and began to wave handkerchiefs and papers. Most of the men and boys were in their shirtsleeves and they stood up and also waved their arms trying to disconcert the attention of the New York batsmen.*⁵¹

It was the Phillies’ unwillingness to clear fans from the center-field seats, moreover, that led to the forfeit, not any demands by McGraw or his Giants. “Umpire Brennan forfeited the game to New York after the Philadelphia Club had failed to move from a section in the centre field bleachers spectators who, the New York players claimed, interfered with the vision of the batsmen.”⁵²

PRESIDENT OVERRULES UMPIRE

Phillies Manager Charlie Dooin announced following the game that he would protest Brennan’s forfeit decision and aid every effort to have the umpire driven out of organized baseball. Dooin was quoted as saying:



Taken by a fan in the stands on August 30, 1913, this image shows the Giants during pre-game warm-ups. John McGraw, arms folded, stands behind the pitching mound looking into right field. Christy Mathewson is on the mound. Note that many patrons sitting in the section in front of the centerfield clubhouse and on the roof of the clubhouse are wearing white shirts. (Author's Collection)

I do not know whether a protest will avail us anything, but we will certainly protest the forfeited game and protest it bitterly. It was sheer robbery and of the rankest sort. I cannot understand how the National League magnates will permit such arbitration of their game.⁵³

Dooin traveled to New York on August 31 “still at white heat with indignation at Umpire Brennan for his asinine decision” to complain personally to the league president.⁵⁴ Lynch listened and on September 2 reversed Brennan’s decision and awarded an 8–6 victory to the Phillies. In his ruling Lynch declared:

The official report of Umpire Brennan covering the game forfeited to New York in Philadelphia August 30 shows that neither club had complained about existing conditions regarding the spectators, and that the umpire plainly went beyond his authority in declaring a forfeiture, for which action he had neither the protection of the regular playing rules nor of any special ground rule. The umpire was clearly at fault in not having the game played to a finish.⁵⁵

BOARD OVERRULES PRESIDENT

Lynch’s decision was applauded by most. Sporting Life, for example, called Brennan’s decision “outrageous” and “infamous,” and opined that “President Lynch had base ball law on his side and could not have done anything else.”⁵⁶ But most did not include the New York Giants. The New Yorkers appealed Lynch’s decision to the NL Board of Directors, with club President Hempstead stating:

How Lynch can take that game from us I can’t understand ... To throw the game out and order it replayed would have been injustice enough after the umpire awarded us the decision. But to declare us defeated without giving us any chance is, in my opinion, unconstitutional.⁵⁷

In yet another precedent-setting move, the Board—comprised of Charles H. Ebbets, August Herrmann, and Charles W. Murphy—overruled Lynch on September 15 and ordered that the game be resumed “with the same men on the field and under the same status as existed on the day that Umpire Brennan awarded the game to New York.” Since the Giants would not return to Philadelphia during the season, the Board directed that the game be completed on October 2 when the Phillies were at the Polo Grounds.⁵⁸

By early October, however, the game had become nothing more than a curiosity. The Giants had staked out a commanding lead for the NL pennant and would finish the season with a comfortable 12 ½-game lead over the Phillies.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, as instructed by the Board of Directors, the clubs resumed the August 30 game at the exact point at which it had been stopped. With one out, outfielder Red Murray grounded out. Catcher Chief Meyers rapped a single. Eddie Grant came in to run for Meyers. Larry McLean, batting for outfielder Fred Snodgrass, hit a grounder that forced Grant at second. The game was finally officially over with the Phillies victorious by a score of 8–6.⁶⁰

REVENGE OF THE PHILADELPHIANS

Though New York had bested the Phillies by winning the NL title and were heading to the World Series, Philadelphia had the last laugh. The Giants' opponent in the Fall Classic was none other than the Philadelphia Athletics. Connie Mack's club was in the midst of its first successful run and had already beaten McGraw's minions in the 1911 World Series, four games to two. The 1913 World Series would be even sweeter for the A's as they downed the Giants by the more lopsided outcome of four games to one.⁶¹ New York City may have been home of the National League champions in 1913, but Philadelphia was home of the world champions. ■

ENDNOTES

1. Richard Adler, *Mack, McGraw and the 1913 Baseball Season* (Jefferson: McFarland & Co., 2008), 39.



Phillies' manager Charlie Dooan. A harsh and frequent critic of McGraw while with the Phillies, Dooan played for the New York manager later in his career. (Author's Collection)

2. "John McGraw," Baseball Library, accessed November 3, 2012, <http://baseballlibrary.com/ballplayers/player>.

3. "John McGraw Quotes: Quotes From & About John McGraw," *Baseball Almanac*, accessed November 3, 2012, <http://www.baseball-almanac.com/quotes/quomcg2.shtml>.

4. "John McGraw," How Stuff Works, accessed November 3, 2012, <http://howstuffworks.com/John-McGraw-hof.h>.

5. David Jordan explained the pronounced enmity McGraw and the Phillies shared: "Proximity often breeds animosity, and there was an ill-concealed bitter edge to relations between the two cities, a bare hundred miles apart, with nothing separating them but New Jersey. The swaggering, bullying tactics of John McGraw and the arrogant attitude of his players irritated many in Philadelphia." David Jordan, *Occasional Glory: A History of the Philadelphia Phillies* (Jefferson: McFarland & Co., 2002), 32.

6. Adler, *1913 Baseball Season*, 171.

7. Feuding between McGraw and Sentelle was not an isolated event. After a June 1906 game in New York, McGraw ordered six men to assault Sentelle as he exited the ballpark. "No sooner had he (Sentelle) got outside the gate than Manager John McGraw set a half-dozen others, players and employees, on him. In spite of the tremendous odds, the young infielder put up a plucky fight, and had one of his assailants down and pummeling him hard when Kid Gleason appeared on the scene. The Phillies' captain succeeded in stopping hostilities, although he had a hard time getting Sentelle away, as the latter was very anxious to get at McGraw, who, as usual, kept well in the background." Frances C. Richter, "Sentelle Assaulted in New York," *Sporting Life* 47, June 30, 1906.

8. The mutual loathing of McGraw and Sentelle persisted for years. In 1917, McGraw took his Giants to Texas to play an exhibition game against the Galveston club managed by Sentelle. According to one account, "An outbreak of the ancient feud between John J. McGraw and Paul Sentelle, manager of the Galveston club, almost resulted in a St. Patrick's Day shindy instead of a baseball game here today. The reversal of a decision by a local umpire precipitated the argument in the third inning." Despite heated remarks exchanged by the two men, a fight was avoided when the owner of the Galveston club intervened to settle the dispute. The origins of the "ancient feud" remain obscure. "Jawn M'Graw Gets Into Warm Debate," *New York Times*, March 18, 1917.

9. Rich Westcott, *Philadelphia's Old Ballparks* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 57-58.

10. "Attack M'Graw After Giants Win," *New York Times*, July 1, 1913.

11. *Ibid.*

12. "Addie Brennan Knocked Down Muggsy M'Graw," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 1, 1913.

13. National League Park later became informally known as Baker Bowl, named after Phillies president William F. Baker. The ballpark's name was never officially changed, however.

14. *New York Times*, July 1, 1913.

15. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 1, 1913. It was also reported that McGraw called Brennan "yellow" and abused him in "alleged unprintable language." "Philadelphia Scene of Latest Slugging Match," *Sporting Life* 61, July 12, 1913.

16. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 1, 1913.

17. Brennan claimed to have landed two punches, a left and a right, that dropped McGraw. "Brennan Was Only Phil Who Cuffed McGraw," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 2, 1913.

18. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 1, 1913.

19. McGraw was not seriously injured and was reported as saying he wanted the incident to be dropped without an investigation. At the start of the next day's game, McGraw and Doolan "were smiling and chattering like two old college chums" when they handed their batting orders to umpire Bill Klem. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 2, 1913.

20. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 1, 1913.

21. *Sporting Life*, July 12, 1913.

22. *New York Times*, July 1, 1913.

23. "To Investigate Fight," *New York Times*, July 2, 1913. Philadelphia newspapers, in subsequent reporting, also confirmed that only Brennan struck McGraw. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 2, 1913.

24. "Umpires Didn't Report Scrap," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 2, 1913.

25. "Lynch Holds Ax Over Addie's Head," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 3, 1913.

26. "McGraw Is Suspended," *New York Times*, July 4, 1913.
27. "President Lynch Suspends McGraw and Brennan for Five Days and Also Finest Phillies' Pitcher \$100," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 4, 1913.
28. *Ibid.*
29. *Sporting Life*, July 12, 1913. Brennan's fine was paid by Phillies management. The pugilistic pitcher received over 500 letters, most of them congratulating him for cuffing McGraw. Robert P. Wiggins, *The Federal League of Base Ball Clubs: The History of an Outlaw Major League, 1914-1915* (Jefferson: McFarland & Co., 2009), 58. McGraw served his suspension sitting in a box next to the Giants' dugout during games. "Matty' Totters But Does Not Fall," *New York Times*, July 6, 1913.
30. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 28-29, 1913.
31. Alexander ended up with a 22-8 record in 1913.
32. Jim Nasium, "Phils' Great Rally Went Into Discard," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 31, 1913. Jim Nasium was the pen name of Edgar Forrest Wolfe—a Philadelphia sportswriter and cartoonist. The mirthful Wolfe derived his *nom de plume* from the word "Gymnasium."
33. "Phila. Rooters Mob Umpire Who Gives N.Y. Game," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 31, 1913.
34. Nasium, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 31, 1913.
35. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 31, 1913. It is not clear from reporting whether Brennan's order applied to patrons sitting in front of the clubhouse, on top of it, or both.
36. Nasium, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 31, 1913. Fans entered the center-field stands during the sixth inning of the game. The crowd had become so dense that ropes used to keep that section free of patrons were removed—a common occurrence when the ballpark was packed to capacity. Brennan could not talk directly to Phillies Manager Charlie Dooin because he had been ejected from the game in the sixth inning.
37. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 31, 1913.
38. *Ibid.*
39. Nasium, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 31, 1913.
40. "McGraw Says Local Club Should Have Cleared Bleachers as Umpire Brennan Ordered," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 1, 1913.
41. "Brennan's Official Statement," *Sporting Life* 62, September 13, 1913.
42. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 31, 1913.
43. *Ibid.* The number of fans milling outside the ballpark and participating in attacks against Brennan, McGraw, and his players was put at 5,000.
44. *Ibid.* As he ran, Brennan cried "Murder!" at the top of his lungs.
45. *Ibid.*
46. *Ibid.* Only one person was arrested in the riot. George Young was taken into custody for inciting to riot and resisting an officer. Young had attempted to trip an officer who was protecting McGraw and his Giants.
47. "Dooin May Carry Protest To Court," *New York Times*, September 1, 1913. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 1, 1913.
48. Nasium, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 31, 1913.
49. *Ibid.*
50. *New York Times*, September 1, 1913.
51. "Philadelphia Fans Spoil A Victory," *New York Times*, August 31, 1913.
52. "Revolver Saves Players," *New York Times*, August 31, 1913.
53. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 31, 1913.
54. "Phils Enter Protest," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 1, 1913.
55. "Brennan Exceeded His Authority Says Lynch," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 3, 1913.
56. "Just Lynch Verdict," *Sporting Life* 62, September 6, 1913.
57. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 3, 1913.
58. "Giants Win Appeal," *Sporting Life* 62 September 20, 1913.
59. Jordan, *Occasional Glory*, 43.
60. The Phillies and Giants were originally scheduled to play a doubleheader on October 2. By adding the completion of the August 30 game, it became a triple-header, which also set a precedent. As the *Inquirer* remarked, "Dooin's Daisies triumphed over the Champion Giants at the Polo grounds this afternoon in the first real triple-header of major league history . . . It isn't the first time that three major league games have been played on one day, but the first time three have ever been played for one admission." In the doubleheader, the Phillies lost the first game 8-3 but took the second contest 4-3. "Phillies Take Two In Triple-Header,"
- Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 3, 1913.
61. David Jordan, *The Athletics of Philadelphia: Connie Mack's White Elephants, 1901-1954* (Jefferson: McFarland & Co.), 55, 61.



Dropping the Pitch

Barbara Gregorich

Leona Kearns was a young woman, a teenage pitcher during the Roaring Twenties. Eddie Ainsmith was once a major-league catcher. When their lives intersected, tragedy was the result.

Back when automobiles were rare and baseball players heroes, Claude and Evalina Gard Kearns raised seven children in the small town of West Union, Illinois: Russell, Forest, Louise, Leona, Jeannette, Nellie, and Roy. Agent-in-charge for the New York Central Line, Claude worked in the depot, where he was also the local Western Union operator. Eva ran the household. “Mom was strict but broad-minded,” Nellie Kearns remembers. “She would cut-up, though. She and Dad went by train to California once. Mom knew everybody in the train by the time they got off, Dad didn’t know a soul. Dad was kind of gruff on the surface, but not inside.”

West Union’s sand prairie and underground water supply nourished wheat, corn, soybeans, and watermelons. Leona and her younger sister Nellie both worked in the fields during harvest. Reflecting on the fragile nature of the fruit, Nellie remembers that kids worked at passing watermelons down the line, but not at packing: That important job was reserved for adults. “There was an art to placing melons in boxcars,” she explains. “They were lined with straw to protect the watermelons.” On weekends West Union’s hard-working farmers and merchants congregated in town to watch baseball games. Before each game townspeople performed Herculean labors grooming the field—games were played in a cow pasture that had to be cleared of cows and manure before the umpire called, “Play ball!”

Born on March 22, 1908, Leona Mae Kearns grew up swimming, skating, and biking. But her real passion was baseball. At 14 she was good enough to pitch and play first base on the men’s town team. “I was never good enough to make the men’s team,” says Nellie, her voice full of pride for Leona. Nellie Monon Kearns, four years younger, was also crazy about baseball. Seventy years later, Nellie, who was her sister’s catcher, can still see Leona’s repertoire. “Fastball and a curve and a drop,” she says without hesitation. “And she threw a knuckleball. You cramp your knuckles around the seams. The thumb and little finger

control the ball. It comes in without rotation.”

Leona Kearns was neither the first nor last young woman to pitch for a men’s team—though the six-foot tall, hard-throwing southpaw was certainly one of the most striking. In 1925 a scout for the Philadelphia Bobbies spotted her and immediately asked to speak to her parents.

A come-lately bloomer girl team, the Bobbies were formed by Mary O’Gara of Philadelphia. From the 1890s through the 1930s, sexually-integrated bloomer teams barnstormed the country, usually fielding six women and three men against men’s teams. By 1911 pitcher Maud Nelson, whose career began in 1897, was touring the Midwest and East with her own team, the Western Bloomer Girls. A short time later Margaret Nabel took over the New York Bloomer Girls and built them to prominence. With Nelson and Nabel touring from Oklahoma to Vermont and Florida to the Maritimes, Mary O’Gara had little elbow room. This may have been what prompted her to take the Philadelphia Bobbies on a tour of Japan in 1925.

In the long story of women as ballplayers, men are always present ... sometimes friend, sometimes foe, but often nothing more than promoter. With calamitous results, catcher Eddie Ainsmith entered the life of the Philadelphia Bobbies and Leona Kearns.

Edward Ainsmith wasn’t nourished in the rich prairie of Illinois, where children formed watermelon brigades, passing the large fruits from hand to hand without breaking them, observing how carefully they were packed and shipped by train to big-city destinations. Ainsmith was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he grew up admiring pugilism. But Ainsmith went the opposite direction of another Massachusetts native, Rocky Marciano, who grew up admiring baseball but, failing that, took up boxing (and became one of the most famous heavyweight champions). “I didn’t raise my son to be a catcher,” quipped Marciano’s mother, who presumably saw more nobility and less danger in the boxing ring. Ainsmith’s parents felt otherwise, and it was because they objected to boxing as a career that Eddie pursued baseball. In 1910 the 19-year-old Cambridge native was signed by

the Washington Senators. Almost immediately he became the catcher for the immortal Walter Johnson. Ainsmith shouldered the responsibility of catching baseball's greatest pitcher effortlessly.

Synchronized at pitch and catch, the batterymates were as unlike as can be. Johnson was a Kansas farm boy, soft-spoken, mild-mannered, and wholly dependable. Ready to fight at the drop of a cap, Ainsmith was on more than one occasion suspended by American League president Ban Johnson for throwing dirt on, leaping on, or punching an umpire. Fans, too, were assaulted by Ainsmith, as were citizens outside the ballpark. After Ainsmith and pitcher Joe Engel beat up a motorman, Engel was fined \$50 and Ainsmith sentenced to 30 days in jail. Probably through the intervention of Senators owner Clark Griffith, the sentence was suspended.

At 5'11" and 180 pounds, Ainsmith was incredibly powerful. Griffith believed him "the most underrated catcher who ever played baseball.... The toughest and strongest ballplayer who ever lived." Runners trying to score bounced off the young backstop, and Griffith recalled that when Johnson's fastball looked like it was going for a wild pitch, "Ainsmith would reach his bare hand up in the air and catch it on the raw flesh without wincing." Of the 110 shutouts that the Big Train hurled, Ainsmith caught 48 (Gabby Street was next with 17). Johnson once remarked that there was no other Washington catcher who could hold him when he opened up at full speed.

In 1914 a whole crop of the nation's young ballplayers married, Ainsmith among them. Newspaper accounts joked about which player would be the first to become a father. Eddie became one the following year, but when his wife died several years later, he left his daughter in Texas in the care of her aunt while he played ball. In the early 1920s he married again.

As he traveled through baseball, Ainsmith's misdeeds—fistfights, fines, late night revels that broke curfew—accumulated like muck in the stables of Augeus. The public tolerated (perhaps even approved of) such immaturity, then as now. But when Ainsmith was drafted for World War I and Griffith successfully appealed the drafting, the public frowned upon the athlete's special treatment. Griffith soon traded Ainsmith to Detroit, where he played until 1921, when the Tigers traded him to the Cardinals.

Shackled with a .232 batting average and a rowdy reputation, Ainsmith was traded to the Dodgers and then to the New York Giants, managed by feisty autocrat John McGraw. When Ainsmith flouted McGraw's house rules during the pennant race of 1924, the manager released him. Ironically, the Giants won the pennant but went

down to Walter Johnson and the Senators in the World Series. Ainsmith, unwanted in the major leagues, went down to the minors. During the offseason of 1924, he took 28 young men to Japan, where each of them earned \$830 playing exhibition baseball. In 1925 Eddie Ainsmith became a promoter of women in baseball when he collaborated with Mary O'Gara to tour Japan with the Philadelphia Bobbies.

Eager to play baseball and see the world, Leona Kearns longed to join the Bobbies and play in Japan, where, she was told, she could earn as much as \$500. Claude wanted her to go, Eva did not. Nellie remembers their mother shed copious tears—tears that saturated Leona's first passport application, making it necessary to fill out a second. Despite her fears, Eva gave in. In the end she wouldn't stand in the way of her daughter seeing the world and playing baseball.

"I was very envious when I heard about her trip to Japan," confesses Leona's best friend, Arlene Tolbert Watt. Afterwards, she felt differently. "There was a lot of discussion. A lot of people blamed Claude because he let her go. You don't think of the danger of being involved with strangers."

Is the word *danger* in a young person's vocabulary? "We used to do some real stupid things," says Arlene. "There was a gravel pit south of where we lived. We used to ride our bikes there and swim. It was a real danger spot, but we were confident that we could swim." Arlene characterizes Leona as a daredevil who wasn't afraid of anything. The daredevil, a child of the Roaring Twenties, whistled incessantly. "There was a song popular back then, 'Doodly Doo,' one of those odd songs, and Leona was always whistling it. It used to drive her mother mad." Arlene pauses. "The first time I went to see her mother after, she said, 'Oh, if I could only hear her whistle 'Doodly Doo' one more time.'"

Granted a leave of absence from high school in September, 1925, Leona bid goodbye to family and friends and boarded the train to Chicago, where she stayed with her sister Louise until, under the chaperonage of Eddie and Loretta Ainsmith, she left for Seattle. Meanwhile 11 Bobbies and manager Mary O'Gara took a different train from Philadelphia to Seattle.

On experienced bloomer teams, players ranged in age from 14 to 40: Rookies and veterans worked together to forge a skilled entity with strong bonds. On the Bobbies, the players ranged in age from 13 to perhaps 20: There were no veterans and no team leader. Incredibly young (their best player was 13-year-old Edith Houghton, who went on to a long ball-playing career and later became a scout for the Philadelphia Phillies), the Bobbies

hadn't been tempered by time. Unlike Maud Nelson and Margaret Nabel, O'Gara hadn't, either. She and her charges blithely undertook a jaunt to Japan, trusting they would win baseball games and come home richer.

Not until Ainsmith arrived in Seattle did the Bobbies first meet Leona. Philadelphia player Nettie Gans, perhaps 15 at the time, recorded her first impressions in a diary. "October 4, Sunday. Played a game in Tacoma. It was a good game. Slim pitched. She is from Illinois. Mr. Ainsmith brought her on the trip. She is six feet tall and sixteen years of age, with a wonderful pitching arm."

Ainsmith also introduced the Bobbies to Earl Hamilton, former pitcher for the Pittsburgh Pirates. Hamilton and his wife would travel to Japan on the same ship as the Bobbies. Claude and Eva Kearns had never met Ainsmith. They had trusted the scout and what seemed like a golden opportunity. But when weeks went by without word from their daughter, they became worried. Eva telegraphed the Ainsmiths in Seattle just as a letter from Leona was traveling through the mail, assuring assure her parents she was having a swell time and that the Ainsmiths *are sure fine people.... He made me a present of a \$5.50 ball glove while we were in Minnesota.... and he bought us each a sweater that cost \$10.00.* After receiving her mother's telegram, Leona wrote again, reporting that the Bobbies won a game in Seattle, 14–13, and won another in Tacoma, with attendance over 2,000. *Say Mom, you had ought to meet these people. They are sure nice and sure know how to treat you.*

Leona was only 17 years old—young enough to be impressed by Ainsmith, too young to discern the difference between gifts and character. Too young, at first, to discern dissension. Among the sad keepsakes in Eva's cedar chest is an unsigned typed report, probably written by Nella Shank. According to the report the Bobbies split into two factions in Seattle, with Edith Ruth and Shank (two of the older Bobbies) wanting Ainsmith to manage the team. The younger players, ages 13–17, sided with Mary O'Gara, their manager and chaperone. Disagreements unresolved, bearing new uniforms with "USA" stitched across the shirt and sleeves, the Bobbies boarded the *President Jefferson* on October 6, traveling first class.

One-way passage had been paid for by the Japanese promoters, who promised large gate receipts, which would take care of the team's room, board, and passage home—and turn a profit, too. *If I make \$300,* wrote Leona, *we will get us a Ford Coup when I get back. We are going to play two games a week and loaf the rest of the time.* As she penned these words, Leona had only \$2.00 remaining in her pockets.

In literature's most famous voyage, Odysseus sailed from Greece to battle in Troy. After 10 years of war he set sail for home, only to experience another decade of the world's deceptions and dangers, from the lures of Circe to the unpleasant options of Scylla or Charybdis. Leona's voyage was much shorter, though no less fraught with deception and danger. The passage to Japan gave her time to observe her companions and perhaps reflect on what would happen when the team reached Yokohama. *Mr. Ainsmith has had me out on deck, giving me a workout, she wrote the day the ship docked. He is getting me ready to pitch in Japan. He got me a swell bat and had his name carved on it. He and I get along just fine but he is having trouble with the rest of them.*

According to Leona, the Bobbies flouted Ainsmith's command, remaining on deck long past curfew. When the shoe was on the other foot, the man who was released from the Giants for flouting McGraw's restrictions didn't like it. Far worse than the curfew violations in Leona's eyes was the lack of talent. In an uncharacteristically critical observation, she wrote: *These girls can't play ball, but they just think that they can....* Dissatisfied with the caliber of her teammates, Leona was at least happy that the hazards of seafaring were over: *We have had two storms since we have been on the Pacific and I thought that my time had come. The waves dashed to the top and you couldn't hardly walk.*

After 11 days at sea, the American ballplayers checked into the Marunouchi Hotel, where reporters surrounded them. Stuffed with tea and cakes, the visitors were showered with official dinners and gifts, laden with bouquets of flowers, and transported in rickshaws. One of the Japanese ballplayers gave Leona a string of pearls. "She was bringing them back for my mother," remembers Nellie. "Mother loved pearls, she wore them all the time."

In what remained of October after the banquets and sight-seeing, the Bobbies played three ballgames, losing each. If this bothered Leona, she didn't let on. *Say Mother. We're sure having a swell time on this baseball tour.* The young woman who whistled "Doodly Doo" had an impish sense of humor, telling her parents that *we girls are not allowed to drink the water here, so we are going to live on beer.*

The time was not so swell on the field as the Bobbies traveled from Yokohama to Tokyo and then Osaka, losing game after game. Initially the Japanese reporters and fans wanted to like the Bobbies. When Edith Houghton pulled the hidden-ball trick and gleefully tagged out the runner at second, the crowd rose to its feet in admiration. Leona, too, was respected for her abilities. The pitcher of the Osaka Foreign Language School Team sent her a

postcard: “Miss Kearns, I’m glad to have met you. On that day, you were very splendid. You are a good batter. You made nice hits in spite of me. You are the only lady whom I can’t struck out.”

Despite Leona and Houghton—and professionals Hamilton and Ainsmith, who stepped in to serve as pitcher and catcher—the Bobbies were not competitive against the Japanese college men. E.R. Dickover, US Consul at Kobe, assessed that “because the girls could not play a sufficiently strong game to compete with any school team in Japan and as the Japanese would pay only to see a baseball contest and would not turn out simply because one of the teams was composed of girls, the trip was a financial failure from the start, despite all the advertising efforts of the promoters.”

Leona never called the trip a failure. In early November she joked: *Say Mother, this trip is sure ruining me. When I get home, I will find myself pressing buttons and ordering my breakfast in bed.*

Mixed in with the words of real humor are those of real-life concerns: She reported that she was down to 20 cents in American money. Later she wrote from Kobe to say that the team was going to Korea. *I may be home for Christmas, but I doubt it very much.* Leona didn’t mail that letter immediately, perhaps she thought it sounded too barren. A second part of the letter is dated November 20: *I am now in Korea and am sure having a good time. Just got in from playing a game with the dental college and we won by a score of six to two.* This was the last letter from Leona to her family: For the next eight weeks, she did not write home.

Months later Gertrude Rasch, an American living in Japan, would write to Eva Kearns, explaining Leona’s lack of communication. “I think she did not write you much because it was not easy to write and tell Mother that the trip was not successful, and, besides, you know young people always find it so easy to think that if things are not good today, they will be all right tomorrow.”

Two of the Bobbies’ three Japanese promoters had disappeared without paying them a penny, and the third, T. Shima, went bankrupt. The money that Ainsmith and O’Gara spoke of never materialized—not \$830, not \$500, not \$200. In Kobe the disagreements between Ainsmith and O’Gara came to a head. “Unlucky Friday 13th,” Nettie Gans wrote in her diary. “Mary fell, not too bad. Mr. Ainsmith and Mary had a discussion about going to Formosa with the girls. I believe it has something to do with money being paid. She didn’t want us to go without her although Mr. Ainsmith and Mr. Hamilton had their wives with them. The girl he brought from Chicago went with him, Mr. Ainsmith, as did two of our girls.”

Cast adrift by the Japanese promoters and at odds with O’Gara, Eddie Ainsmith faced a situation he couldn’t escape through fisticuffs. Assembling a team of Nella Shank, Edith Ruth, and Leona Kearns, plus himself and Hamilton and four Japanese players, he opted to play his way out of trouble. The nine began their own barnstorming tour in Korea, hoping to rake in the now vitally necessary dollars. Of all this, Leona’s parents knew nothing. Nor did the parents in Philadelphia hear that their daughters were destitute half a world away.

Ainsmith at least sought to help himself through action. Mary O’Gara remained in Kobe, throwing herself on the mercy of others. According to Dickover’s report to the State Department months later, Shima solicited contributions from wealthy Japanese to pay for the Bobbies’ passage back to Philadelphia. In this, as in his baseball promotions, he was unsuccessful. Dickover considered appealing to Americans living in Japan, but his advisors thought it hopeless and he agreed, assessing that “the American community, which is constantly being called upon to repatriate stranded American citizens, would not respond to an appeal and most certainly could not raise the Yen 10,000 or more needed to pay the girls’ living expenses and passage home.”

One lone American did respond. Henry Sanborn, who owned and operated the Pleasanton Hotel in Kobe, fed and housed the Bobbies at his own expense. Using what influence he had, he tried to persuade the Osaka *Mainichi Shimbun* to publicize a fund-raising campaign, but the paper declined. Just when it looked as if all the efforts of Shima, Dickover, and Sanborn had failed, N.H.N. Mody, a wealthy British-Indian in the banking business who was residing at the Pleasanton, handed Sanborn a check for ¥12,000 (approximately \$6,000). Mody let it be known that the money was a gift outright, not a loan, its sole purpose being to pay for the Bobbies’ passage home. Observed Dickover: “The gift is the more admirable in that it is believed that Mr. Mody was not acquainted with any of the baseball party at the time.”

On November 18, while Ainsmith’s group was playing ball in Korea, Mary O’Gara and nine of the Bobbies boarded the *Empress of Russia*, bound for Vancouver. O’Gara apparently used all of Mody’s ¥12,000 gift. Whether she gave thought to Ainsmith—or to Nella, Edith, and Leona—is not known. On deck, the Bobbies played tennis, jumped rope, and threw basketballs. Nettie Gans reflected on November 26, “Today is Thanksgiving and I think I have quite a bit for which to thank the Lord; in fact, I think all the Bobbies realize this fact, especially that we are going home safely.” From Vancouver the Bobbies took a train to Philadelphia, arriving home on

Sunday, December 6.

Back in Illinois Leona's older brother Russell, who worked for the *Clark County Democrat* in Marshall, read on the wire services that the Bobbies had returned to Philadelphia. Alarmed, he queried R.W. Bruce, the Chicago General Agent of the Admiral Oriental Line, who responded on December 9: "Altho we have had various postal cards from Mr. and Mrs. Ainsmith, yours is the first intimation that the team was meeting with financial difficulties in Japan.... I am asking our Philadelphia Office to get in touch with Thomas Cook & Sons, Mr. Barth of Philadelphia, thru whom all arrangements were completed.... In the meantime, I feel you may assure the parents of Miss Kearns that the team is in the capable hands of Mr. and Mrs. Ainsmith, whom I know personally and that their safe return to the United States would be assured in any event."

Hollow assurances: Even as Bruce sent them, Ainsmith had returned to Kobe, where he solicited aid from the US Consul. Although Dickover accompanied Ainsmith and Hamilton to the police, requesting them to secure the "guaranteed" money, the police could do nothing. Again Henry Sanborn tried to help, this time by selling his brasses and other curios. The sale netted only ¥600, insufficient for passage home. Ainsmith then informed Dickover that he could obtain money from the US, but only enough to repatriate himself and Loretta—not enough for Nella, Edith, and Leona. On December 22 Dickover requested assistance from the Department of State. Around this time, Leona mailed a Christmas card home, but she didn't write. No words in her young life could describe the hopelessness she must have felt in the face of the dissension, incompetence, and irresponsibility encountered on her odyssey.

Two days after Christmas Eddie and Loretta Ainsmith said goodbye to the three young women and sailed away, homeward bound. To his superiors back home (who perhaps rebuked him for letting Ainsmith leave) Dickover explained: "While Mr. Ainsmith was morally bound to care for the girls and should have remained with them until their repatriation, he could not be held legally responsible and so was permitted to leave." Edith Ruth, Nella Shank, and Leona Kearns moved into Henry Sanborn's hotel, where, penniless, they stayed at his expense.

With no news from Leona (and never any from O'Gara or Ainsmith), Claude and Eva Kearns grew more worried by the day. Claude appealed to the Great Northern Railway Company in Philadelphia for an explanation of what was happening. On January 4, 1926, the man in charge of passenger travel responded: "I am

asking Miss O'Gara today to write you concerning the details of this trip, also the reason for their return home and why Miss Kearns decided to remain in Japan." But there is no letter from Mary O'Gara in the stack of faded letters and telegrams that Eva saved. A few days later the parents of the three young ballplayers were informed that their children were stranded in Japan and that passage for each would cost \$300. Claude Kearns wired the \$300 for Leona. "He probably had to borrow it from the bank," reflects Nellie. Then everybody waited. "We were looking forward to Leona coming home. There was going to be a big reunion."

Informed by the Department of State that passage had been paid for, Dickover booked Nella, Edith, and Leona for second-class passage aboard the *Empress of Asia*, due to leave Kobe on January 13. A benefit dance was held, the money used to buy the young women winter coats and dresses for the cold homeward passage.

If ever there was an unlucky ship, the *Empress of Asia* was it. On its way to Kobe, the vessel rammed and sank a river steamer. After docking in Shanghai for repairs, the *Empress* finally departed Kobe five days late, at 4 P.M. on Monday, January 18.

Homeward bound at a speed of 16 knots, the *Empress* encountered frequent snow squalls, winds up to 70 miles per hour, and waves 80–90 feet high. On Friday, January 22, four days out of port, the captain recorded that the waves had finally subsided. When the crew opened the steel storm doors for second-class passengers, Leona ran wild up and down the deck, elated to be going home. At 3:00 P.M. the senior assistant purser warned her that the ship was rolling and that it was dangerous to run around the deck in that manner. She then went below to take tea in the salon with Edith Ruth.

In West Union the day was just beginning. Claude heard the telegraph keys tapping out his code number as he unlocked the stationhouse door. At 7:32 A.M. he took the message. *Kobe, Japan. To Kearns, West Union, Ill. Leona washed overboard. Am overcome with grief. Sanborn.*

Claude called the dispatcher to cover for him, then walked home. "He was home before 8:00," recalls Nellie, who was playing in the yard. "I remember Mom was standing in the kitchen door. She saw the telegram in his hand. Mom knew."

Knowledge and hope pull in opposite directions. Eva and Claude hoped there was some mistake, that their daughter was alive. Claude immediately left for Vancouver, and when Nella Shank and Edith Ruth debarked on January 28, he was waiting for them. "Leona's father had been in Vancouver to meet us," says the unsigned report, "and to hear the sad details. He wanted to hear all about it

from us, thinking it could hardly be true.”

In finality, the steamship company turned over all of Leona’s possessions. Claude transported them home, where Eva put them in a chest. Shank and Ruth continued their trip by train, reaching Philadelphia on February 3. The next day, Loretta Ainsmith telegraphed the Kearns family: “Frightfully shocked we extend hearty sympathy letter follows. Mrs. E. Ainsmith.” Edith Ruth’s mother penned a letter of condolence. “I was very much grieved to hear of your dear loss.... It was an ill-fated trip from beginning to end. And I really think it was all due to the girls manager here in the city. As there was a disagreement between the two managers from the start.”

Half a world away, Gertrude Rasch felt otherwise. “I do not see how the other two girls can make any excuses for Ainsmith,” she wrote to Eva. “To me, it is a most unpleasant thought that any man and woman could sail away and leave three girls in a strange country.”

When her sister died, Nellie Kearns was 13 years old. She remembers the event vividly, from her father’s walking into the yard that January day to her mother’s packing Leona’s things into the cedar chest. “It’s always there,” she says of the tragedy. Her parents were crushed by the loss. Arlene Watts confirms this. “It took all the life out of her mother. It’s the uncertainty of it that affected the family the most.” Missing a body to confirm the loss, many people find that mourning takes longer—and may never be completed. Arlene herself used to dream that Leona was alive.

Seeking answers, solace, connection of some kind, Eva Kearns felt compelled to speak to the last two people who had seen her daughter alive. Traveling to Philadelphia, she called on Edith Ruth and Nella Shank. Edith did not want to talk about the incident, but Nella did.

Nella, feeling seasick, had been sitting out on the deck of the *Empress of Asia* the afternoon of January 22. In the salon, Leona finished her tea, then stepped out to join her friend. At that very moment a massive wave rushed toward the ship. Leona must have shouted a warning to Nella, who opened her eyes to witness the mountainous wave hanging over the ship. She saw Leona leap over a bench and run toward the bulkhead door.

The massive wave crashed.

In the tea parlor, Edith Ruth witnessed the event. Racing toward the door, she saw Nella clutch a rail as the receding wave pulled everything with it. Leona was nowhere in sight. Edith’s screams of terror alerted the crew. The captain cut the engines, stopped the ship, and circled the roiling sea for an hour.

No trace was ever found of Leona.

Safe at home, Ainsmith continued his career in

baseball, playing for minor-league teams. During the 1930s Walter Johnson hired him as a coach. When coaching proved unsuccessful, Ainsmith unabashedly took up the wearing of the blue, becoming an umpire. Later he became a scout. For a very brief time in 1947, he was hired as manager of the Rockford Peaches of the All-American Girls Baseball League. Eddie Ainsmith lived to be 90 years old. If he ever reflected that he spent his life catching a baseball but dropped the most important pitch, he never told a soul. ■



Connie Mack's Second Great Athletics Team: Eclipsed by the Ruth-Gehrig Yankees, But Even Better

Bryan Soderholm-Difatte

In the annals of baseball history, the New York Yankees are often remembered as being most formidable when they had Babe Ruth batting third and Lou Gehrig right behind him in the cleanup slot. They were the heart of the 1927 Yankees—still mythologized by many as the greatest team ever there was. The 1927 Yankees finished every day of the season in first place, won 110 games, took the pennant by 19 games, outscored their opposition by 376 runs (that's 2.4 runs a game more than the other team), and were said to so intimidate the Pirates during batting practice before Game 1 in Pittsburgh that their quick sweep in the World Series was a foregone conclusion—or any other words you might choose to connote inevitability. Ruth and Gehrig teamed together for 10 years, 1925–34, but despite power production unmatched in history by any other dynamic duo, they led the Yankees to only four pennants. The Ruth and Gehrig Yankees won three consecutive flags from 1926 to 1928, and a fourth in 1932.

The team that interrupted and short-changed the Ruth-Gehrig Yankee dynasty was the Philadelphia Athletics, who won three consecutive pennants of their own from 1929 to 1931—all in convincing fashion. One would be misguided to think that Ruth and Gehrig should have won more than the four pennants they did together, so great were they and their team, because the rival Philadelphians had their own luminescent stars in baseball's historical firmament—notably muscular first baseman Jimmie Foxx, left fielder Al Simmons, catcher Mickey Cochrane, and pitching ace Lefty Grove. It was no disgrace for the Ruth-Gehrig Yankees not to win more often when those guys were their contemporaries on the Athletics.

And so the question to be addressed: Is it possible that the Foxx-Simmons-Cochrane-Grove Philadelphia Athletics were actually a better team than the Ruth-Gehrig Yankees? For comparative purposes, this analysis will not focus in on any one iconic year—such as 1927 for the Yankees—or even two (1932 is close to iconic for the Ruth-Gehrig Yankees). Ironically, while the Athletics were the first team in baseball history to have three consecutive 100-win seasons—the Ruth and Gehrig Yankees

managed two in 1927 and 1928—their three straight blow-out pennants are anything but iconic; the 1929–31 Philadelphia Athletics are, in fact, largely forgotten in the broad arc of popularized baseball history, except perhaps in the collective historical memory of the City of Brotherly Love. The mark of a great team is its performance over time, and so this comparative analysis will focus on the seven years between 1926 and 1932, which mark the beginning and end of the pennant-winning collaboration of Ruth and Gehrig, but during which Philadelphia owner and manager Connie Mack restored the Athletics to their former measure of greatness. Let us begin with a brief history on how Mr. Mack rebuilt Philadelphia's foundation for competing with the New York Yankees.

MACK'S ATHLETICS RETURN WITH A VENGEANCE

Connie Mack built one of the first great runs in American League history, winning four pennants in five years between 1910 and 1914, all by comfortable margins—14 1/2 games in 1910, 13 1/2 in 1911, 6 1/2 in 1913, and 8 1/2 in 1914—and the Athletics confirmed their dominance of the baseball world in the World Series by dispatching the Chicago Cubs in five games in 1910, the New York Giants in six in 1911, and the Giants again in five in 1913, before being ignominiously swept by the surprising National League champion Boston Braves in 1914. It is true that the Boston Red Sox intervened with a command performance to take the 1912 pennant by 14 games over Washington and 15 over 90-win Philadelphia, and that the 1914 World Series debacle spoiled the party, but the Athletics appeared primed to be the team to beat for at least the next several years, except that 1914 turned out to mark the end of Mack's dynasty.

Although undoubtedly embarrassed by his team's fold against the Braves, it was financial pressures from diminishing attendance and the challenge posed by the start-up Federal League that caused Mack, who was an owner as well as manager of the Philadelphia franchise, to begin disbanding his great team. Taking a page from the American League's own book, the Federal League (which lasted only two years as a "third major league" in 1914 and 1915, before legal challenges forced its surrender) offered

higher salaries to attract the major-league veterans needed to build credibility for the new league (and the Federal League is indeed recognized in baseball's official records as having been one of the major leagues). This, in turn, contributed to demands for more money from players staying loyal to the American and National Leagues, dollars that Mr. Mack was unable or unwilling to pay.¹

Meanwhile, in 1913 and 1914, the US economy was hit with its second recession in four years. Industrial production and real income declined, and in 1914 the number of civilians in the labor force who were unemployed nearly doubled from 1.7 to 3.1 million, according to statistics compiled by the National Bureau of Economic Research, representing about 12 percent of nonfarm workers. These tough economic times undoubtedly contributed to a dramatic 30 percent decline in attendance at major-league baseball games, excluding the Federal League. Notwithstanding the attraction of watching two of the best players of their era—Eddie Collins and Home Run Baker—and the fact that the Athletics won the American League pennant, Mack's ledgers showed an even greater 39-percent drop in paying customers in 1914. They may have been by far the best team in major-league baseball, but the Philadelphia Athletics were only the fifth-best team in the American League in attendance, and seventh overall, including National League clubs.² This was not helping Mr. Mack pay his \$100,000 infield (whose members, of course, did not collectively earn nearly that much).

It would be wrong to say that Mack broke up the core of his *first* great team all at once. He did so over three years. But the heart was cut out in 1915. Veteran pitchers Eddie Plank and Chief Bender defected to the Federal League after having been preemptively placed on waivers by Mack, leaving a young pitching staff without experienced and savvy veterans; Collins was sold to the White Sox, and shortstop Jack Barry to the Red Sox.³ Mack did not move Home Run Baker in 1915, but his refusal to meet Baker's salary demands caused his outstanding third baseman to sit out the season. Indicative of the importance of these players, particularly Collins and Baker, the Athletics plunged into the first of a disheartening wilderness of seven consecutive last-place finishes, beginning in 1915.

By the early 1920s, Mack was patiently reconstructing another would-be dynasty. Although the Athletics finished dead last in 1920 for the sixth straight year with 106 losses, in 1922, they finally moved out of last place, finishing seventh with 89 losses, having added Bing Miller to the outfield. By 1924, Al Simmons was in the Philadelphia outfield, and the Athletics moved up to

fifth place. In the 10 years after 1914, the Athletics had an abysmal .354 winning average (528–963), but with 71 victories in 1924 putting them within five wins of a .500 record, their future was looking bright.

The next year, 1925, proved pivotal as Cochrane, Grove, second baseman Max Bishop, and pitcher Rube Walberg became regulars. Their addition not only propelled the Athletics to their first winning season since 1914, but also landed Philadelphia in second place (second place!), 8 1/2 games behind Washington. The 1925 Athletics even held first place for nearly two full months in May and June, and for nearly another month between July 23 and August 19. But Mack's budding great team was not yet ready. From August 14, when they led the league by two games, to September 7, the Athletics lost 17 of 20 games, including 12 straight at one point, to fall nine games back and out of contention.

The team lost ground in 1926—the year when Ruth and Gehrig teamed up for their first pennant together—by finishing third with five fewer wins, but ended up only six games behind the Yankees, whom they beat 13 times in 22 games. Any hopes Philadelphia had of closing that gap in 1927 were dashed with the Yankees having their first iconic season. While never in the pennant race, Mack's men finished strong with 19 wins in their final 27 games, which did nothing more than secure second place, for whatever that honor was worth, 19 games behind New York. By 1928, right-hander George Earnshaw had joined Grove and Walberg in the starting rotation; Foxx was a rookie playing third base on his way to becoming one of the game's greatest first basemen (moving across the infield the next year); Bing Miller, who had been traded away in 1926, was back in the outfield alongside Simmons; Mule Haas was new in the outfield; and with Cochrane behind the plate, Philadelphia was poised to challenge the Yankees—this time for real. At first it didn't seem like it would be in 1928, but a surge of 40 wins in 52 games allowed the Athletics to overcome a 12 1/2-game deficit as late as July 18 and bring a half-game lead into Yankee Stadium for a doubleheader showdown with the Bronx Bombers on September 9. Alas, the Yankees swept the twin bill, beat Grove for good measure the next day, and the 1928 Athletics never saw the sunny side of first place again. But they had sent a message to New York, and the next three years were all Philadelphia's.

ATHLETICS PENNANT WINNERS WERE ARGUABLY MORE DOMINANT

It perhaps comes as a surprise, given the Bronx Bombers' headliners Ruth and Gehrig, but between 1926 and 1932 the Philadelphia Athletics' achievements were

comparable to those of the New York Yankees. Each won three consecutive pennants, although the Yankees won four American League titles in all. Philadelphia won two World Series, New York won three. The Yankees won 677 games and lost 400 over those seven years for a .629 winning percentage. The Athletics, playing 10 fewer games resulting in a decision (not including games that ended in a tie because of darkness or weather), had a slightly higher .636 winning percentage, with 679 victories against 388 losses. In the five years between 1928 and 1932, including three straight pennants sandwiched by runner-up status to New York, Philadelphia's .662 winning percentage (505–258) is exceeded only by the 1906–10 Chicago Cubs (530–235, .693, four National League pennants and two World Series championships) for the highest over any five-year period in major-league baseball since 1901. No New York Yankees team over any five-year period—not with Ruth, not with Gehrig, not with DiMaggio, not with Mantle, not with Jeter—ever had as high a winning percentage as the 1928–32 Philadelphia Athletics.

The Athletics won more than 100 games in all three of their consecutive pennant seasons and were never challenged after mid-summer, winning decisively each year. In 1929, the Athletics blew open the pennant race early and inexorably built their lead from 9 1/2 games on July 4, to 10 1/2 games on August 1, to 12 1/2 games going into September, on their way to an 18-game final advantage (with 104 wins) that was nearly the equal of the 1927 Yankees' 19-game pennant romp. The 1930 Athletics actually trailed the unsuspected Washington Nationals (officially the Nationals, but better known as the "Senators") by a half-game on July 9 and 10, but were eight games in front by the end of the month and never looked back on their way to 102 wins and an eight-game margin of victory. And 1931 was 1929 all over again in Philadelphia's complete dominance of the league—12 games up by the end of July and 15 1/2 by the end of August. They wound up taking the pennant by *only* 13 1/2 games, but with the most wins of any of Connie Mack's 50 Philadelphia teams, including his great 1910–14 Athletics. Indeed, no team in franchise history—including after the A's moved to Oakland, via Kansas City—won more games than the 1931 Philadelphia Athletics.

The 1926–32 Yankees also won at least 100 games three times—consecutively in 1927 and 1928, and again in 1932—but cruised to the pennant decisively only twice: in 1927 (by the aforementioned 19 games) when they won 110 games and in 1932 (by 13) over Philadelphia. Their 107 wins in 1932 would remain the second-highest total in the Yankees' storied history until 1961. In their two other pennant-winning years, the

Yankees finished first by just three games over second-place Cleveland in 1926 and by only 2 1/2 over the late-charging Athletics in 1928, and in both those years, they allowed large leads to fade away.

In 1926, the Yankees had a 10-game lead on August 23, and led by eight as late as September 9, before holding on to win the pennant, possibly only by virtue of the big lead they built up early in the season. The 1926 Yankees had a losing record in the final two months of the season, going 25–29 in August and September. And in 1928, the Yankees were in command by 13 1/2 games on July 1, only to lose the entire lead and find themselves a half game behind Philadelphia on September 9, the start of a four-game series against the Athletics. As already mentioned, the Yankees took the first three of those games to move into first place for good. And in the three following seasons, when Philadelphia cleaned up on the American League, the Yankees were playing catch up from far behind early on and never challenged for the pennant. In 1930, the Yankees didn't even finish second; they came in third, behind second-place Washington.

POTENT PHILADELPHIA OFFENSE NO MATCH FOR YANKEES

With Cochrane, Simmons, and Foxx at the heart of the lineup, the Athletics were a dangerous club, particularly once Foxx became a regular in 1928. Thirty-five percent of their 505 victories during the five years from 1928 to 1932 were by blowout margins of five runs or more, but the Athletics did not once lead the league in scoring because, well, they were *not* the New York Yankees—the Bronx Bombers with their fabled Murderer's Row. After scoring the second-*fewest* runs in 1926, Philadelphia was third in scoring the next year, second from 1928 to 1930, third behind New York and Cleveland in 1931—despite setting what remains the franchise record for wins—and second to the Yankees by only 21 runs in 1932.

With Ruth and Gehrig being, well, Ruth and Gehrig, the Yankees dominated all of baseball offensively between 1926 and 1932, leading not just the American League but both major leagues in scoring in six of the seven years.⁴ Even when the Yankees finished third in runs in 1929—the year Philadelphia displaced New York at the top of the American League—they scored only 27 fewer runs than the Tigers, who led the league despite finishing in sixth place, and only two fewer than the Athletics. In 1930, the Yankees resumed their place as the team scoring more runs than anybody else and, moreover, became the first team in modern baseball history (or the first since the Boston Beaneaters in 1897, if you prefer) to score more than 1,000 runs, when they touched the plate 1,062 times—the first of three consecutive 1,000-run seasons.

In the six years they led the league in scoring between 1926 and 1932, the Yankees did so by an average margin of 92 runs.

The Yankees completely dominated the American League in offensive wins above replacement (WAR), according to data available on *Baseball-Reference.com*, leading by a substantial margin all seven years between 1926 and 1932.

Appropriately for being the “Bronx Bombers,” the Yankees led the league in home runs every year of this run except 1932, when the Athletics hit 172 to their 160 (Interestingly, the Ruth-Gehrig Yankees from 1925 to 1934 were not perennial major-league leaders in home runs. The National League’s Giants in 1925, Phillies in 1929, and Cubs in 1930 all hit more home runs than the Yankees.) Indicative of their clout, from 1926 to 1932 the Yankees won 38 percent of their total 677 victories by blowout margins—including an astonishing 44 of their 94 victories (47 percent) in 1931, a year in which they finished 13 1/2 games behind the Athletics *despite* outscoring Philadelphia by 209 runs. And why would that be?

YANKEES PITCHING AND FIELDING NOT IN PHILADELPHIA’S CLASS

Because, the Athletics had far better pitching and fielding than the Yankees. Philadelphia led the league in fewest runs allowed four times (1926, 1928, 1929, and 1931), was second in 1930, third in 1927, and fourth in 1932, when the Athletics finished second in the standings, but far behind the Yankees. In five of those seasons (all except 1927 and 1932), Connie Mack’s pitching staff collectively had the highest WAR for pitchers in the American League. Philadelphia pitchers accounted for 21 percent of the league’s total pitchers’ value from 1926 to 1932, and in all but 1927, the park effects at Shibe Park—the Athletics’ home field—was not favorable for pitchers.⁵ With Lefty Grove and George Earnshaw, who were first and second in the American League in strikeouts in each of their pennant-winning seasons, the Athletics were also the premier power-pitching team in baseball. The Athletics led the league in strikeouts for six straight years beginning in 1925, before finishing third in 1931 and second in 1932.

The Yankees pitching staff, meanwhile, was in transition from Waite Hoyt and Herb Pennock, their ace starters for three consecutive pennants from 1926 to 1928 and two of the best pitchers in the American League those three years, to Red Ruffing and Lefty Gomez, who were emerging by the pennant-winning year of 1932 as the foundation of what would prove to be an excellent

staff later in the 1930s. In between those years—when the Athletics were winning *their* three straight—the collective WAR for the Yankee pitching staff was dead last in the league in 1929 and 1930, and next-to-last in 1931. The 1926–32 Yankees led the league in fewest runs allowed only once (in the mythologized year of 1927), surrendered the second fewest in 1928 and 1932, and the third fewest in 1926 and 1931. They were fourth in 1929 and seventh in 1930.

TABLE 1: PITCHING WINS ABOVE REPLACEMENT

	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932
NY	10.7 (4)*	17.0 (1)*	12.4 (5)*	2.1 (8)	1.3 (8)	7.4 (7)	14.3 (2)*
Phila.	28.3 (1)	16.6 (1)	20.3 (1)	23.3 (1)*	18.0 (1)*	22.4 (1)*	13.6 (4)

(#) = pitching WAR ranking among the 8 AL teams

Yankees pitchers had less solid fielding behind them than the Athletics. New York was never better than second in fielding percentage and led the league in defensive efficiency (making outs on balls put into play) only in their historic 1927 season. In five of the seven years—including when they won three of their four pennants—the Yankees were below replacement-level performance in defensive WAR. The Athletics, by contrast, were never worse than third in fielding percentage (only once, in 1928), had the best league’s fielding percentage during each of their three straight pennants and in 1932 besides, and led the league in defensive efficiency in three of the four years between 1928 and 1931 (they were third-best in 1930).

TABLE 2: DEFENSIVE WINS ABOVE REPLACEMENT

	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932
NY	-1.5 (6)*	4.1 (1)*	-1.2 (6)*	1.9 (3)	-3.3 (7)	-0.4 (4)	-1.9 (6)*
Phila.	1.0 (3)	0.1 (4)	1.3 (2)	1.1 (5)*	1.4 (3)*	5.6 (1)*	2.6 (2)

(#) = pitching WAR ranking among the 8 AL teams

* = won AL pennant

TABLE 3: DEFENSIVE EFFICIENCY RECORD

	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932
NY	.691 (4)*	.701 (1)*	.689 (4)*	.691 (4)	.674 (5)	.690 (3)	.690 (5)*
Phila.	.692 (3)	.687 (4)	.700 (1)	.703 (1)*	.688 (3)*	.708 (1)*	.699 (2)

(#) = defensive efficiency ranking among the 8 AL teams

* = won AL pennant

Comparing the two teams specifically for the years 1928 to 1932, while the Yankees outscored the Athletics by an average of 81 runs per season, the strength of their pitching and fielding enabled Philadelphia to outpace the Bronx Bombers in outscoring *their game opponents* by an average of 232 runs annually to the Yankees’ 217-run annual margin. Throw in the 1926 and 1927

seasons, and the 1926–32 Yankees scored an average of 227 runs more than their game opponents, still not quite as productive as the Athletics from 1928 to 1932, but better than the A's average of outscoring their opponents by 198 runs per season over the entire seven years. The 1928–32 Athletics' superior defense gave them a better differential between runs scored and runs allowed than the 1926–32 Yankees.

PHILADELPHIA HAD AN ALL-AROUND STRONGER ROSTER

Our analysis so far shows the two teams comparable in terms of achievement between 1926 and 1932. The Yankees have an edge in winning four pennants to the Athletics' three during those seven years, but Philadelphia had a higher overall winning percentage. Moreover, our analysis suggests the Athletics, especially in the five years from 1928 to 1932, were a marginally more dominant team than the 1926–32 Yankees—despite the Bronx Bombers' overwhelmingly superior offensive WAR—because of their *three blowout pennants* and *much better* pitching and fielding. Nonetheless, while the names Ruth and Gehrig (and their long-ball exploits) have kept the Yankees of those years alive in historical memory, the Philadelphia Athletics—despite their own great players and string of championships—are largely a historical afterthought.

Taking account of the teams' core players—position regulars, starting pitchers, or oft-relied upon relievers for at least four seasons between 1926 and 1932, or on either of the three-straight pennant winners for all three years—the Yankees would seem to have a huge advantage with seven of their own enshrined in Baseball's Hall of Fame, compared to only four for the Athletics. And for the Yankees, that does not even include Hall of Fame pitchers Ruffing and Gomez. Red Ruffing did not don Yankee pinstripes until 1930, was on only one pennant-winner as a teammate of Gehrig *and* Ruth, and sealed his Hall of Fame legacy later in the decade with the Gehrig and Joe DiMaggio Yankees. Lefty Gomez made his debut with the Yankees in 1930, pitched badly and was sent to St. Paul in the second half of the season, then became a fixture on Manager Joe McCarthy's pitching staff in 1931, winning 21 that year and 24 the next—accounting for exactly half of the four 20-win seasons he put together in his career.

Three core regulars of the 1926–32 Yankees were the best in the American League at their position during all or most of this seven-year run—Gehrig at first base, Tony Lazzeri (even better than Charlie Gehringer for most of these years) at second, and Ruth as one of three outfielders. And those three, plus center fielder Earle Combs, were among the AL's 10 best position players between 1926 and

1932, based primarily on the WAR metric. In 1929, the Yankees introduced catcher Bill Dickey to the equation. While he immediately established himself as one of the best catchers in baseball, it would not be until the mid-1930s that he supplanted Mickey Cochrane as the best catcher in the league.

The Athletics had four of their core regulars among the league's 10 best position players during those years—Foxy, Simmons, Cochrane, and Bishop. In fact, Cochrane behind the plate and Simmons as one of three outfielders were the best at their positions for all or the majority of these seasons.⁶ Jimmie Foxx was such a great player in his own right, beginning in 1929, that it would be unreasonable not to consider him 1B to Gehrig's 1A as the best first baseman in baseball during this time. Coincidentally, neither the Yankees nor the Athletics had a particularly strong left side of the infield.

Two Philadelphia pitchers—Grove and Walberg—count among the five best in the American League between 1926 and 1932, based primarily on the WAR metric for pitchers. From 1928 to 1932, Grove made a strong case for having the best five-year stretch of any pitcher ever by winning 128 games while losing only 33 (that's a .795 winning percentage) and leading the league in earned run average the last four of those years, in strikeouts the first four, and this in the peak years of the hitters' era.⁷ Grove also led the league in ERA in 1926 and in strikeouts for seven consecutive years—beginning in his rookie season of 1925—before the Yankees' Red Ruffing took the K crown with two more than the Philadelphia Lefty in 1932. Walberg, another lefty, ever reliable, had his best seasons in 1929 (18–11) and 1931 (20–12). Earnshaw, meanwhile, was 67–28 in the Athletics' three pennant-winning seasons (for a .705 winning percentage), before beginning a relatively quick burnout at age 32 in 1932 when he went 19–13. Although the concept of dedicated relief pitchers was in its infancy at the time, the Athletics had Eddie Rommel (himself a formidable starter for most of the 1920s) pitching very well, mostly in relief during these years, although it was ace-starter Lefty Grove who more often than not was the “closer”—a term still about a half-century away from being coined.

None of the Yankees pitchers were among the five best in the league for the majority of the seven years between 1926 and 1932, although both Hoyt and Pennock had been from the early 1920s through the three consecutive pennants New York won from 1926 to 1928. The southpaw Pennock was 23–11, 19–8, and 17–6 those three years, and right-hander Hoyt went 22–7 and 23–7 in 1927 and 1928. Those, however, were the last of the best

seasons by either in a Yankee uniform.

TABLE 4: CORE REGULARS ON THE 1926–32 YANKEES AND ATHLETICS

	NEW YORK YANKEES	PHILADELPHIA ATHLETICS
1B	<i>Lou Gehrig, 1926-32</i> HOF	<i>Jimmie Foxx, 1928-32</i> HOF
2B	<i>Tony Lazzeri, 1926-32</i> HOF	<i>Max Bishop, 1926-32</i>
SS	Mark Koenig, 1926-29	Joe Boley, 1927-31
3B	Joe Dugan, 1926-28	
MPR		Jimmy Dykes, IF, 1926-32
LF	Bob Meusel, 1926-29	<i>Al Simmons, 1926-32</i> HOF
CF	<i>Earle Combs, 1926-32</i> HOF	Mule Haas, 1928-32
RF	<i>Babe Ruth, 1926-32</i> HOF	Bing Miller, 1928-32
C	Bill Dickey, 1929-32 HOF	<i>Mickey Cochrane, 1926-32</i> HOF
SP	Herb Pennock, 1926-32 HOF	<i>Lefty Grove, 1926-32</i> HOF
SP	Waite Hoyt, 1926-29 HOF	<i>Rube Walberg, 1926-32</i>
SP	George Pipgras, 1927-32	George Earnshaw, 1928-32
SP		Roy Mahaffey, 1930-32
SP-RP	Hank Johnson, 1928-31	Jack Quinn, 1926-30
RP		Eddie Rommel, 1926-31

MPR = multi-position regular (no set position from one year to the next)

Bold italicized players were the AL's best at their position for the majority of these years or among the AL's 10 best position players, five best starting pitchers, or best dedicated reliever between 1926 and 1932, based on the wins above replacement (WAR) metric and playing at least four years.

TABLE 5: BEST PLAYERS IN THE AMERICAN LEAGUE, 1926–32

(1-5) 10 BEST POSITION PLAYERS (6-10)		5 BEST PITCHERS
Babe Ruth, 1926-32	Goose Goslin, 1926-32	Lefty Grove, 1926-32
Lou Gehrig, 1926-32	Earle Combs, 1926-32	Wes Ferrell, 1929-32
Jimmie Foxx, 1928-32	Tony Lazzeri, 1926-32	Ted Lyons, 1926-32
Al Simmons, 1926-32	Charlie Gehringer, 1926-32	Alvin Crowder, 1926-32
Mickey Cochrane, 1926-32	Max Bishop, 1926-32	Rube Walberg, 1926-32

Based on average annual wins above replacement (WAR) value, consistency from year to year, and playing at least four years

All told, while the Yankees were a very impressive team, Ruth and Gehrig were the only players who had historically great years between 1926 and 1932. The Philadelphia Athletics, by contrast, had four core players in their prime with historically great years—Lefty Grove, Jimmie Foxx, Al Simmons, and Mickey Cochrane—even if none of the four measured up to Ruth and Gehrig.⁸ It may seem a heretical notion because the 1927 Yankees are an iconic team, but with four such all-time greats at the peak of their career and accomplishing what they did—three straight pennants, all by decisive margins—against the Bronx Bombers as their principal rival, the Philadelphia Athletics from 1926 to 1932 were probably the better team in context, notwithstanding Ruth and Gehrig (not to mention Lazzeri, Combs, and Dickey).

BREAKING UP THE COMPETITION: THE END OF THE ATHLETICS IN PHILADELPHIA

Just as he dismantled the 1910–14 Philadelphia Athletics for economic reasons in the midst of a grave recession, so did the Great Depression compel Connie Mack to break up his even better 1926–32 team in what would be the beginning of a very long end—more than two decades—for American League baseball in the City of Brotherly Love. This time, however, the breakup was less precipitous, and also less immediately calamitous. Of the four Hall of Famers who were the centerpiece of the team, Simmons was gone by 1933, Cochrane and Grove by 1934, and Foxx remained three more years before leaving Philadelphia in 1936. Of the other core regulars, Jimmy Dykes and Mule Haas were gone by 1933; Bishop, Earnshaw, and Walberg by 1934; and Bing Miller by 1935. (Bishop and Walberg were part of the deal that sent Grove to Boston). Philadelphia dropped to third in 1933 and fifth in 1934 before finding a home in the American League basement for seven of the next nine years.

Unlike the core players of the 1910–14 Athletics, most whom were still in their prime, the foundation players on Philadelphia's last great American League team were all on, or very close to, the downside of their career when Connie Mack said to them good-bye and good luck. Grove and Foxx played for eight and six years with the Boston Red Sox after they were traded away for bit players and (primarily) big money, and both had some excellent years with their new team, but no stretch of five consecutive seasons that would have given them the historical legacies (and Hall of Fame credentials) they earned in their time with the Philadelphia Athletics.

The New York Yankees, meanwhile, were financially on a more sound footing throughout the Depression years, shedding only those players they no longer needed or wanted. By 1935, that included the Babe himself, despite his iconic status in New York City. With excellent scouts, one of baseball's premier minor-league systems, and a trademark commitment to excellence, the Yankees were on the threshold of being the best they ever were. And when the team that still had Gehrig, Lazzeri, Dickey, Ruffing, and Gomez in pinstripes added Joe DiMaggio in 1936, it wasn't long before the New York Yankees—winning six pennants and five World Series in seven years from 1936 to 1942, before World War II claimed Mr. DiMaggio for the service, and another pennant and World Series without him in 1943—would eclipse the 1928–32 Philadelphia Athletics, with three straight pennants in the middle of those five years, as the best team in American League history through the first half of the twentieth century.

This time, unlike after he dismantled his first great team, Connie Mack did not invest in trying to rebuild a championship-caliber club. The ultimate question, of course, is: Could he have, if he wanted to, as the Great Depression ran its course? At the time, Philadelphia was one of five American cities with two major-league teams, one in each league. Of the five cities, only New York (which actually had three teams, if you include Brooklyn) and Chicago historically were consistently able to support two major-league teams with strong attendance for each relative to other teams in their league. In Philadelphia, on the other hand (as well as in Boston and St. Louis), attendance in most years was typically heavily skewed in favor of the city's more successful team at the time, with the other team at or near the bottom of its league's attendance and usually in financial straits. But at least until the Depression, the return on investment for putting together a competitive team—much easier said than done, of course—could turn around a financially troubled franchise, even with in-market competition from the other franchise, and all three cities had years where both teams had good attendance records.⁹

With 16 teams in 10 cities, an equal distribution of attendance per team would have been slightly more than 6 percent of the major-league total. For the five cities with two big-league teams, drawing a combined 10 percent of total attendance would seem to have been a reasonable threshold below which the city's capacity to support two teams would have to be considered problematic. For most of the first third of the twentieth century, this was never a problem for New York City and Chicago, and it wasn't for Philadelphia either. Except for the first half of the 1920s, when both the Athletics and the Phillies were in the dumps with very bad teams, the two franchises in most years combined for about 12 percent, and sometimes as much as 15 percent, of total major-league attendance, equaling or exceeding a notional equal distribution for two teams. The good citizens of Philadelphia might flock overwhelmingly to the ballpark of the better team, but the City of Brotherly Love was a large enough market for both when both the Athletics and Phillies had competitive teams.

With the Great Depression, the dynamic in Philadelphia changed for the worse. Most years from 1933 until 1945, the two Philadelphia teams combined for only about 7 percent of total attendance—barely above what one team alone should have drawn if attendance was equally distributed among the 16 teams. This clearly was not sufficient for a two-team market. And after the war ended and major-league attendance nearly doubled between 1945 and 1948, Philadelphia's combined share

remained below 10 percent, hovering between 8–9 percent. The Athletics and Phillies were nearly an equal draw in 1947 and 1949, but it probably seemed apparent to *owner* Connie Mack that Philadelphia was not a sustainable market for two major-league teams in the long run. ■

This article was adapted from the chapter on the 1926–32 Yankees and 1928–32 Athletics found on the author's website, www.thebestbaseballteams.com.

ENDNOTES

1. Norman L. Macht, *Connie Mack and the Early Years of Baseball* (University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 650–670.
2. Attendance figures from www.baseball-reference.com.
3. Macht, 650–652. In his comprehensive biography of Connie Mack, Norman L. Macht states that, economic issues aside, Mack was not inclined to stick with Plank and Bender because both were aging veteran pitchers whose best years he assessed were behind them.
4. The Yankees also led the league in scoring in 1933, although they finished second in the standings to Washington, seven games off the pace. Third-place Philadelphia was second in scoring.
5. Park factor values are included annually for each team's home ballpark in www.baseball-reference.com.
6. The author's identification of the American League's 10 best position players and five best pitchers between 1926 and 1932, based on playing at least four of those years, are derived from the wins above replacement (WAR) metric used by www.baseball-reference.com, but are not determined by highest cumulative or average annual WAR. The author instead rated players according to consistency of high-level performance. Heinie Manush, for example, had a higher cumulative and average WAR for 1926–32, but with two seasons (1927 and 1931) with a player value of 1.6 wins above replacement, he did not maintain as high a level of consistency as Max Bishop, who had only one season (1929, with credited with 1.7 wins above replacement), with such a low player value.
7. The pitcher most often compared to Grove for best five-year stretch was Sandy Koufax, who from 1962 to 1966 won 111 and lost 34 for a .766 winning percentage, led the National League in ERA all five years, in strikeouts three of the five years—failing to do so in 1962 and 1964 when arm problems limited him to 26 and 28 starts—and averaged 9.4 strikeouts per nine innings, with 1,444 strikeouts in 1,377 innings pitched.
8. In *The New Bill James Historical Baseball Abstract* (The Free Press, 2001), baseball historian and godfather of sabermetric analysis, Bill James, ranked Grove (number 19), Foxx (29), Simmons (71), and Cochrane (72) in the top 100 players of all-time based on his win shares methodology. Ruth (number 1) and Gehrig (14) were the only players on the Yankees between 1926 and 1932 who made James's best 100 list.
9. As Connie Mack steadily improved his team during the 1920s, average per-game attendance at Shibe Park soared from among the worst in the AL to consistently second behind the Yankees beginning in 1925 (when the Athletics actually led the league). Winning the 1929 pennant resulted in a 22 percent increase in home attendance for the Athletics, but the beginning years of the Depression resulted in a 14 percent decline when Philadelphia repeated as AL champions in 1930, another 13 percent drop when Mack's men won their three-peat in 1931, and a far more precipitate 35 percent decline in 1932 (third-best in the league), when the Athletics were still a baseball power but could not keep pace with the Ruth-Gehrig Yankees. Perhaps more to the point, per-game home attendance decreased from about 38 percent of Shibe Park's capacity in 1929 to only 16 percent of capacity in 1932—the Athletics' lowest level since 1919, when Mack's last-place team with its atrocious 36–104 record was the worst draw in the American League. (Data on attendance capacity at Shibe Park can be found in "Shibe Park Historical Analysis" on www.baseball-almanac.com. Annual and per-game attendance figures can be found for each team, each year in www.baseball-reference.com.)



The 1929 Mack Attack

Jimmy Keenan

As the 1929 major-league season came to a close, the two best teams in baseball prepared to do battle in the upcoming World Series. Joe McCarthy's National League champion Chicago Cubs cruised into October 11 games in front of the second-place Pittsburgh Pirates.

In the junior circuit, Connie Mack's Philadelphia Athletics racked up 104 victories and finished 18 games ahead of the New York Yankees. It was 11 years since the Cubs had played in the World Series, and even longer for the Athletics, who hadn't been to the postseason since 1914.

Mack had been the manager of the Philadelphia Athletics since their inaugural season in 1901. Under his guidance, the A's had won world championships in 1910, 1911, and 1913. Philadelphia was swept in the 1914 fall classic by the Boston Braves, and soon after, Mack began to dismantle his ballclub. A number of factors contributed to the major overhaul. First and foremost, the team was losing money because A's fans had grown so accustomed to winning, they stopped coming to the ballpark. There was also the newly formed Federal League, which was tempting Mack's players with higher salaries, plus his dissatisfaction with the team's poor performance in the 1914 Series.

One by one, Mack unloaded his high-priced stars. After suffering through years of futility, he slowly began to rebuild his franchise, and by 1929, Mack assembled what was arguably one of the best all-around teams in baseball history.

The mainstays of the 1929 Athletics pitching staff were George Earnshaw (24–8), Lefty Grove (20–6), and Rube Walberg (18–11). Earnshaw, an alumnus of Swarthmore College, led the junior circuit in wins, with Grove finishing third. Grove topped the loop in strikeouts (170) and Earnshaw (149) came in second. Mack purchased both pitchers from Jack Dunn, president and manager of the International League's Baltimore Orioles. Grove joined the A's in 1924 and Earnshaw followed suit in 1928. Rube Walberg was purchased from Portland in 1923.

The remainder of the Philadelphia mound corps consisted of a mix of veterans and rookies. Knuckleballer Eddie Rommel (12–2) was acquired from Newark of the

IL before the start of the 1920 season. Former New York Yankees spitballer Jack Quinn (11–9) joined the club in 1925. Rookie Bill Shores (11–6), who also saw time with Dunn's Birds, led the Athletics in saves (7). Well-traveled veteran Howard Ehmke (7–2) came over in a trade with the Boston Red Sox during the 1926 season. Carroll Yerkes (1–0), Ossie Orwoll (0–2), who was optioned to Milwaukee late in the season, and Bill Breckinridge (0–0) rounded out the staff. Mack's pitchers led both major leagues in strikeouts (573) and earned run average (3.44) in 1929.

Second baseman and leadoff hitter Max Bishop (.232, 3 HR, 36 RBIs) was another former Baltimore Oriole. An outstanding fielder with a great batting eye, Bishop was plagued with health issues and injuries for most of the season, but still managed to lead both major leagues with 128 walks. George "Mule" Haas (.313 BA, 16 HR, 82 RBIs) played center field and hit second. He came to Philadelphia in a deal with the Atlanta Crackers in 1927. Next in the batting order came catcher Mickey Cochrane, whose contract was purchased from Portland in 1924.

The cleanup man for Mack's Athletics was left fielder Al Simmons (.365 BA, 34 HR, 157 RBIs). Simmons, hampered by rheumatism in his legs for most of the year, led the American League in RBIs and total bases (373) while finishing second in batting. He was acquired from the Milwaukee Brewers in 1923. Jimmie Foxx (.354 BA 33 HR, 118 RBIs) followed Simmons in the order. Foxx broke into pro ball at age 16 with Easton in the Eastern Shore League in 1924. Frank "Home Run" Baker was Foxx's manager at Easton and it was his recommendation that led to Mack signing the young slugger in 1925.

Bing Miller batted sixth (.331 BA, 8 HR, 93 RBIs), and his 28-game hitting streak during the season was the longest in the majors. The Washington Nationals traded Miller to the A's in 1922. Mack dealt him to St. Louis in 1926 and then picked him back up the following year. Next in the lineup came versatile third baseman Jimmy Dykes (.327 BA, 13 HR, 79 RBIs), who could play every infield position. Dykes was acquired from the Gettysburg team in 1917. Shortstop Joe Boley (.251 BA, 2 HR, 47 RBIs) possessed great range in the field and hit eighth in

the order. Boley, who missed a number of games during the season with a sore throwing arm, was another Dunn prodigy, and was purchased from the Baltimore Orioles in the fall of 1926. Role players like Sammy Hale, Cy Perkins, Walt French, Homer Summa, Jimmy Cronin, and George Burns also contributed to the A's success in 1929.

On the other side of the diamond, Joe McCarthy took over a Cubs team that finished last in 1925. In four seasons he turned them into a pennant winner. Cubs owner and chewing gum magnate William Wrigley was the chief architect of the resurgence, spending nearly \$6 million putting together his ballclub.¹

The heart of the Chicago batting order, known as "Murderer's Row" or "The Four Horsemen," featured Hack Wilson, Kiki Cuyler, and Riggs Stephenson in the outfield, plus Rogers Hornsby (.380, 39 HR, 149 RBIs) at second base.

The other player on the right side of Chicago's infield was first baseman Charlie Grimm, the only southpaw swinger in the starting lineup. The left side was anchored by Woody English at shortstop and Norm McMillan at third base. Gabby Hartnett was the Cubs backstop, but a lame throwing arm limited him to 25 games during the season. With Hartnett laid up, the bulk of the catching fell upon veterans Zack Taylor and Mike Gonzalez.

The "Big Three" of the Cubs pitching rotation was made up of all right-handers. Pat Malone (22–10), who led the National League in wins, was the ace of the staff, followed by Charlie Root (19–6) and Guy Bush (18–7). Bush won 16 of his first 17 decisions but struggled late in the year.

Chicago's second-line starters consisted of hard-throwing Sheriff Blake (14–13), side-arming Hal Carlson (11–5), and lefty Art Nehf (8–5). Nehf had the most World Series experience of any Cub pitcher, but at age 37, his best days were behind him. This group of Bruin hurlers started 56 games and another handful of pitchers saw limited action during the year.

Chicago Cub fans flocked to Wrigley Field in record numbers during the 1929 campaign, setting a new major league mark for regular season attendance with 1,485,000.² In the days leading up to the opening game, the demand for tickets was so great that the Cubs management had to return over \$1.5 million in advance sales due to the lack of seating at the ballpark.³

The press box at Wrigley Field was expanded to accommodate the onslaught of sportswriters and 96 separate telegraph lines were run into the ballpark. There was also national radio coverage arranged by the Columbia and National Broadcast companies.

The Athletics arrived at Chicago in seven Pullman

cars on the afternoon of October 7. From the train station, they were driven to their quarters at the Edgewater Beach Hotel located on the shores of Lake Michigan.

Cubs manager Joe McCarthy announced days in advance that Charlie Root would be his starter in the first game. The hard-throwing hurler led the senior circuit in wins (26) and games pitched (48) in 1927. Root's win total dropped off the following year (14), but by 1929 he was back in form. Much of his success was attributed to a pitch he called the wrinkle ball.⁴

On Tuesday October 8, Connie Mack, who had told the press, "You'll know my pitchers 15 minutes before each game,"⁵ gave the nod to right-hander Howard Ehmke. The Cubs had a predominantly right-handed lineup, so Mack figured he would go with Ehmke, saving his fire-balling southpaws, Grove and Walberg, for relief roles.

A sore arm plagued Ehmke for most of the season and he logged just under 55 innings of work. In early August, Mack put the injured tosser on waivers, but none of the 15 major-league teams expressed an interest. With his options limited, Mack summoned Ehmke to his office, located inside the circular turret that sat atop Shibe Park on the corner of Lehigh and 21st Street, to inform him of his release.

After talking with his veteran pitcher, Mack decided to give him another chance. Ehmke was advised to work on getting his arm back in shape and, most importantly, he was given a special assignment. Looking ahead to the World Series, Ehmke was told to stay behind during the club's last Western road trip of the season. Mack instructed him to go over to the Baker Bowl and scout the Chicago Cub hitters who were coming to town to play a three-game series against the National League Phillies.

When the Athletics returned home, Ehmke reported to his manager with valuable information on the strengths and weaknesses of Chicago's powerful lineup. At that time, Mack asked the journeyman pitcher if he thought he could beat the Cubs. When the much-maligned hurler answered in the affirmative, the A's skipper replied, "Then you will."⁶

Over 50,000 fans descended upon Wrigley Field for the first game of the series. The weather was mild and there was a slight breeze blowing in from Lake Michigan. Commissioner Landis allowed the game to start 15 minutes later than scheduled due to the endless sea of humanity that was making its way through the grandstand turnstiles.

A few minutes before game time, Captains Eddie Collins and Charlie Grimm presented the lineup cards for their respective teams to home plate umpire Bill Klem (NL). The rest of the arbitrating crew was made up of Bill

Dineen (AL), Charlie Moran (NL), and Roy Van Graflan (AL).

Earle Mack and Kid Gleason were Mack's coaches, while Jimmy Burke and Grover Land formed McCarthy's brain trust. Cubs owner William Wrigley Jr. threw out the first pitch and the game was soon under way. Root, relying on his heater and infamous wrinkle ball, held the Athletics scoreless for the first six innings. Ehmke, tossing up a variety of slow, underhand curves, while mixing in an occasional fastball and change of pace, was equally effective. A's first baseman Jimmie Foxx finally broke the ice in the top of the seventh with a long home run that landed several rows up in the center-field bleachers.

Guy Bush relived Root in the eighth. The Athletics scored a pair of runs off Bush on consecutive errors by English and a two-RBI single from Bing Miller.

The Cubs scored a run in the ninth and were threatening to score more as pinch-hitter Chick Tolson stepped to the plate with two on and two out. With the count full on Tolson, Ehmke called catcher Mickey Cochrane out to the mound for a conference. Ehmke told Cochrane to call for a fastball and he would shake him off while releasing the ball at the same time. As the A's pitcher let go of the ball, Cochrane yelled, "Hit it," and Tolson swung and missed, closing out the game and preserving the 3-1 victory.⁷

Ehmke scattered eight hits and struck out a record 13 batters while earning the win, surpassing "Big Ed" Walsh's previous World Series record of 12 strikeouts, set back in 1906.

The Cubs vaunted offensive attack of Rogers Hornsby, Hack Wilson, and Kiki Cuyler each struck out twice and mustered only one hit between them. When asked about the trio's lack of production, Connie Mack responded, "Hornsby, Wilson, and Cuyler may be poison in the National League apothecary but they're just vanilla ice cream to me."⁸

On Wednesday, October 9, Cubs fans once again turned out en masse, and the attendance was right around 50,000. The sky was overcast and it was much colder than the previous day. There was also a stiff breeze blowing from the southeast, forcing the Wrigley faithful to wrap themselves in blankets, and in some cases newspapers, to keep warm.

Earnshaw started for the Mackmen and McCarthy countered with temperamental Irishman Pat Malone. The Cubs right-hander was considered to have one of the best fastballs in the National League, but he was known to come unraveled over bad calls by the umpires.

The A's jumped out in front in the third after Jimmie Foxx belted one of Malone's offerings into the left-field

bleachers with two men on, giving the Athletics a 3-0 lead.

Dykes led off the fourth with a single to right and Boley sacrificed him to second. Earnshaw tapped a grounder to English that he misplayed for an error. After a Bishop walk and an RBI groundout, Simmons knocked Malone out of the game with a two-run single to center field. Fred Blake took over the pitching duties and retired the side.

The Cubs bats came alive in the bottom of the fifth, scoring a brace of runs on five hits and a walk. Mack summoned Lefty Grove to replace Earnshaw, and he fanned pinch-hitter Gabby Hartnett for the last out.

Carlson relieved Blake in the sixth inning. The A's scored three more times, on an RBI single by Dykes in the seventh and a two-run blast by Simmons in the eighth that cleared the screen in right field. Nehf came in for Carlson and pitched a scoreless ninth.

Grove's fastball overpowered the Cubs for the last four innings and the game ended with the score at 9-3. Earnshaw was credited with the win.

Both teams left Chicago by train and, after a nearly 18-hour trip, arrived at North Philadelphia Station on the afternoon of Thursday, October 10. As the A's disembarked, they were hailed as conquering heroes by throngs of swarming fans.

There were a couple hundred Chicago supporters at the depot, but there was little fanfare associated with their reception. Wrigley spared no expense for his team, renting out an entire floor of the Benjamin Franklin Hotel in Philadelphia. The players had a private dining room that came with a chef and two assistants, plus the use of a gymnasium, as well as their own private elevator.⁹

Although rain had been in the forecast, Friday, October 11 dawned with a blue sky and warm temperatures. Some people stood outside of Shibe Park all night for a chance to buy the remaining \$1 seats. Fans with tickets began arriving around 11 a.m., and soon the park was filled to capacity (29,921). Around this same time, carpenters were driving home the last nails in the temporary bleachers that were constructed on the roofs of the brick row homes that were located behind the right-field fence on North 20th Street.

Connie Mack surprised many baseball pundits when he sent Game 2 starter George Earnshaw out to open the third contest. McCarthy, who was now waiting until the last minute to announce his starting pitcher, gave the nod to Guy Bush.

Philadelphia fans observed a minute of silence for the recently deceased Miller Huggins, late manager of the Yankees, and soon after, home plate umpire Charlie

Moran yelled play ball.

Hack Wilson led off the second inning with a three-bagger that landed near the center-field flagpole. Wilson attempted to score on a Stephenson grounder, but Max Bishop gunned him out at the plate.

The Athletics drew first blood in the bottom of the fifth when Cochrane beat out an infield hit and later scored on a Bing Miller single. Miller, who pilfered 24 bags during the season, tried to steal second but was caught in the act to end the inning.

In the top of the sixth, Bush, who hit .165 during the season, worked a walk off Earnshaw. After a foul out, Woody English batted a slow grounder to Jimmy Dykes at third. Dykes bobbled the ball and all hands were safe. Hornsby lashed a single past shortstop Joe Boley that scored Bush. English was held at second. Wilson was then put out on a fantastic play by Bishop, with both runners moving up a base. The next batter, Cuyler, smacked a high bouncer over Earnshaw's head that accounted for two more runs.

That was the extent of the scoring by both clubs. When the final out was recorded, Chicago was ahead, 3-1. Bush, who worked his way out of numerous jams, went the distance, scattering nine hits, striking out four, and walking two.

Earnshaw, except for his lapse in the sixth, pitched a fine game. He allowed six hits in nine innings, walked four, and struck out 10 Cubs.

After the game, McCarthy admitted to the press that he sent former Cubs great Joe Tinker to Shibe Park to scout the A's hitters during their last regular-season series, against the Yankees. Mack, who somehow found out Tinker's intentions, instructed Jimmie Foxx to swing at and miss the high balls he normally feasted on. The A's crafty manager also passed the word for certain players to lay off their favorite pitches. Tinker watched the A's hitters, and reported back to McCarthy with an inaccurate scouting report. This led to Foxx getting nothing but high pitches in the first two games of the series.

The Cubs caught a break when an unnamed American League pitcher tipped McCarthy off about Mack's ploy on the train ride to Philadelphia.¹⁰ Realizing that he had been duped, the Cubs manager instructed his Game 3 starter Guy Bush not to throw any more high pitches to Foxx.

On Saturday, October 12, another sold-out crowd packed into Shibe Park for Game 4. Forty five-year-old Jack Quinn started for the Athletics and Charlie Root took the mound for the Cubs. Quinn battled his way through the first three innings, but Chicago nicked him for two runs in the fourth. He was banished to the showers in the sixth after giving up four straight singles to the Cubs'

"Murderer's Row" that resulted in two more Bruin runs. Walberg came in from the bullpen, and by the time the dust cleared, five men had crossed the plate.

Eddie Rommel relieved Walberg in the seventh. Chicago pushed across another marker against Rommel, but their hopes of a bigger rally were dashed by a great stop by Dykes that he turned into an inning-ending double play.

Root, meanwhile, had the A's hitters at his mercy for the first six innings. With the score 8-0, the situation was looking bleak when the Athletics came to bat in the bottom of the seventh.

By this time on a fall afternoon in Philadelphia, the sun was setting directly over the grandstand behind home plate. Even the pitchers were having a tough time fighting off the glare. Simmons led off the seventh with a towering home run that banged off the roof in left field. Foxx, Miller, Dykes, and Boley followed with singles that brought home a pair of runs. Miller's hit was a short fly to Wilson in center, but the glare of the sun affected his ability to make the play. George Burns, who pinch-hit for Rommel, popped out to temporarily halt the rally. Bishop followed with an RBI single over second that knocked Root out of the game. Nehf came in and the next batter, Mule Haas, lifted a high fly to center field. For the second time in the inning, Wilson lost the ball in the sun. As he chased after the elusive horsehide, Haas was racing around the bases.

There was bedlam in the Athletics' dugout as Haas slid across home plate. Jimmy Dykes, in a state of euphoria, turned around and slapped the closest person on the back. Unfortunately, it was 67-year-old Connie Mack, who went sprawling into the bat rack. While Dykes was apologizing, Mack told him, "That's all right Jimmy, anything goes at a time like this, ain't it wonderful?"¹¹

Nehf seemed unnerved after the inside-the-park home run. After walking the next batter, he was replaced by Sheriff Blake. Simmons followed with a hard-hit ball to short that bounced over English's head for a single. Foxx followed with a base knock to center that tied the game. McCarthy had seen enough of Blake and summoned Pat Malone to the mound. Malone started off by nailing Bing Miller in the ribs to load the bases.

Dykes was up next, and he cracked a Malone speedball to deep left field. The ball glanced off Stephenson's fingertips and rolled to the wall, with two runs scoring on the play. Malone recovered to fan Boley and Burns, but the damage was done.

Grove closed out the game with a pair of scoreless innings, striking out four of the six Cubs he faced. After the game, an emotional Mack called the 10-run

seventh inning, “The greatest thrill I had in 29 years of managing.”¹²

There was no game on October 13 as Philadelphia’s blue laws prohibited the playing of any sporting events on Sunday.

On Monday, October 14, Mack waited until a half-hour before game time to inform Ehmke, who was in street clothes sitting in the stands, that he was the starter. Within minutes, Ehmke was in uniform and warming up on the sidelines.¹³

McCarthy handed the ball to his talented, yet sometimes excitable, right-hander, Pat Malone. Once again, Shibe Park was filled to capacity. The pregame festivities included the arrival of President Herbert Hoover and his party. The fans cheered heartily for their Commander in Chief, but it was the height of prohibition and the chant of “we want beer” could be heard throughout the ballpark.¹⁴

Neither team scored until the fourth inning when the Cubs got to Ehmke for a pair of runs. Rube Walberg was summoned from the bullpen and struck out Malone to end the rally. Walberg held the Cubs scoreless for next five stanzas, retiring the first 10 men he faced.

Malone breezed through the A’s lineup, taking a two-hit shutout into the bottom of the ninth. Former West Point football star Walt French, pinch-hitting for Walberg, went down swinging for the first out. Max Bishop followed with a single over third. The next batter, Mule Haas, crushed Malone’s first offering, a waist-high fastball, over the right-field wall for the game-tying home run. The ball landed on North 20th Street and bounded onto the porch of one of the brick row houses. Shibe Park shook to its concrete and steel foundation as nearly 30,000 screaming fans howled in delight. While Bishop and Haas were circling the bases, Malone was yelling at catcher Zack Taylor over what some in the crowd perceived to be his dissatisfaction over the pitch selection.

McCarthy came out of the Cubs’ dugout to calm Malone down and break the A’s growing momentum. Malone induced a ground out from Cochrane, and for a moment, it looked like the game would go into extra innings. But, the next batter, Simmons, kept the rally going by smashing a two-bagger off the scoreboard in right-center field. McCarthy came back out to the mound and after a brief conference, they decided to walk Foxx and pitch to Bing Miller.

After working the count to two balls and two strikes, Miller lined a Malone curveball over Hornsby’s head.¹⁵ The sphere landed safely in the grass between Cuyler and Wilson as Simmons galloped home with the winning run, clinching Mack’s fourth world championship.

The Athletics, including their normally reserved manager, rushed out of the dugout to greet Simmons as he crossed the plate. Even the mayor of Philadelphia, the honorable Harry A. Mackey, ran on the field to join the celebration. President Hoover and his entourage were also caught up in the excitement, applauding enthusiastically from their special box next to the A’s dugout.

Connie Mack wrote in his newspaper column the next day, “To my players must go full credit for the victory. They won the American League pennant brilliantly and didn’t lag a bit in the world’s series. They kept their heads up, fought to the last and won the big title with the most amazing display of courage in winning games apparently lost that was ever seen in the classic.”¹⁶

The attendance for the five games was 190,490, resulting in gate receipts of \$859,494.¹⁷

Dykes led the Athletics with eight hits in the series and a .421 batting average. Foxx, Simmons, and Haas supplied the power, each swatting two home runs. Hornsby fanned eight times, while Cuyler went down swinging on seven occasions. McMillan and English whiffed six times apiece. Wilson paced the Cubs with a .471 batting average. Malone, who lost two of the four contests, led all Chicago pitchers with 11 strikeouts. Twenty-four previous World Series records were either broken or tied, with many of the new marks set during the Athletics’ 10-run seventh inning of Game 4.

On Friday, October 18, the Chamber of Commerce and the Philadelphia Sports Writers Association, along with city officials, held a dinner at the Penn Athletic Club Ballroom in honor of the new world champions. Mayor Mackey was the toastmaster and there were over 1,200 people in attendance. Collins and Mack received radios, and the City of Philadelphia gave wristwatches to every member of the ballclub.¹⁸

Most of the players and coaches spoke to the audience that evening. Mack closed his remarks by saying that his club was successful because it wasn’t a one-man team. Eddie Collins stood up and said, “I want to take issue with Mr. Mack on that account.” The club’s captain went on to say, “Fans often ask me to compare the A’s championship team of former years with the present aggregation. Both were one-man teams and the one man responsible for the A’s success is the beloved Connie Mack.”¹⁹

A few weeks later, controversy arose when Jimmy Dykes spoke at a Delaware County Real Estate Board luncheon. Dykes told the board members that he and his fellow teammates were stealing the Cubs’ signs from catcher Zack Taylor for most of the series. Dykes’ claims certainly have a ring of truth, as A’s third-base coach Eddie Collins is considered to be one of the best sign-stealers of all time.

Cubs manager Joe McCarthy scoffed at the idea, telling reporters, "If my men knew what the pitchers were going to throw, they'd make so many runs in the very first inning; they'd have to get an eviction notice to put the side out." The Cubs manager went on to ask that if the Athletics knew the Cubs' signs, why did they wait so long to score in Games 4 and 5?²⁰

Dykes' statements aside, the Athletics won because they outplayed the Cubs in every facet of the game.

Years later, Mack told a group of New York sportswriters that the greatest manager of all time was his opponent in the 1929 fall classic, Joe McCarthy. When informed of Mack's statement, McCarthy replied, "Connie was very kind to say that. But, let's not kid each other. There is one man who is baseball's greatest manager and no one else can be spoken of in the same breath. And his name is Connie Mack."²¹ ■

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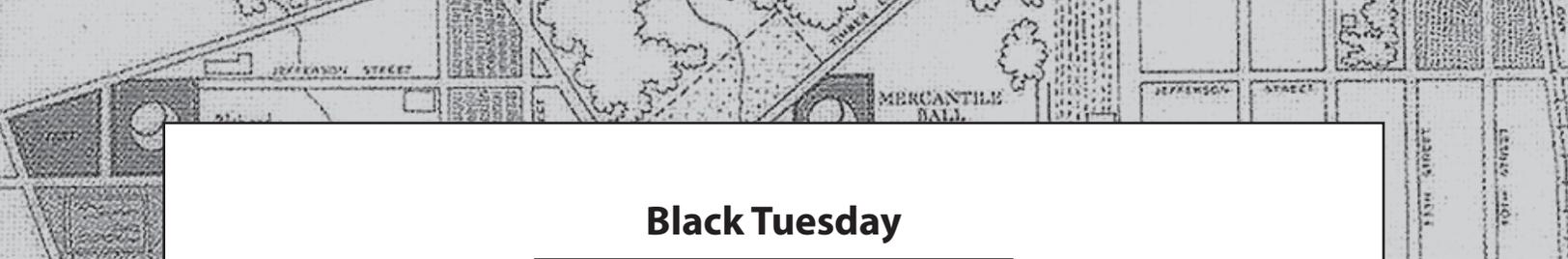
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Black Tuesday

David Jordan

December 1933 in Philadelphia was a time of anxiety and anticipation. In the city, as in the rest of the country, there was a sense of hope as the measures of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal started to have an effect on the worst of the Great Depression. Money became a bit more available, jobs opened up a little, and the people of the city and its surroundings allowed themselves to hope that the economy was improving.

Philadelphia's baseball fans hoped to see fortunes improve, too. But they were aware that their Phillies were not improving—the club had just traded away its big star, Chuck Klein—and their Athletics seemed to be declining from their championship stature of a couple of seasons back. The fans followed the news to see what else was going on around town.

On the fifth of the month, at exactly 5:32 p.m. Eastern Time, Prohibition had come to an end, as Utah officially ratified the 21st Amendment to the Constitution. Of course, the headline in the December 6 *Philadelphia Inquirer* read “PRICES HIGH, SUPPLY LOW IN PHILA.” There was an inevitable hassle, as the newly created State Liquor Control Board granted only 10 of the 231 new liquor stores in the state to Philadelphia. The squawks to Harrisburg were loud enough that the next day the state's largest city was awarded nine more stores.¹

On December 10, 53-year-old Bill Roper, an Independent Republican city councilman and the legendary former football coach at Princeton, died of a blood infection at his home. Roper had been instrumental in passage of the recent legislation legalizing Sunday sports in Pennsylvania, which the city's voters had approved in a referendum a month earlier.

The movie theatres in town were featuring shows like “One Sunday Afternoon,” with Gary Cooper and Fay Wray at the Rialto in Germantown; Constance Bennett in “After Tonight” at the Earle; and the Marx Brothers in “Duck Soup” at the Stanley. The comic strips in the local newspapers included “Winnie Winkle,” “Bringing Up Father,” “Mutt and Jeff,” “Tillie the Toiler,” “Blondie,” and “Moon Mullins.” So there were things available for folks to take their minds off the state of the economy.

Another major outlet for Philadelphians was baseball.

Through the early 1920s, both of the city's ballclubs, the Phillies and Connie Mack's Athletics, were pretty bad. In the middle of the decade, Mack rebuilt his team so successfully that the 1929 A's, winners of the World Series over the Chicago Cubs, are often considered the best baseball team of all time. In 1930, the A's repeated their World Series triumph, and in 1931, after winning their third straight pennant, they came very close to a third Series win in a row, losing to St. Louis, four games to three.

In 1932, the team won 94 games, but finished second in the AL behind a rejuvenated New York Yankee squad. Slugging star Jimmie Foxx belted 58 home runs and was voted the American League's Most Valuable Player. With attendance dropping, though, due as much to the Depression as anything, Mack saw the red ink piling up on his ledgers, and traded off some star players—Al Simmons, Mule Haas, and Jimmy Dykes—for cash.

The A's of 1933 dropped off a bit more, finishing third, with attendance down some more, though Foxx did win the Triple Crown, leading the AL in batting average, home runs, and runs batted in, on the way to a second MVP Award. The club still had the best pitcher around, Robert “Lefty” Grove, who won 24 in 1933, the best catcher in the game in Mickey Cochrane, and some good-looking additions in Mike Higgins, Bob Johnson, and Doc Cramer. With the coming of Sunday baseball, A's fans looked ahead to more successful seasons.

1933 even brought some good feelings to Phillies fans. Though the club finished a distant seventh in the National League, it too featured a Triple Crown winner in outfielder Chuck Klein, who not only led the circuit in batting average, homers, and RBIs, but also in hits, slugging percentage, and total bases. Klein had been the league MVP in 1932, but somehow his Triple Crown honors could not win him a repeat in '33, with the Giants' Carl Hubbell winning that prize.

While Philadelphians were going about their usual business—a police raid on the headquarters of a West Philadelphia bookmaking ring, the annual Temple University music department concert, and the election of officers of the Union League—the leaders of baseball were gathering in Chicago for the annual meetings.

One leader not there was Thomas S. Shibe, president of the Athletics and a director of the American League. Shibe, as James Isaminger of the *Inquirer* reported it, was in St. Agnes Hospital for an operation on a head infection. While the procedure was not considered serious, Shibe did not go to the league meeting.²

There was much talk in Chicago about the Philadelphia clubs and their money problems. The A's attendance in 1933 was 297,138, down from a high of 839,176 in 1929, and the club was still paying some high salaries. The Phillies' gate in 1933 was only 156,421, but they were more used to such low numbers. And on November 21, the Phillies, as mentioned, had shipped Klein off to the Cubs for three inconsequential players and cash.

Early on December 12, Cy Peterman of the *Evening Bulletin* described what was going on in Chicago: "The tall and angular figure of Connie Mack, nearing his 71st birthday as he approaches this annual meeting of leaders in the game to which he has devoted most of his life, took on colossal proportions as he reached Chicago today. Arriving in Chicago at 8:20 Manager Mack delayed the suspense further when he said he would have nothing to announce until 6 o'clock this evening, which would be 7 o'clock in Philadelphia. He gave no further hint of what his announcement would be."³

There were plenty of rumors floating around the Palmer House as Mack arrived. Everyone in the American League was familiar with the A's money problems, and it was assumed that Mack, "the Tall Tactician," would have to do something. There had been reports of Cochrane going to Detroit to become the Tigers' new manager, but whether that would come to pass or not would have to await Mack's announcement. There was talk, too, of George Earnshaw and Rube Walberg, pitching stalwarts for some years, being on the market, and even the possibility of Grove being sold, but that looked unlikely.

Isaminger wrote sourly that "to lose Grove, Walberg and Earnshaw at one meeting would cost the Athletics nearly all of their seasoned pitching material and Mack would have to start the 1934 playing season with a more or less green staff."⁴

Late in the day, Connie Mack told a group of Philadelphia scribes what had happened. "We sold Grove and Walberg and Bishop to the Boston Red Sox," he said, "and they give us Kline and Warstler." He went on, "We sold Cochrane to Detroit and got Pasek in return. We sent Earnshaw to Chicago, with Pasek, and get catcher Berry from them. That's all."

"But what about the cash?" he was asked.

"That's all I have to say," he repeated, his face

tightening as he turned away.

The reporters checked with the other teams involved, checked with each other, assessed what Mack had told them, and were finally able to put it all together for the next day's papers.

"In a series of spectacular deals," reported the *Inquirer* the next day, "the Athletics tonight officially announced transfers of five of their most valuable players that brings to them virtually a quarter of a million dollars and at the same time weakens the team in three departments."

Three players—Lefty Grove, Rube Walberg, and veteran second baseman Max Bishop—were sent to the Boston Red Sox for cash, right-handed pitcher Bob Kline, and infielder Harold "Rabbit" Warstler. Warstler had batted .211 and .217 the prior two seasons, and Kline was 7–8 with a 4.54 ERA in 1933, so clearly the deal was made for the cash.

Cochrane went to the Tigers, who promptly signed him to a two-year contract to manage and catch. In return, the A's received \$100,000 and a catcher named Johnny Pasek, who had caught in only 28 games for Detroit and was quickly included in the next deal. And that was George Earnshaw and Pasek to the White Sox for \$15,000 and catcher Charlie Berry.

A Philadelphia baseball writer watched what he called "Connie Mack's bitterest hour." He entered the room where the reporters waited, invited by Eddie Collins, once Mack's star infielder, now the general manager of the Red Sox. Mack was "pale, so pale and gray and old, that even for old Connie he looked frail and wasted." He had "just announced the greatest disposal of stars that baseball ever saw. More than a quarter million dollars worth of baseball aces whose deeds will ring through the years, once his, all now no longer his. His voice shook and his hand trembled so that the papers within it quivered, rustling slightly." The writer summed it up: "Connie had no further words.... In a hurried half-whispered sentence he said he had sold out." Then the old man walked away.⁵

The banner headline across the December 13 *Inquirer*, "COCHRANE, GROVE SOLD IN \$250,000 DEAL," greeted Philadelphia's baseball fans, as they and the writers who covered the team tried to assess what it was all going to mean. Mack declined to make any more comments on the deals and said he would have nothing to say until he returned to Philadelphia.

The first thing, of course, was that Mack and the Shibes were going to pay off that \$225,000 bank indebtedness. That was the best part of things for the Athletics. The rest of it looked pretty bad. The club still had Foxx and Johnson and Higgins, but it had little pitching remaining. As one writer put it, "Grove gone. Cochrane

gone. Walberg, Bishop, Earnshaw gone. Simmons gone. Haas and Dykes. Since 1925 those names were as much of Mack and his plans as the scorecard upon which he wrote them.”⁶

Lefty Grove, contacted by phone after the trade was announced, said, “Well, that’s great and I’m sure tickled to hear it.” He continued, “I expect I’ll have many more years of pitching without losing any stuff.” George Earnshaw said, “I am now content ... I don’t like the idea of leaving the Athletics, but you must go where they send you in baseball.” Max Bishop commented, “It’s all in the game and if Connie sold me to Boston well and good.”⁷

Mickey Cochrane, after he had signed his contract with Detroit, even approached Mack to see if he could secure a trade for Mike Higgins, but the A’s owner quickly refused: “I would break up my team,” he said, somewhat ironically, “if I let Higgins, the best third baseman in baseball, go.”⁸

The fans in Philadelphia were stunned by the trades. They had heard some of the rumors that something was coming, but they hardly imagined the wholesale liquidation of star players that happened. Their team had quickly gone from a first-division contender to a sure also-ran. “Scattered to the four winds, the once proud Athletics,” wrote Cy Peterman. “That is the tragic finish of the last great baseball machine molded by Cornelius McGillicuddy.”⁹

In an editorial, the *Inquirer* stated that “the announcement that he (Mack) has made a series of spectacular deals by which he gives up five of his stars in return for about a quarter of a million dollars and several players will cause moaning and groaning from thousands of the patrons of the game in Philadelphia.”¹⁰

The moaning and groaning was loud and persistent, and with good reason. For the followers of the Philadelphia Athletics, 1934 developed as they feared it would. Attendance actually increased by about 8,000, but this increase was generally attributed to Sunday baseball. The team fell into the second division, finishing in a distant fifth place with a record of 68–82. Foxx hit .334 with 44 home runs, and Higgins, Cramer, and Bob Johnson all hit well over .300. It was the pitching staff that did them in: No one won more than 14 games and none had an earned run average below 4.41. Grove, Earnshaw, and Walberg were gone, replaced by the likes of John Marcum, Joe Cascarella, Bill Dietrich, and Sugar Cain.

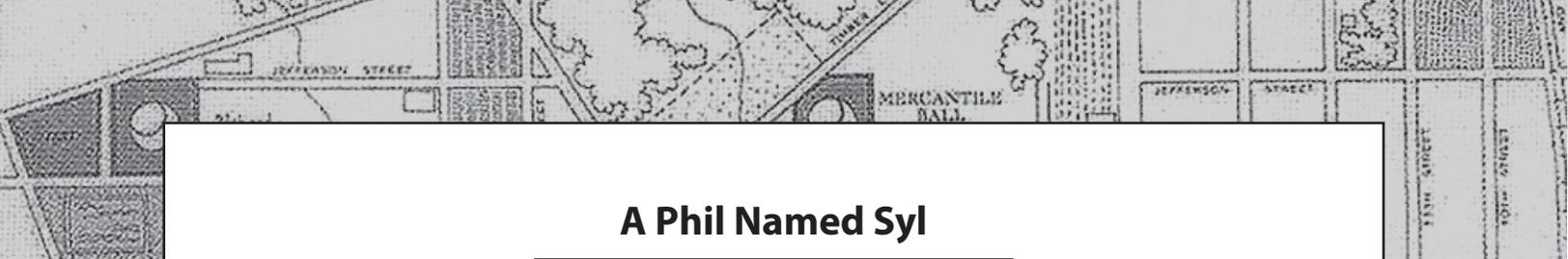
In 1935, the A’s collapsed into the AL cellar, with a record of 58–91, five and a half games behind the seventh-place Browns. Jimmie Foxx led the league with 36 home runs and hit .346, but the pitching was once again poor.

Last place became a bad habit for Connie Mack’s

Athletics. In the next eight years, the Mackmen finished last six times, and seventh the other two seasons. Mack managed for 17 more years, and finished 10 of them in last place. The club remained in the city through 1954, but did not win an American League pennant after 1933. This tumble into the nether regions of the American League had commenced on “Black Tuesday,” December 12, 1933. ■

ENDNOTES

1. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Dec. 6, 7, 8, 1933.
2. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Dec. 10, 1933.
3. *Evening Bulletin*, Dec. 13, 1933.
4. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Dec. 12, 1933.
5. Cy Peterman, *Evening Bulletin*, Dec. 13, 1933.
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A Phil Named Syl

Matthew Clifford

The famous city of Philadelphia totes the title the City of Brotherly Love for many reasons. One intention might refer to a friendship between a pitcher and a catcher that would last for 19 years. The catcher was Jimmie “Ace” Wilson, a backstop born and bred in the great state of Pennsylvania. In the fateful year of 1928, Ace found himself crouched behind home plate at St. Louis’ Sportsman’s Park, a place where his mitt would feel peppered twirls from a quiet, skinny hurler named Sylvester Johnson. The batterymates would occupy the St. Louis Cardinals roster for six years. During that time, Sylvester and Jimmie developed a bond that was solidified with skillful communication, talent, and good humor.

Sylvester “Syl” Johnson was born in Portland, Oregon on December 31, 1900. By the time Syl was eight years old, he and his younger brother Norman were regular players at the local sandlots. At that time, Sylvester preferred the duties as the team’s catcher, but his choice of position changed dramatically after a hot pitch smashed him in the mouth, knocking his teeth loose and his awareness out cold. Johnson quickly realized that he would be safer on the other side of home plate, as a pitcher. Syl’s father worked as a sawyer at a lumber mill near Portland’s Willamette River, and the father would soon receive his son’s assistance.

Sylvester contributed to the Johnson family till by dropping out of high school and working at a paper mill adjacent to his father’s. Moments after the bell rang at the end of his work day, Syl brushed the sawdust from his shoes and pedaled his bicycle back to the sandlots. He soon found himself playing semi-pro baseball for Portland’s financially powerful United Artisans. Johnson was immediately recognized for his side-armed fastball while he worked with the Advanced Junior Artisan team. Portland’s newspaper, *The Oregonian*, took notice of Syl’s skills on the mound and the youngster’s name appeared in press ink that would soon change his life forever. Throughout the AJA’s 1918 and 1919 seasons, young Syl cut every article from the newspapers and created a personal scrapbook resume of his baseball talents. In 1920, Johnson’s bicycle wheels crossed a bridge over the Willamette River to the Vaughn Street Park, the home of

the minor-league Portland Beavers. With his scrapbook in hand, Johnson pleaded with Beavers boss Walter “Judge” McCredie for a chance to attend spring training with the club.

McCredie ordered his star pitcher, Harvey “Suds” Sutherland, to catch Johnson’s twirls during the short audition. After several fastballs were fired into Sutherland’s mitt, McCredie gave Johnson the invite he was hoping for.

Syl’s inexperience and lack of control soon forced the Judge to send the youngster away for some Canadian seasoning with the Vancouver Beavers shortly after the 1920 schedule began. Sylvester worked under the command of Vancouver skipper Bob Brown who taught Syl to control his wild right arm. McCredie reviewed Johnson’s progress and invited the skinny kid back to the Portland roster in 1921. The Portland pilot let Sylvester handle 304 innings in the ’21 season, and Johnson earned 12 wins and 26 losses.

Although his won-loss record worked against him, the skinny kid wasn’t completely at fault. Regardless of Johnson’s well-controlled golden righty, the Portland Beavers had difficulty scoring in 1921. Similar to 1920, the Beavers finished dead last. The McCredie family finally gave in to their bad luck, and booing Portland crowds, by selling the team to a former president of the Seattle Rainiers, William “Billy” Klepper.

Before making his permanent exit in November, Judge McCredie told *The Sporting News*: “I look for Johnson to be one of the best pitchers in the Pacific Coast League next season. Within five years he will be one of the greatest pitchers in the country. Just paste that prediction on the wall and see if I’m not right.”¹ New boss Billy Klepper saw things differently when the topic of Syl was discussed. Prior to the sale of the Portland club, Detroit talent scout Eddie Herr took notice of Sylvester and another Portland twirler, Herman Pillette.

Herr contacted Detroit president Frank Navin and insisted that Johnson and Pillette were the finest hurlers on the West Coast. Bird dog Eddie attempted to sway McCredie in October, but Mack adamantly refused to give up Johnson. Navin met with Klepper in early December and acquired Johnson and Pillette for \$40,000 in cash and

eight players from the Detroit ballclub—Boss Klepper had pocketed a third of his Portland investment and an octet of Motor City players before the 1922 season began. Sylvester's name made headlines around the country, getting top billing in the most famous baseball transaction of 1921, "The Johnson-Pillette Deal." Sylvester's first order of Detroit business involved a lengthy barnstorming tour with the Rochester Tribe from New York. Early into the trip, Johnson's life changed forever.

During an exhibition game against the Tribe, Syl tossed a side-arm bullet to a Rochester batter who hit a line-drive boomerang back to the mound. The fateful ball slammed against Johnson's right arm, crushing the bones joining his wrist and hand. Poor Syl believed that Ty Cobb would send him and his useless appendage back to Portland once the barnstorming tour was completed, but he didn't. It seemed that Cobb agreed with Walter McCredie's fervent faith in Syl Johnson. The Peach decided to keep the crippled kid on Detroit's 1922 roster.

In July, Sylvester spent more time on the bench after part of his tonsils were removed. Weeks after he was given medical clearance to return to the game, Syl got cracked on the elbow after a fellow Tiger sent the boomerang ball back to the mound during batting practice. After he pitched the last game of the season, Johnson was credited with a 7–3 record. Days after returning to his hometown of Portland, Syl married his sweetheart, Ruth Heitsman. Johnson was invited back to the Tigers in 1923.

About a week before the season began, Syl accidentally let go of a bat during routine batting practice. It spun erratically from Johnson's grip and landed on the leg of a fellow teammate: Detroit's famous center fielder and Syl's faithful boss, Ty Cobb.

On September 19, 1923, Syl experienced a bittersweet game against the Philadelphia Athletics. That day he smacked his first major-league home run. His luck ran out a few innings later while he took the mound and pulled ligaments in his golden righty. Johnson took the bench again. Sylvester finished the 1923 season with the Cobbmen, earning a 12–7 pitching record. Detroit then kept him on the roster in 1924 and 1925.

In June of 1924, Johnson threw the pitch that resulted in Babe Ruth's 253rd career home run. The Peach's faith in Johnson faded completely after another jinx found the pitcher in May of 1925. Johnson appeared in five games and earned himself a 0–2 record before his last game in Detroit stripes. Bad luck arrived in Comiskey Park's batter's box in the form of Bibb Falk while Syl was on the mound. Falk, who took "Shoeless" Joe Jackson's left-field position in 1921, slammed a line drive directly into Sylvester's left eye.

Sylvester mentioned his catastrophic injury in a 1978 interview: "We had a big lead going in the ninth inning. Bibb Falk hit a line drive; hit me right there. Fractured eight bones. The ball rolled over to first base, ... picked the ball up. Knocked me down. Just a line drive. A flash. So I got up. Fred Haney was on third base and he come over ... and he got a hold of me. Blood was just pouring out. After that happened they thought I was through."²

Falk's liner knocked Syl back into the minor leagues in late June. After three weeks to heal in the Windy City, Johnson was shipped to California to play for the Vernon Tigers and answer to his new boss, Bill Essick. Syl suffered on the mound as the vision in his left eye adjusted. With his recovery and a scarred cheekbone, Sylvester turned in an atrocious 3–17 record in the PCL minors. At the end of the 1925 season, St. Louis Cardinals scout Charlie Barrett saw something interesting in Sylvester Johnson and he convinced Cardinal bosses Sam Breadon, Branch Rickey, and manager Rogers Hornsby to give the unlucky pitcher a chance on the 1926 roster. Barrett's persistence worked, but Syl's good luck turned sour in May after Cincinnati's new first baseman, Wally Pipp, smacked one of Johnson's bullets back to the mound. Sylvester sustained a broken toe on his right foot.

Unlucky Johnson took his familiar place on the bench while the rest of the Cardinals fought their way to the 1926 World Series. Just as Syl's toe finished healing, more bad luck appeared after his teammate Bob O'Farrell hit another liner to Johnson during batting practice. Bob's liner smashed several bones in Syl's hand. Moments before the Cardinals clinched the NL pennant, Hornsby sent Syl back to Portland with a promise. Johnson recalled the details of Hornsby's pledge in an interview recorded in 1978: "Rogers Hornsby said if you can't do anything more for the rest of the year, you might as well go home. He said I guarantee you if we win the pennant, anything that anybody gets you get, too. I got the World Series check."³

Hornsby and his Cards defeated the New York Yankees and Johnson got his first World Series ring, although he was missing from the St. Louis lineup. Sylvester had limited time on the major-league heap thanks to Lady Luck's absence and two unforgiving line drives. The 1926 season produced an 0–3 record for Johnson in only 19 appearances. Two months after Syl slipped on his first World Series ring, Ruth Johnson gave birth to their first child, Beverly. Unwilling to gamble with Johnson in 1927, the Cardinals farmed Syl to their International League associates in Syracuse, New York.

Sylvester stepped into a Syracuse Stars uniform with hopes of better luck in the minors. With manager Burt Shotton at the helm, Syl quickly came back into

his original form. In June, the Portland hurler threw a no-hitter against the neighboring Buffalo Bisons. When the season wrapped up, Johnson had an 18–13 record with the Stars. In 1928, the Cardinals noticed Syl's improvement and invited him back to the St. Louis roster. Rehired Johnson worked closely with St. Louis' new manager, Bill McKechnie. Syl was soon befriended by the Cards' new catcher, Jimmie Wilson. With the undeniable talents of Johnson, Wilson, and the other stars on the roster, the Missouri club won the NL pennant in 1928. Johnson had finally earned a chance to pitch in a World Series, albeit briefly, as he threw two innings and allowed one earned run.

Syl finished 1928 with an 8–4 record in 34 mound appearances. Sylvester and Jimmie Wilson stayed in the Cardinals' birdcage in 1929. At the age of 28, Johnson was noted as a reliable relief pitcher. That season, he pitched in more games than any other Cardinal, and after 42 appearances, he was credited with 13 wins and seven losses. His 1929 performance was the best season of his career, so St. Louis manager Gabby Street decided to make Johnson a starting pitcher rather than a reliever in 1930. The Cardinals cinched the pennant and another ticket to the World Series.

With Gabby steady at the helm of the St. Louis ballclub in 1931, Sylvester Johnson was designated as one of the team's dependable starting pitchers. With the assistance of Syl and the other stellar twirlers on the St. Louis roster, the Cards captured another NL pennant. Syl cleaned up the last two innings during the first game of the World Series at Sportsman's Park in St. Louis but his relief came too late as the A's won, 6–2.

Four days later, on October 5, a homicide took place at a Brooklyn speakeasy. The victim, Gustave Johnson, was killed in a World Series brawl while defending his namesake and favorite Swedish pitcher, Sylvester Johnson. A fellow patron, John Leonard, took a swing at Gustave for bragging about Syl. Gustave fell and hit his head on a marble table, which led to his death. Leonard was charged with murder while the proprietor of the speakeasy was pinched for violating the Volstead Act. In 2010, Syl Johnson's offspring learned about the horrific incident that involved a man defending their father's name and talents. All were shocked to hear the news for the first time, as each child explained that their father never mentioned any details or knowledge of the Brooklyn homicide linked to his title. Perhaps Syl himself never knew that his name was connected with one of the most violent World Series arguments in history.

With credit to Sylvester Johnson, Jimmie Wilson, and the intense talent that filled the Cardinals lineup,

St. Louis beat the Athletics in seven games for the 1931 championship. Sylvester picked up a sharp pitching record of 11 wins and nine losses in 1931 and he looked forward to improving his low 3.00 ERA in 1932. But a few changes were waiting for him. In addition to his first assigned uniform number in the majors (23), Johnson shared the St. Louis mound with a new pitcher named Dizzy Dean in 1932. Unlike their successful season the year before, the Cards landed in sixth place with a 72–82 record. Johnson's performance also reflected a dismal pitching record of five wins and 14 losses.

In January 1933, the Cardinals sold the 32-year-old Syl and left-fielder Ray Blades to their minor-league team, the Columbus Redbirds in the American Association. The deal became tainted after Cincinnati Reds president Sidney Weil noticed that Syl's name was not included on St. Louis' waiver list. In February, the Cardinals informed Johnson of the botched sale and he was instructed to report to spring training in Florida. Johnson's major-league service was far from over.

Cards manager Gabby Street assigned Johnson a substantial amount of relief work, while Dizzy Dean handled the brunt of the team's pitching duties in 1933 season. After appearing in 84 innings, Johnson pulled an even 3–3 record. The calendar year of 1934 brought several changes for Johnson and his Portland family. In January, St. Louis sold him and veteran catcher Bob O'Farrell to the Cincinnati Reds. Syl would now be answering to O'Farrell as the Reds' player-manager. Soon after the sale was completed, Cincinnati Syl got an interesting call from a trusted ally, Jimmie Wilson, who had been traded to the Phillies after the 1933 season.

Wilson, now the Phillies manager, insisted that Syl would be accompanying him to Philly. "He said I'm gonna take you back to Philadelphia with me," said Johnson in a 1978 interview. "And I said oh, get outta here. Sure enough, series was over, I got called by Cincinnati. You're traded to Philadelphia."⁴ After appearing in just two games with Cincinnati, Jimmie Wilson handed his pal Syl a Philadelphia uniform as promised.

Wilson decided to put Johnson to work as a relief pitcher, even though Syl was one of the oldest hurlers on the squad. Old Jimmie would share the Philadelphia clubhouse with Sylvester for the next four years, using SYL primarily in relief. Syl welcomed the birth of his second child, Sylvester Jr., in 1935. Syl Sr. looked forward to spending time with his growing family once the '35 season closed. Less than a month after the pitcher handed out cigars to his Philadelphia teammates, Johnson had another visit from Old Man Jinx in the Baker Bowl clubhouse: A hemorrhaging ulcer forced him off the

schedule and the Portlander returned to Oregon.

Johnson reunited with the Phillies in 1936 and was later noted as one of the most profound relief hurlers on the squad. Fellow teammates nicknamed Johnson “The Fireman” after the twirler pulled seven doomed contests out of the flames. Regardless of Syl’s saving grace, the Phillies slipped into the cellar. The club turned in a frightful 54–100 record in ’36, sending them to last place. The following season barely brightened, as the team took one step out of the darkness, claiming seventh place in the NL. Sylvester stayed busy in 1937 as his manager and trusted comrade Ace Wilson assigned him the additional task of coaching first base.

Months before Philadelphia closed the ’37 season with a frown, Sylvester Johnson began a public crusade to create a pension plan for retired baseball players who devoted a decade of their lives to the game. The 36-year-old veteran justified his notable proposal by explaining the active pension plan exercised by retired major-league umpires. “Umpires are entitled to a pension after 15 years of service,” explained Johnson to the sportswriters. “Why shouldn’t a player receive the same reward? I’d like to see each ten year man become eligible for a pension of seventy-five dollars a month, with five dollars for each additional year of service. There are not many players with that length of service in the majors.”⁵

Old Syl tried to pitch his idea to Baseball Commissioner Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis and the league bosses during the winter meetings of 1938, but his request fell on deaf ears. Nine years later, in April of 1947, Johnson’s bright idea found justice after Commissioner Albert “Happy” Chandler and Yankees boss Larry MacPhail created a pension plan for retired baseball players that were active as of 1947.

During the last hour of 1937, Sylvester celebrated his 37th birthday and was one of the oldest players on the 1938 Phillies roster, and the ninth-oldest player in the National League. Jimmie Wilson (born six months before Syl) shared the distinction as the other “old man” on the Phillies brigade. Though his age was against him, Johnson stayed active as a reliever for the Phillies in 1938 and 1939. Sylvester returned to Philadelphia to complete the 1939 season under the supervision of newly assigned manager James “Doc” Prothro. The Doc was unable to save the Phillies from a losing season as the club took last place in the NL with a 45–106 record. Johnson stayed consistent with an even 8–8 record in 22 appearances. Phillies president Gerry Nugent and pilot Prothro decided to keep old Syl with them in 1940. Not only was he the eldest player on the squad, he was noted as the fourth-oldest player in the majors. (Charlie Root, Jimmie

Wilson, and Gabby Hartnett were the only players older than Sylvester.) 1940 was a bittersweet year for Syl for two important reasons: In January his third child, Judith, was born, and in April he suffered an internal hemorrhage in the Phillies clubhouse and was immediately admitted to Temple University Hospital. After he was released, Sylvester spent minimal time on the mound. Prior to his medical ailment, Doc named Sylvester team coach and his light duties as club instructor kept him busy until his final performance.

On September 14, 1940, Sylvester Johnson made his last major-league appearance, pitching the full nine against the Chicago Cubs at Shibe Park in Philadelphia. His grand finale produced the last recorded win on his pitching resume as the Phils took the game, 5–3. In his 19 years in both leagues, Sylvester handled 2,165 innings, appeared in 542 games, and struck out 920 batters. Since his efforts to create a pension plan were dashed in 1938, he had no choice but to look for work to support his Portland family, which continued to multiply.

During the month of December 1940, Syl’s wife announced that another child would be added to the Johnson roster. Three months after Johnson got the good news, the Phillies handed him his unconditional release. Rumors of other major-league clubs having their telescopes fixed on the old hurler trickled throughout the sports pages, but Sylvester had made up his mind to stay close to his family in Portland. Things worked out perfectly when Seattle Rainiers boss Emil Sick and new manager Bill Skiff presented Syl a contract to pitch in the Pacific Coast League. Sylvester happily bit the line since Seattle was close to home. In August 1941, Ruth Johnson gave birth to her fourth child, David, who was born with Down syndrome. The following month, Syl broke his elbow twirling pepper to a Hollywood Stars batter.

Before he took the rest of the season off, Johnson recorded 13 wins and seven losses. After the season ended, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and the United States entered World War II. As fate would decide, 40-year-old Sylvester (with a wife and four children) was not eligible to participate in the war.

In 1944, Skiff promoted Johnson to the combination position of pitcher-coach. The Rainiers skipper made another adjustment to staff by adding an eight-year-old to Seattle’s payroll. With references provided by the new recruit’s father, Sylvester Johnson Junior took the assignment of team batboy for the Rainiers. Not long after the season began, Ruth Johnson was expecting another child. Syl Sr. actively coached Seattle’s pitching staff in 1944 and took the mound 13 times himself. During the last week of November, the Johnson clan

welcomed a visit from the Portland stork who delivered baby number five, Sharyn.

In 1945, Johnson was named assistant manager to pilot Skiff's squad and earned a 6–3 pitching record after appearing in 23 games. After the 1945 schedule was completed, old man Johnson got a job offer from an old friend. In December 1945, Seattle sold Sylvester to the Vancouver Capilanos from the Western International League after Bob Brown (Syl's old Beaver boss) came calling for the Portlander personally; he hired Syl to manage Canada's Caps jointly with Eddie Carnett and Bill Brenner. Since Carnett and Brenner were 20 years younger than Johnson, old Syl felt out of place. The Capilanos' disgraceful lineup matched their unsuccessful May record.

In June 1946, unhappy Syl took an interesting telephone call from Bill Skiff, who was recently dropped by the Rainiers and rehired by the New York Yankees as a chief scout (he had once managed in their farm system). By the end of June, Johnson decided to resign from Vancouver. It would be the last time that he would wear a minor-league uniform. Including his early years playing for the Portland and Vancouver Beavers, the Vernon Tigers, and the Seattle Rainiers, Sylvester threw 1,336 innings over 248 minor-league contests. Skiff's contact with Syl continued and soon enough the old pitcher was hired as a New York Yankees scout working under Joe Devine in August 1946.

During his time off from the season, Sylvester stayed busy in 1947 bird-dogging on the West Coast for young players. He frequently visited Oregon and Washington colleges, snatching athletes worthy to play for the Yankees farm teams. In 1948, Johnson remained with the Yanks scouting team, scouring the local diamonds for new talent. In this era, there was a football team in New York also called the Yankees and owned by Dan Topping. During 1949, he assisted the football Yankees, scouting to sign athletes for both teams. Johnson spent his time visiting fraternity houses, baseball diamonds, and football fields throughout the Coast.

Early in his scouting years, Syl purchased some property with his in-laws and started a berry farm in Gresham, Oregon. In 1954, he bid farewell to the Yankees and was hired as a talent scout for the Brooklyn Dodgers. Sylvester was designated to his familiar territory of the western division (Washington and Oregon) and answered to division scouting boss Bill Brenzel. Syl remained a Dodger talent spy for eight years. The Dodgers moved to Los Angeles in 1958, but Johnson stayed busy on the Coast. As the years progressed, Sylvester was invited to several old-timer games to meet with old teammates from

the Portland Beavers and the St. Louis Cardinals.

In 1961, Sylvester finished his last year with the Dodgers and said goodbye to baseball. With 10 years earned in the minors, 19 years in the majors, and 15 years as a bird dog, Johnson had acquired a 42-year resume devoted to organized baseball. In 1981, a committee from the Oregon Sports Hall of Fame added Sylvester Johnson to their historic roster. Just after his 84th birthday, Syl Johnson passed away in Portland on February 20, 1985. Mrs. Ruth Johnson passed away in 2001, preceded by her son David W. Johnson in 1995. ■

ENDNOTES

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Connie Mack and Wartime Baseball—1943

Norman Macht

Gerry Nugent and the Phillies were flat broke. Worse than that: They were concave broke. Not only were they penniless, they were in debt to the National League. NL president Ford Frick went looking for somebody to rescue the franchise. Bob Paul, sports editor of the Philadelphia Daily News, was approached by local sports promoter and professional basketball pioneer Eddie Gottlieb, acting on behalf of Leon Levy, president of WCAU and one of the backers of the new CBS network.

This is Paul's story.

Gottlieb came to me and asked a favor: "I understand the Phillies are for sale. I want you to find out if they can be sold to a Jewish person. The owner of WCAU wants to buy the club but he's been told that because he's Jewish he didn't have a chance. The only person that can answer that question is Ford Frick. As a sportswriter you can ask questions that we can't. I'd like you to ask him."

I said, "What's in it for you?"

He said, "I would be general manager. We would have enough money to have a winning club."

I called Frick and put the question to him: "Will the National League or baseball accept a Jewish owner?"

He said, "Of course I wouldn't say to you they won't accept a Jewish owner. I would never say a thing like that. I cannot tell Nugent what to do with his ballclub. I'm not going to tell Nugent to talk to that man or listen to him or take his money. The answer to your question is yes, a Jewish man can buy a ball club."

I relayed that answer to Gottlieb. It turned out that his group said that wasn't a definite enough answer. They were not going to be put in the spot of having their religion being the main issue in buying a ballclub. They wouldn't go to Nugent unless Frick assured them they would be accepted if their finances were in order.

So they didn't buy the Phillies.

In February Frick found a buyer in William D. Cox, a New York lumberman. That would lead to monumental consequences for the Athletics.

The autumn of 1942 was not a pleasant time for Connie Mack. It began in the clubhouse after the team's closing doubleheader on September 20 (for some reason the A's season finished a week earlier than the rest of the league). Bob Johnson's contract had called for a bonus of \$2,500 if attendance reached 400,000 and another \$2,500 if it reached 450,000. While packing up his gear to head for Tacoma, Johnson, who had received the first bonus check, asked about the second one. Mack said there wouldn't be a second check; they hadn't come close to 450,000. Johnson didn't believe him. According to Stan Baumgartner, "Hot words passed between them. The fine feelings of ten years were smashed in five minutes."

Johnson may have been so adamant because of the evidence of his eyes. Or perhaps he was keeping score at home, noting the reported attendance figures in the box scores. Despite its lowly position, the team had temporarily sparked the interest of the fans. In the last week of May, a Monday night game against Washington, Friday night and Saturday Memorial Day Weekend games against Boston, and a Sunday doubleheader with the Yankees drew over 85,000. The papers projected a total of 600,000 for the year, the highest in a decade and a record for a last-place team.

The official final count was 423,487, although an unofficial Retrosheet count of daily attendance as reported in the newspapers—sometimes using an obvious round-number estimate—adds up to 546,141. Attendance bonus clauses always specified "paid home attendance." What was reported, however, was the turnstile count, which would have included servicemen, kids, and other non-paying pass holders, for whom the home team did not owe anything to the visiting club or the league.

The club's books seem to support Mack. In the closest comparable year, 1940, official attendance was 432,145 for 59 home dates; admissions totaled \$552,542 vs. \$522,926 for 1942. Visiting clubs' shares totaled \$120,135 in 1940 vs. \$118,616 in '42. The league's share of receipts: \$21,607 in '40 and \$21,174 in '42. Had the actual paid attendance exceeded 500,000, as it did in 1941, the amounts paid to visiting clubs and the league in 1942 would have been closer to the 1941 figures: \$148,148 to visiting clubs and

\$26,455 to the league.

The war of words grew more heated through the winter. Mack had met his match in stubbornness. Johnson wrote to Mack asking to be traded “even if you pay me the second bonus.”

Mack replied, “I don’t owe him a second bonus and he knows it.”

When Johnson was put on the trading block, several clubs expressed interest. None of them had any players to spare and offered only cash, which Mack rejected. Clark Griffith won the raffle in exchange for infielder Jimmy Pofahl (who refused to leave his defense job, the A’s receiving \$6,250 compensation) and Cuban outfielder Roberto Estallela.

Johnson was happy to be away from the left-field wolves at Shibe Park. “I never could understand why they booed me. I batted in over a hundred runs for seven straight years, but I was a bum when I struck out.”

But he was not happy about his part in the argument that had led to his departure. His respect for Mr. Mack was undiminished. The first time the Nationals and A’s met, Johnson walked across the field and shook hands with Mack. “Wasn’t that nice of Bob?” said Mack. “He didn’t have to do that.”

It was a bad deal for Connie Mack. Estallela could hit, but he turned easy fly balls into spectacular catches, and had no idea what to do with it after he caught it. Bobo Newsom, who had been with him in Washington, said, “Bobby’s a four-to-one shot to throw to the wrong base and if there were five bases instead of four, he’d be five-to-one.”

To replace Johnson, Mack sent \$5,000 and Dee Miles to Seattle for veteran outfielder Jo-Jo White, who had played for Mickey Cochrane on Detroit’s pennant-winning teams in ’34 and ’35.

In November Mack lost another longtime friend when George M. Cohan died. Mack and several other baseball men were honorary pallbearers at the funeral in New York.

Mack’s 80th birthday gala was postponed to February 5 to avoid the Christmas season. More than 850 civic, business, and baseball people turned out at the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel. He was lauded by old friends Clark Griffith, Bob Quinn, and Branch Rickey, among others. The speeches were of the kind usually heard at a funeral.

Quinn spoke of Mack’s generosity to the needy and to young men trying to go to college. “I know because I handled the money on many such occasions. And I want to add that Mr. Mack accorded me the same courtesy and consideration on our first meeting forty-seven years

ago as he does now. That is one of the beacon lights of a great man.”

Rickey said, “I went to him with my first problems and he gave me sage counsel and encouraging advice. We don’t just admire Mr. Mack, we love him.”

Judge McDevitt quoted former A’s outfielder Walter French, who at a similar gathering a decade ago had said, “On December 23, 1862, our Lord created Connie Mack, was satisfied, and rested for the remainder of the day.”

Jack Kelly, Olympic oarsman and longtime friend, called him “an oasis of peace in a world torn by strife, a man of understanding in a world of misunderstanding.”

Mack was brighter of eye and keener of mind than many younger men at the gala as he rose near midnight and recounted his beginnings in baseball, touched on highlights of his career, and thanked the newspapermen for their support. Then, showing that he was still more forward-thinking than anyone else in the room, he suggested that selecting all-time all-star teams was obsolete. Citing the many changes the game had undergone over the years, he said, “There is only one fair way to select all-star teams and this is to choose one every ten or fifteen years and make only ten-year men eligible for such a club ... If I were to have my way I would have the sportswriters of this country select such a club every ten years.”

Al Simmons had watched the caliber of pitching all last season and decided he could hit it. Besides, he had begun to brood over the fact that he was 103 hits shy of 3,000. That hadn’t meant much to him during his heyday—there were only six who had reached 3,000 at the time, and nobody made a big deal about it. But now, as he neared 40, he began to mentally kick himself for all the at-bats he had wasted in one of his peevish periods and the days off he had taken. He hadn’t batted once in 1942. When he told Mr. Mack he wanted to go back on the active list, Mack thought it was a bad idea to try to come back after a year off, especially at the age of 40. “But if you want to do this and can hook on with somebody else, you have your release. And when you’re ready to come back, your job will still be here.”

On February 3 Eddie Collins agreed to take him on the Red Sox. Simmons found his eyes and legs were as good as ever, but his reflexes weren’t. The wrist action required to get around on a fastball was gone. He collected 27 hits and batted .203. After the season he admitted it had been foolish. “No man worked harder or was in better physical condition for a comeback. But I couldn’t make the grade.”

Connie Mack had made a December trip to Savannah and a few spots in Florida in search of a new training site.

Then the government announced restrictions on travel that threw baseball for a loop. Commissioner Landis ordered all clubs to set up camp someplace close to home. All plans to head for their usual sunny climes went out the window. Teams arranged with private schools, colleges, resorts—anyplace that had some indoor facilities—for makeshift facilities. No club went farther than 450 miles from its home ballpark, and the Washington Nationals stayed home.

The Athletics went just 35 miles to Wilmington, Delaware. They stayed at the Hotel du Pont, three miles from the ballpark where their farm team played. Connie Mack walked to the park; most of the players went by bus. One cold day the players were waiting for the bus. Mack came out of the hotel and walked briskly by them, waving, and saying, “Come on boys, the walk will be good for all of us.”

Bobby Estalella asked the man next to him, “How old he?”

“Eighty.”

“He eighty?” Estalella said. “He live to be a hundred. We win the pennant, he live to two hundred.”

Estalella decided that if the old man could walk the three miles, he would, too.

The Athletics’ training camp was as much of a novelty to the local residents as it had been during the team’s first spring in California in 1940, especially to the youngsters in the small town. Charlie Lucas, 15, was one of them.

“Kids would come up to Mr. Mack for autographs,” Lucas recalled. “He was very patient and always obliged them. He sat in a box with Mr. Carpenter (Wilmington Blue Rocks co-owner with Mack) in a gray wool overcoat on cold days. Kids gathered around him and he would talk to them like a grandpa: ‘Are you playing ball in school ... How’s your grades?’”

Was Connie Mack 50 years ahead of his time? Or do we just imagine that men were men and pitchers finished everything they started in those days? On March 27 he was quoted in the *Washington Post*, as saying, “Pitchers ought to get themselves in shape. Nobody should have to tell them to work every day, but dammit they want to take a day off now before they throw batting practice. And in a game if somebody hits a home run, they suddenly get an ingrown toenail and have to be taken out.”

Maybe he was just fed up with one complainer and let off some steam. Whatever. At 80, his fire clearly had not gone out.

Over the winter Mack watched more of his players go into the service, bringing the total to 20—by the end of the year it would be 29. Dick Fowler and Phil Marchildon reported for duty with the Canadian armed forces.

Mack’s daughter, Mary, had left the convent to marry Francis X. O’Reilly in 1932, and had separated from her husband in 1935. She had moved in with her parents in their apartment and was a social service worker at Temple University medical school when she decided to join the WACs and went off for motor corps training.

Connie Jr. went to work for Bendix Corporation, then the Third Service Command, while occasionally helping out Bob Schroeder in the A’s concessions business.

Mack’s grandson Connie McCambridge was attached to an engineers division from Michigan, waiting at Ft. Dix, New Jersey, to go overseas. When he asked for a pass to say goodbye to his grandfather, Connie Mack, two officers decided they had to go with him.

“They were all ice skaters,” McCambridge said, “and they wanted me to ask Dad if he could get them in to use the hockey arena. Dad picked up the phone and it was all set, just like that, and on a Saturday afternoon they went to play hockey and skate—all free—and I stayed in camp ‘cause I had duty.”

Only 10 minor leagues opened for business, and all but one completed the season. When the draft age was raised to 38 and the list of departing big-league players grew longer, the key of all of baseball shifted from major to minor. Clubs were permitted up to 40 players on their reserve rosters, though none had that many. The A’s had 29. Except for four pitchers, Mack’s only major-league players were Suder, Siebert, Valo, Swift, and Wagner. After a few days of practice Roberto Estalella said to him, “Mr. Mack, you’re one of the greatest managers, but if you do something with these bums, you the greatest manager in whole world.”

Connie Mack knew full well what he had to work with. He didn’t need the garrulous, fun-loving, overweight Bobby Estalella to remind him. His thoughts may have resembled those of George Washington on first inspecting the rebel rabble he was asked to command, or the Duke of Wellington surveying his troops pressed into His majesty’s service: “I don’t know what effect these men will have upon the enemy, but, by God, they terrify me.”

Mack had bought pitcher Jesse Flores, listed at 24, really 28, on a trial basis from Los Angeles for \$1,000 in September. Flores had been 14–5 with the Angels. Mack liked what he saw and paid the \$9,000 balance on April 27. Flores was a heady pitcher, threw several pitches including the most effective screwball in the league, and was sneaky fast. Midway through the season he added a knuckleball. He pitched 230 innings and was 12–14 with the only ERA on the staff lower than the league average.

Don Black was another old-for-a-rookie pitcher at 26. Mack paid \$5,000 for him after he’d won 18 for Petersburg

in the Class C Virginia League. Black worked over 200 innings for a 6–16 record.

Under a working agreement with Williamsport, Mack had his pick of up to three players. He had taken just one, 24-year-old infielder Irv Hall, who had spent six undistinguished years in the lower minors. The 5-foot-10, 150-pound Baltimore resident was tickled to death to be in a major-league spring training camp. Strictly a singles hitter, he not only became the everyday shortstop, he survived the return of the servicemen and lasted until 1947 (although baseball.reference.com says his last game in MLB was in 1946).

When Hall signed his 1943 contract for \$2,500, he told Mack, “My father wants to be a farmer and I want to borrow \$1,800 to buy a farm for him.”

Mack agreed, “We’ll take so much out of your salary until you pay it back.”

At the end of the year there was still \$600 due. Mack called Hall to his office, cancelled the rest of the debt, gave him a \$1,200 bonus, and a ’44 contract for \$4,000.

With an eye as much on draft status as ability, Mack had drafted two men with enough big-league experience to demonstrate they were not big-league caliber: 29-year-old outfielder John Welaj from Buffalo, and 33-year-old infielder Eddie Mayo from Los Angeles. But they hustled, gave it all they had, and never complained, grateful to be back in the bigs. Mayo won the third-base job, but in a spring game a throw ricocheted and hit him in the left eye, which developed a blind spot. He said nothing, but dealt with it and batted .219. During the winter Mayo’s eye cleared up. The Tigers picked him up and he had five productive years with them, including a second-place finish in the 1945 AL MVP voting.

(Twenty-seven years later, Mayo attended a ceremony dedicating a monument in front of Connie Mack’s birthplace in East Brookfield, Massachusetts. At a dinner that followed, Mayo said, “I once asked (Mr. Mack) about what was the hardest thing in managing a ball club, expecting he would answer about strategy or player relations. ‘Telling a player you have to release him,’ said Mr. Mack. It was a classic remark and a lesson that has helped me greatly in my business career.”)

Like many who played for Mack, what John Welaj remembered most was what he learned from sitting beside him on the bench. “I heard him tell pitchers how to pitch to certain batters, and hitters what to do at the plate in certain situations. And, of course, his moving the outfielders.”

But now there was less of that moving the outfielders than there had been in the past. “You need real pitching to move your men around,” Mack said. “You’ve got to

know that your pitcher knows where and how he’s going to throw the ball ... But my pitching now is so uncertain it’s not worthwhile to try and play that style.”

Connie Mack still promulgated the illusion that Earle would succeed him, with a cryptic qualification. He told reporters on May 11, “Earle is going to be the next manager of the Athletics, if they ever have one, and he’ll probably do a better job than his dad.”

The A’s opened in Washington in a wartime atmosphere that prevented President Roosevelt from being there. War Manpower chief Paul McNutt, whose ballplaying days went as far as Indiana University, filled in for him. Before the first pitch, Clark Griffith walked toward the A’s bench and gestured for Connie Mack to come over to the VIP box. Mr. Mack’s emergence from the dugout evoked a standing ovation from the 25,000, and he ate it up. He took off his hat and clasped his hands above his head grinning broadly as he strode rapidly across the field. On his way back he waved to the fans in the bleachers.

The war affected the game in another way besides the loss of players. There was a shortage of rubber for wrapping the core of the baseballs, so Spalding experimented with something called balata, which was similar to golf ball cover material. The result was a dead ball. The balata balls were identified with a star, and were used only until May 9, when synthetic rubber replaced it. The balata balls resulted in Mr. Mack’s being accused of cheating.

The A’s were in third place, only two games behind the Yankees, when Detroit came to town for a doubleheader. Hal Newhouser shut out the A’s in the first game. Roger Wolff had a 4–2 lead in the top of the eighth of the second contest when Rudy York hit a long drive that looked like it was headed for the bleachers until it died like a plugged quail and was caught.

York and Tigers manager Steve O’Neill demanded to see the ball. It was one of the discontinued dead balata balls. O’Neill filed a protest with the league.

“Some old balls had come in from the factory along with the fresh supply,” Mack explained to Dan Daniel of the *New York World-Telegram* on June 11, “and if they got into the game the umpires were at fault.” The protest was rejected.

The A’s had no hitting or pitching. By July 4 they were in the cellar to stay. They lost 105 games, and were swept in 18 doubleheaders. The old baseball gallows humor set in: “Somebody’s always saying we got to have harmony on this team. When (are) we going to get that guy Harmony?”

In some ways they matched the futility of the 1916 A’s, Mack’s worst team, losers of 117. The ’43 version batted 10 points lower than the 1916 outfit, and were shut

out 23 times. They finished 49 games behind the Yankees but only 20 games below seventh, half the gap of the 1916 team.

Through it all Connie Mack continued to ride the patched-together, antique railroad cars through the hot summer, and shivered in the cold wet spring, watching, missing nothing on the field, knowing this would not be his year—that there may never be another “his year”—but never surrendering hope.

On July 6 in Cleveland Mack demonstrated that his mind was still sharp. Oris Hockett led off and singled for Cleveland. Lou Boudreau walked. Roy Cullenbine sacrificed them to third and second, respectively. Ken Keltner hit back to the pitcher, Orie Arntzen, who threw to catcher Bob Swift. Hockett danced between third and home without drawing a throw while Keltner made it to second and Boudreau, head down, raced for third and arrived while Swift was chasing Hockett toward the base. Apparently thinking that Boudreau was entitled to third, Hockett kept on going into left field. Swift instinctively tagged Boudreau, who was standing on the bag, and caught up with Hockett. Third base umpire Joe Rue called Hockett out.

Two outs, men on second and third.

Mack called time and beckoned for the home plate umpire.

“Mr. Grieve,” he addressed Joe Rue, “don’t you think that, since Hockett had regained third base before Boudreau was tagged, Hockett was entitled to the base and Boudreau was tagged for the second out? Hockett was then tagged for the third out (or, under the rules, for going out of the basepath), making it a double play?”

Rue pondered that while the press box crowd and fans wondered what the discussion was about. “You’re right,” he said.

Red Smith commented, “Only Connie could get the play right and the umpire’s name wrong.”

A rookie, Hal Weafer, was the first-base umpire. A few innings later Bobby Estalella hit a groundball that an infielder picked up and threw wild past first. After crossing the bag, Estalella turned to the left and walked back. First baseman Mickey Rocco had recovered the ball and routinely tagged him. Weafer called Estalella out for turning to the left after crossing the bag. Connie Mack knew the umpire had blown the call; the old rules had required a turn to the right, but they had been changed to allow the base runner to turn either way with impunity as long as he didn’t make a break for second. But Mack said nothing at the time.

When he wanted an explanation for a controversial call, or, as some umpires put it, “to berate us about

something,” Mack would sometimes send Earle out between innings to tell the ump, “Dad wants to know after the game why you made that call,” and the umpires would go over to the dugout after the game. This time, reported Red Smith, the wily Mack said to Weafer, “Ah, on that play at first, Estalella turned the wrong way, didn’t he?”

“No,” said Weafer, “I thought he made a break for second.”

“So,” wrote Smith, “he avoided the trap which Connie, two jumps ahead of everyone, was laying for him.”

The A’s wound up losing the game, 2–0. That evening Mack admitted he wasn’t all that smart. “If I had known we were going to lose, I would have kept quiet about that play at third and let them call it wrong. Then I could have protested the game and it would have had to be replayed.”

On August 8 Elmer Valo went into the army just as the Athletics were beginning a record-tying, 20-game losing streak, the last 17 mercifully on the road. They didn’t see themselves as that bad and, in fact, were in most of the games right up to the last out. Mack juggled the lineup like W.C. Fields but there wasn’t much to juggle; most of them were batting .220 to .240. Roger Wolff won the last game before the swan dive, 4–0 over New York on August 6. Eighteen days later, the A’s were in Chicago for a doubleheader, their fourth twin bill in four days. The White Sox scored two in the ninth to win the first game, 6–5. Between games Mack said to Wolff, “You can either set a record or break this string.” The A’s scored eight runs in the third and Wolff cruised to an 8–1 win.

Mack didn’t hesitate to use Wolff in relief, especially for Jesse Flores who tired in the late innings. Wolff’s knuckler would get by a catcher, but Mack seemed to sense when it would be most effective. In a game in Boston, he sent Wolff in to pitch the ninth with an 8–7 lead. With two out and the tying run on base, Mack ordered Bobby Doerr intentionally walked, causing gasps of disbelief among the by-the-book grandstand managers for putting the winning run on base. The next batter was Babe Barna, who had played for Mack five years earlier. Mack didn’t believe Barna could hit a knuckleball. He was right.

During the season a variety of exhibition games were played to sell War Bonds: old-timers’ games, service teams playing major-league all-star clubs, doubleheaders involving three teams. On August 26 Mack was present at the Polo Grounds along with a group of old-timers including Babe Ruth, Eddie Collins, Honus Wagner, Tris Speaker, and Walter Johnson. As the oldsters fell down attempting to catch pop flies, and 64-year-old Roger Bresnahan tried to hold on to Johnson’s pitches while

Ruth tried at length before finally hitting one into the upper deck in right field, Connie Mack “almost cried. I wanted to remember them as they were in their prime,” he told Stan Baumgartner.

The All-Star game played in Shibe Park on July 13 was the first one played at night. Dick Siebert was the only A’s representative. The Yankees had six men on the AL roster, but manager Joe McCarthy chose not to use any of them and still won, 5–3.

The story of Carl Scheib is illustrative of how Connie Mack dealt with young players at that time. In 1942 Scheib was a 15-year-old pitcher in Gratz, Pennsylvania, north of Philadelphia in the coal country. The town of 800 people was not on any scouts’ itinerary. But it was on a traveling salesman’s route. One day the salesman called on the general store in town and the woman behind the counter told him about the star pitcher for the local high school. The salesman saw him pitch and wrote to Connie Mack about him.

Next thing Scheib knew, he had a letter asking him to come to Philadelphia for a tryout.

On Saturday, August 29, his brother Paul, a catcher, drove him to Shibe Park. The game was rained out, but the rain had let up by the time they arrived.

“I had no glove or shoes or uniform,” Scheib said. “So they had to go around the clubhouse and collect them for me. I went down to the bullpen and all the coaches and big wheels were there. I threw to Earle Brucker and Mr. Mack said, ‘You hurry back next year as fast as you can.’

“I had two years to go in high school but didn’t finish. The only thing for me in Gratz was the farm or the coal mine so I left quick as I could. My dad was a coal miner and died at fifty-seven. The next year I quit school and became the regular batting-practice pitcher, traveled with the team, got into a few exhibition games. In August we had a four-week road trip. On the train coming home Mr. Mack said to me, ‘It’s time for you to pitch.’

“I said, ‘I’m ready.’”

The Yankees were in town for the Labor Day doubleheader. That morning Carl and his parents went up to Mr. Mack’s office. His dad, Oliver, signed the contract for \$300 for the rest of the season. Mack gave him \$500 for signing, and handed Oliver Scheib a check for \$1,000.

“Now you go down to the clubhouse,” Mack told Carl, “and get a uniform with a shirt number so you can be identified.”

The A’s won the first game, 11–2. Earle Brucker, the bullpen coach, took Scheib to the ‘pen for the second game. He was sitting beside Orie Arntzen, who was old enough to be his father. Scheib was amazed that an

old man like Brucker could still crouch and warm up a pitcher; Brucker was 42.

The Yankees led, 5–2, when the A’s rallied for two runs in the last of the eighth. Johnny Welaj had pinch-hit for the starter, Don Black. Orie Arntzen started the ninth and quickly gave up a few hits and walks. Earle Mack emerged and rapped the Shibe Park wall by the dugout with his hand, the signal for Scheib to warm up. Carl started throwing. More Yankees scored. Earle went out to the mound.

“You’re in there,” Brucker told Carl.

The first man Scheib faced was Nick Etten, who tripled. Joe Gordon singled him home. Carl, called “Charlie” in the *Times* account, then retired Hemsley and Crosetti.

The Yankees won, 11–4.

At 16 years, 8 months, and 6 days, Carl Scheib became the youngest pitcher in American League history. He worked in five more games, pitching the last four innings of the season and taking the loss when Cleveland scored four runs in the top of the 12th to break a 4–4 tie.

Under the new management of William Cox and Bucky Harris, the Phillies had turned over almost the entire roster. The new faces brought out the crowds. Although the Phillies finished seventh, they won 22 more games than the year before. Attendance doubled, and they outdrew the Athletics, 466,975 to 376,735, for the first time in 23 years.

But the Athletics benefitted by it, too. The rental income from the Phillies almost doubled, to \$57,997, which included back rent owed at the time of the sale of the club to Cox. With \$37,000 from the NFL Eagles and \$7,681 from two prize fights, and a payroll of only \$131,952, the Athletics managed to show a profit of \$17,697.

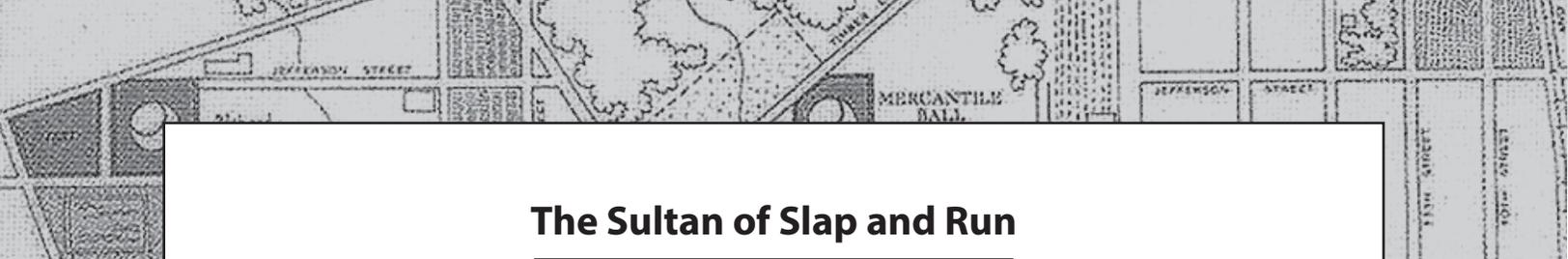
In the fall of 1943 Mack spent that much and more trolling in minor-league waters. Then the Macks went for a rest to Atlantic City, where Connie visited a military hospital and umpired a softball game for the walking wounded.

While termites were eating away the foundation of the Athletics from within, another turn of events ultimately contributed to bringing down the house of McGillicuddy. On November 23, 1943, Commissioner Landis banned Phils president Bill Cox from baseball for betting on games. Robert Carpenter Sr. of the du Pont dynasty, a minority stockholder, bought control of the team from Cox and installed his 28-year-old son, Bob Jr., as president.

“The closest I’d ever been to a major-league team was to watch a game from the stands,” Carpenter said. “It was all a new experience to me. I got a lot of help from Connie Mack. I would visit him in his office at Shibe Park and he was most gracious.” With millions at his disposal, Carpenter quickly hired Red Sox farm director Herb Pennock as his general manager and farm director while Carpenter was away for two years in the army. Major-league rules forbade two clubs from sharing ownership of a minor-league club, so Connie Mack sold his interest in the Wilmington Blue Rocks to Carpenter.

The resurrection of the perennial National League doormats began, but the impact wasn’t felt immediately. The Phillies remained in last place during the war, then built a farm system and a pennant winner.

How the battle for survival in what was destined to become a one-team city would have turned out if William Cox had kept his nose clean and run a threadbare operation while the A’s became pennant contenders in 1948, or Connie Mack Jr. had bought out his brothers and competed with Bob Carpenter Jr. on an equally funded basis, must be left to the realm of the what ifs. The Athletics owned the ballpark. It would have been easier and more attractive for the tenants to move to the greener pastures beckoning in the west. ■



The Sultan of Slap and Run

Francis Kinlaw

The Phillies' Richie Ashburn hit only 29 homers—approximately one per 300 times at bat—in a 15-year career, and none of them are legendary because of their length. Eight were inside-the-parkers that never left the playing field. Exhibiting a slashing style of hitting that contrasted sharply with the “swing-from-the-heels” approach of most of his contemporaries, he could run like the proverbial wind, and he hit singles as well as anyone in the game. When one of those “singles” suddenly slipped between opposing outfielders, Ashburn's blazing speed and impressive base-running ability made things very interesting.

Weighing 175 pounds and standing 5-foot-10, Ashburn may have lacked the physical equipment of a slugger, but he excelled in every other category. In his rookie season of 1948, he served notice that a new and dangerous guy was on the scene by finishing a distant second to Stan Musial (with an average of .333) in the chase for the National League's batting championship. After posting averages in 1951 (.344) and 1953 (.330) that were well within the “batting-title range,” he finally obtained a crown in 1955 with a nifty figure of .338. He won another in 1958 by hitting at a .350 clip, and thus became one of the few men to win a batting title while playing for a last-place team. His average dipped from that lofty .350 to .266 in 1959 (a year in which he had 660 trips to the plate but only 20 runs batted in), but the decrease was temporary. His lifetime average was a very respectable .308 and, by hitting .306 for the expansion Mets in 1962, he joined a small group of players who batted higher than .300 in their final major-league season.

In the process of slapping out 2,574 career hits, Ashburn led the National League in hits three times (1951, 1953, 1958), in singles four times (1951, 1953, 1957, 1958), and in triples twice (1950, 1958). He registered more than 200 hits in three seasons (1951, 1953, 1958), and had a 23-game hitting streak in 1948. The only rookie voted onto or selected for either the National or American League All-Star team that season,¹ he was also a member of the National League's contingent in 1951, 1953, 1958, and 1962 (both games). (He seemed to merit selection to the 1955 squad but, despite having posted a midseason

batting average of .327 while in the process of capturing the batting championship, he was snubbed by manager Leo Durocher who made no secret of the fact that he favored sluggers over slashers.)²

Ashburn's ability to reach base cannot be measured only by hits and batting percentages. In a league that was stocked with dangerous hitters, he received the most walks three times (1954, 1958, 1960), and tied for the lead in 1957. His talent for walking—as well as running—to first base must be deemed extraordinary given the fact that opposing pitchers were doing everything they could to keep the speedster off of the basepaths. High numbers of hits *and* bases on balls consistently translated into impressive on-base percentages, and his combined hits and walks twice reached or surpassed the lofty total of 300: in 1954 he had 175 hits and 125 bases on balls, and in 1958 he had 215 hits and 97 walks.

Once he reached base, that speed indeed became a factor. Nicknamed “Putt-Putt” by Ted Williams, who was quoted as saying that Ashburn had “twin motors in his pants,”³ Ashburn led the league in stolen bases in 1948 with 32 swipes. He also kept innings going with fast pedaling toward first base: He hit into only 83 double plays in 8,365 times at bat—a ratio of only one twin killing per 117 plate appearances.

As for durability, if Lou Gehrig was the “Iron Horse,” Ashburn was at least a “Steel Pony.” He averaged 146 games per season over his 15-year career, and from 1949 through 1958 he played in 98.5 percent of his team's games. During one stretch he played in 730 consecutive games.

His most memorable play may have been neither a hit nor a base-running ploy, but rather the defensive act of nailing Cal Abrams of the Brooklyn Dodgers at the plate in the ninth inning of the final game of the 1950 season. That throw from short-center field preserved a 1-1 tie and set the stage for Dick Sisler's pennant-clinching home run in the 10th inning. The circumstances of the moment ensure its legendary status in “Whiz Kid” annals, but such a play was not unusual for a man who led National League outfielders in assists three times. He also led his league's fly chasers in putouts in nine seasons, and became the only outfielder to record 400 putouts in nine different seasons

and to record 500 putouts in four different seasons.

Ashburn's uniform "#1" was retired by the Phillies in recognition of his 12 years of stardom in the City of Brotherly Love, and his identity was well established in Philadelphia as an athlete. But the difference of 84 points in his 1958 and 1959 batting averages gave the Phils front office an uneasy feeling, and the fan favorite known as "Whitey" was traded to the Cubs in January of 1960 for Alvin Dark, John Buzhardt, and Jim Woods. Then, after spending two (homerless) seasons in Chicago, he was sold to the Mets in December of 1961. Amid the disaster of the Mets' first season, Ashburn "distinguished" himself by continuing to hit for average, by becoming the first Met to play in an All-Star Game (the second of two such games played in 1962), and by hitting more home runs than he had hit in any previous season.

Seven of Ashburn's 29 homers were hit in 1962. Prior to that relative "explosion," his season high had been the four he tagged in 1951, and during two extended periods he had failed to reach the seats—or, in his case, the gaps between outfielders—at all.⁴ When, as a Met, he finally knocked one over the wall in Wrigley Field to bring an end to the second drought, he took off on a veritable rampage by connecting for four more circuit drives within two weeks—and then he tagged two other homers later in the season.

Why the sudden appearance of a slugging Ashburn in 1962? Quite simply, after a decade and a half in the majors, Ashburn finally had an opportunity to play the majority of his games in a stadium that was ideally suited to his talents.

As a member of the Phillies, Ashburn had hit nine of his 22 home runs in the Polo Grounds. (He hit six more homers there during his season with the Mets.) The New York Giants' home park, with a spacious center-field area that extended 475 feet from home plate and a cozy right-field foul-line measurement of 258 feet, was favorable for batters with speed but limited power—and Ashburn took full advantage of the surroundings while playing for Philadelphia.

Because Ashburn's round-trippers have been generally overlooked due to the significance of his other achievements, let us review chronologically his 22 career home runs for the Phillies and his seven-homer "explosion" as a member of the Mets:

Date: May 29, 1948 (Saturday afternoon)

Site and attendance: Polo Grounds, New York (18,843)

Circumstances: Ashburn turned a rather ordinary single off of left-hander Thornton Lee into an inside-

the-park home run. As the leadoff hitter in the top of the first inning, Ashburn hit the game's third pitch slightly to the left of center field. As center fielder Bobby Thomson dashed for the ball, it took an unpredictable hop toward left field and bounced between Thomson and left fielder Whitey Lockman. Ashburn circled the bases. Ashburn's hit was the first of seven by the Phillies off of Lee, who went the route in a 7-1 Giants' victory.

Date: July 30, 1948 (Friday night)

Site and attendance: Shibe Park, Philadelphia (12,020)

Circumstances: Trailing Cincinnati by a 4-3 score in the bottom of the fifth inning, the Phillies tied the game on the first of two home runs by Andy Seminick. Then, after Robin Roberts was retired, Ashburn's inside-the-park blow off of left-hander Ken Raffensberger gave the Phils a 5-4 lead.

Date: April 24, 1949 (Sunday afternoon; first game of doubleheader)

Site and attendance: Shibe Park, Philadelphia (33,748)

Circumstances: Ashburn's seventh-inning home run over the right-field wall with one man on base broke a 4-4 tie with the Dodgers and sparked the Phils to a 7-4 win. Ken Heintzelman, a left-handed pitcher who would throw a complete game for Philadelphia, had singled and was on first base at the time. Ashburn hit a fastball that had been thrown by Carl Erskine on the inside of the plate.⁵

Date: May 30, 1950 (Tuesday morning; first game of twin bill)

Site and attendance: Ebbets Field, Brooklyn (18,884)

Circumstances: In the first game of a morning-afternoon twin bill on Memorial Day, Ashburn gave his team a temporary 5-4 lead by tagging a delivery from Preacher Roe over the right-field wall with no runners on base in the eighth inning. The Dodgers, however, defeated the Phillies, 7-6, in 10 innings.

Date: July 8, 1950 (Saturday afternoon)

Site and attendance: Ebbets Field, Brooklyn (20,714)

Circumstances: With the Dodgers clinging to a precarious 1-0 lead after seven innings, and with pitcher Robin Roberts set to be the leadoff batter in the top of the eighth, Phillies manager Eddie Sawyer sent Dick Whitman to the plate as a pinch-hitter. Whitman "rolled out," but Ashburn followed with a high fly ball⁶ off of Don Newcombe that cleared the right-field screen and landed on Bedford Avenue. The score remained tied until Bill

Nicholson, pinch-hitting for Mike Goliat with two out in the top of the ninth inning, hit a three-run homer to give the Phils a 4–1 victory.

Date: May 13, 1951 (Sunday afternoon; first game of doubleheader)

Site and attendance: Polo Grounds, New York (26,740)

Circumstances: Ashburn hit the first pitch of the game into the upper deck in right field. The blow gave the Phillies an early lead against Larry Jansen before the Giants took control of the contest and rolled to a convincing 11–2 victory.

Date: June 4, 1951 (Monday afternoon)

Site and attendance: Shibe Park, Philadelphia (2,343)

Circumstances: Ashburn hit a solo inside-the-park home run in the ninth inning of a 12–4 loss to Pittsburgh. The home run, which was hit to center field off of Murry Dickson with two out in the ninth inning, obviously had no effect on the outcome of the game.

Date: July 3, 1951 (Tuesday afternoon)

Site and attendance: Polo Grounds, New York (9,295)

Circumstances: Ashburn's home run off of Giants starter Sheldon Jones with two men on base in the top of the third inning put the Phillies ahead by a 3–0 score. But New York came from behind five times in this 13-inning game to capture a 9–8 victory.

Date: September 3, 1951 (Monday afternoon; first game of doubleheader)

Site and attendance: Polo Grounds, New York (31,397)

Circumstances: Ashburn's three-run homer in the fifth inning erased a 3–1 New York lead and sparked the Phils to a 6–3 victory in the first game of a Labor Day twin bill. Andy Seminick had opened the top of the fifth with a single to right field. Robin Roberts then walked and, with the Giants infield pulled in to protect against a bunt against one of baseball's fastest baserunners and most skilled bunters, Ashburn drove the second pitch from Giants starter Al Corwin into the right-field stands—and drove Corwin from the game. The fans present for this game nearly witnessed an extremely strange combination of occurrences: an over-the-fence clout by Ashburn and an inside-the-park homer by the powerful Willie Mays. The Giants' rookie sensation hit a ball to right-center field in the second inning with Whitey Lockman on base and, when the ball went past right fielder Nicholson,

Mays circled the bases. However, after the ball had been returned to the infield, Phillies third baseman Tommy Brown called for it and claimed that Mays had failed to touch third base. When the umpires granted the appeal and ruled Mays out, one of the more unlikely happenings in the history of the sport was erased from the record books.

Date: July 29, 1952 (Tuesday night; second game of twi-night doubleheader)

Site and attendance: Shibe Park, Philadelphia (19,055)

Circumstances: Ashburn's inside-the-park home run to center field with one out in the fifth inning helped lift the Phillies to a 4–3 win over Cincinnati. This homer, which was hit off right-hander and former “Whiz Kid” Bubba Church, came with no runners on base and increased the Phils' lead to 2–0.

Date: May 19, 1953 (Tuesday night)

Site and attendance: Crosley Field, Cincinnati (8,561)

Circumstances: Ashburn led off the top of the fourth inning with a drive over the right-field fence, providing the game's first run as Philadelphia defeated the last-place Reds, 6–3. The victory lifted the Phils into first place. The fence over which Ashburn's hit passed had been moved in prior to the 1953 season, but the homer off of left-hander Harry Perkowski was not cheap: The fence was moved in 24 feet prior to the season, but its distance from home plate was still a respectable 342 feet.⁷

Date: May 29, 1953 (Friday afternoon)

Site and attendance: Polo Grounds, New York (6,253)

Circumstances: This round-tripper by Ashburn was less than crucial in a 12–3 rout of the Giants. Ashburn's blow to right field off of right-hander Bill Connelly came in the sixth inning with one out and the bases empty, and it extended the Phillies' lead to 9–1.

Date: June 29, 1954 (Tuesday night)

Site and attendance: Forbes Field, Pittsburgh (5,088)

Circumstances: Ashburn's inside-the-park homer off of right-hander Max Surkont, with two out and two men on base in the top of the eighth inning broke a scoreless tie and sent the Phillies to a 4–0 victory over the Bucs. The rally, which culminated with Ashburn's dramatic blow, began when Pirates shortstop Gair Allie fumbled a grounder hit by Danny Schell. Schell advanced to second base when Bobby Morgan walked, and Ashburn then

slammed a hit between right fielder Sid Gordon and center fielder Dick Hall, which rolled all the way to the right-field gates. Ashburn easily beat the relay to home plate.⁸

Date: June 21, 1955 (Tuesday night; two home runs)

Site and attendance: Busch Stadium, St. Louis (7,717)

Circumstances: The two homers by Ashburn were significant as the Phillies posted a 10–8 victory over St. Louis after overcoming a four-run Cardinals' lead. With St. Louis holding a 6–2 advantage in the top of the seventh inning, and with Roy Smalley (who had singled) on first base, Ashburn faced Harvey Haddix with two out. Ashburn hit Haddix's first offering into the right-field stands to reduce the lead to 6–4. The Cardinals still led by a score of 8–7 in the top of the ninth when Glenn Gorbous, pinch-hitting for Murry Dickson, led off by drawing a walk from Cards hurler Frank Smith. When Smith's first two pitches to Ashburn missed the strike zone, Cardinals manager Harry Walker summoned left-hander Paul LaPalme from the bullpen. Ashburn smacked LaPalme's first delivery into the right-field grandstand to give the Phillies a 9–8 lead. Granny Hamner then made LaPalme's night even worse by hitting his next pitch over the fence to complete the scoring.

Date: July 7, 1955 (Thursday afternoon)

Site and attendance: Polo Grounds, New York (5,130)

Circumstances: Approximately two weeks after his two-homer game, Ashburn hit for the circuit again, but this time his team came out on the short end of a come-from-behind affair. With no one on and one man out in the top of the sixth inning, and with the Phillies holding a 4–0 lead, Ashburn hit a pitch from Hoyt Wilhelm into the lower right-field stands to increase his team's margin to five runs. The Giants, however, dominated the game from that point on to register an 8–5 win.

Date: April 28, 1956 (Saturday afternoon; two home runs)

Site and attendance: Polo Grounds, New York (8,297)

Circumstances: Ashburn's two homers off of left-hander Johnny Antonelli accounted for four runs in a 6–2 victory over the Giants. Ashburn led off the top of the sixth inning with a drive that bounced off a screen attached to the right-field foul pole at the upper-deck level. His round-tripper reduced a 2–0 Giants' lead to 2–1. Then, after the Phils tied the score and scratched out a run

in the top of the ninth inning to go ahead 3–2, Ashburn locked up the game by drilling a three-run homer against the façade of the upper right-field stands. The decisive blast, on a 3–2 pitch with two men out, came with Andy Seminick on second base and Robin Roberts on first.

Date: April 29, 1956 (Sunday afternoon; first game of doubleheader)

Site and attendance: Polo Grounds, New York (18,689)

Circumstances: One day after hitting two balls into the upper reaches of the Polo Grounds, Ashburn knocked an inside-the-park home run to raise his season total to three with 144 games yet to be played! (He would hit no more homers in 1956, nor would he hit any in 1957.) The bases were empty with two out in the top of the third inning when Ashburn slammed a Ruben Gomez delivery against the right-field wall. The sharply hit ball⁹ hit the wall on one bounce before the Giants' Don Mueller could position himself for the carom, so Mueller was forced to dive headfirst in an attempt to corral the ball.¹⁰ Ashburn circled the bases before center fielder Willie Mays could fire the ball to the infield. The home run erased a 1–0 New York lead, and the Phillies went on to capture a 5–4 victory.

Date: April 27, 1958 (Sunday afternoon)

Site and attendance: County Stadium, Milwaukee (18,408)

Circumstances: After playing 309 consecutive games without homering, Ashburn finally hit another shot as the Phillies defeated the Braves. With two out and the Phils holding a 2–1 lead in the top of the fourth inning, Jack Sanford singled to right field. Ashburn then hit Lew Burdette's first offering over the right-field screen to increase the lead to 4–1. The Phillies went on to register a 6–2 victory. Estimates by sportswriters of the distance of Ashburn's drive varied slightly¹¹ but, estimates aside, the ball easily cleared the fence, which was erected 315 feet from home plate at the foul line.¹²

Date: June 22, 1958 (Sunday afternoon; first game of doubleheader)

Site and attendance: Connie Mack Stadium, Philadelphia (30,454)

Circumstances: Ashburn's two-run homer off of Marv Grissom with two out in the eighth inning wiped out a 4–2 Giants lead, setting the stage for an extra-inning struggle that was finally decided in the 14th frame when Willie Kirkland (who had been called up from Phoenix of the Pacific Coast League the day before)¹³ homered for

San Francisco. Bob Bowman, after reaching base on Daryl Spencer's error, scored ahead of Ashburn. Ashburn's blow passed over the right-field wall of the Philadelphia ballpark, which had been renamed since his last homer there—nearly six years before!

Date: July 2, 1959 (Thursday evening; second game of twi-night doubleheader)

Site and attendance: Connie Mack Stadium, Philadelphia (15,428)

Circumstances: Ashburn's inside-the-park home run against the Reds had little effect on the outcome, an 8–4 Cincinnati victory. Because the Phillies trailed by a score of 5–1 when Ashburn hit a Don Newcombe pitch to the base of the center-field light standard in the sixth inning, the long hit with two out and no runners on base merely reduced the Reds' margin of victory.

Date: June 10, 1962 (Sunday afternoon; second game of doubleheader)

Site and attendance: Wrigley Field, Chicago (16,332)

Circumstances: After almost three years without a homer (including the two seasons spent as a member of the Cubs), Ashburn connected for the Mets against Chicago. His solo home run into the right-field seats¹⁴ off right-hander Bob Anderson with one out in the eighth inning put his team ahead by a 3–1 score. New York added an insurance run, but Ernie Banks' three-run drive in the ninth inning—following an error by Ron Kanehl on a grounder that should have been converted into the game-ending putout—sent the contest into extra frames. The Cubs posted a run in the 10th inning to win, 5–4.

Date: June 17, 1962 (Sunday afternoon; first game of doubleheader)

Site and attendance: Polo Grounds, New York (13,128)

Circumstances: This home run by Ashburn, a drive into the right-field seats off of right-hander Barney Schultz leading off in the bottom of the fifth inning, was overshadowed by an incredible blast in the same game by rookie Lou Brock of the Cubs. Brock became the first major leaguer to hit a ball into the right-center field bleachers at the Polo Grounds when he slammed an Al Jackson delivery at least 460 feet. (Joe Adcock had blasted a homer into the bleachers on the left-field side of the center-field clubhouse off of Jim Hearn on April 29, 1953. And, one day after Brock's long drive, Henry Aaron hit a pitch from the Mets' Jay Hook into the same area of the bleachers. Thus, Brock was the only major leaguer to hit a ball into the seats to the right-field side of the

clubhouse.)¹⁵ Ashburn homered as the first batter in the fifth inning, and his blow tied the game at five. The Cubs regained the lead, however, and went on to an 8–7 victory.

Date: June 22, 1962 (Friday afternoon; first game of twi-night doubleheader)

Site and attendance: Polo Grounds, New York (11,484)

Circumstances: Ashburn banged this homer early in the game between the Mets and the National League's other expansion club of the 1962 season, the Houston Colt .45's. By doing so, he extended an interesting pattern: This drive and his preceding four round-trippers were hit during doubleheaders. Leading off for the Mets in the bottom of the first inning, Ashburn tagged Dick "Turk" Farrell's 2-2 pitch into the right-field stands to provide the first New York run in an eventual 2–0 triumph.

Date: June 23, 1962 (Saturday afternoon; two home runs)

Site and attendance: Polo Grounds, New York (6,425)

Circumstances: As the Mets gained revenge for a 16–3 drubbing they had endured in the previous evening's nightcap by whipping the Colt .45's by a score of 13–2, the first of Ashburn's two homers came on a delivery by right-hander Ken Johnson with no one out in the third inning, after Mets pitcher Jay Hook had led off by reaching first base on a bunt single. Ashburn's long drive bounced off of the right-field façade. His second home run of the day—and his fifth in a two-week period—never left the premises. Facing left-hander Dean Stone as the leadoff hitter in the fourth inning, Ashburn's hit tipped off of right fielder Ramon Mejias's glove and rolled into right-center as Ashburn raced around the bases.

Date: July 14, 1962 (Saturday afternoon)

Site and attendance: Polo Grounds, New York (37,253)

Circumstances: Three weeks after homering twice in the lopsided victory over Houston, Ashburn hit another circuit drive in a very different situation. With the Mets trailing the Dodgers by the discouraging score of 17–0 and one out in the bottom of the sixth inning, New York hurler Bob Moorhead was on first base after receiving a walk. Ashburn then proceeded to hammer a pitch from Stan Williams against the upper right-field deck. The home run affected only the game's final score as the Mets absorbed an embarrassing 17–3 defeat.

Date: August 19, 1962 (Sunday afternoon)

Site and attendance: Polo Grounds, New York (10,182)

Circumstances: The final home run of Ashburn's career came in the fifth inning of a game against the Cardinals, with the Mets trailing by a score of 6–2. Ashburn homered to right field off of Lindy McDaniel with the bases empty and one out to reduce his team's deficit, but St. Louis went on to pin a 10–5 loss on the New York club.

This review of Ashburn's limited but interesting relationship with the long ball has provided the following facts:

- Ashburn hit 10 homers against the Giants, four against the Reds and Dodgers, three against the Cardinals and Colt .45's, two against the Pirates and Cubs, and one against the Braves.
- Ashburn hit 20 home runs off of right-handers, and nine against lefties.
- Ashburn hit 15 homers in the Polo Grounds, six in Shibe Park/Connie Mack Stadium, and two in both Ebbets Field and Busch Stadium. He hit one home run in Crosley Field, Forbes Field, Milwaukee's County Stadium, and Chicago's Wrigley Field.
- Ashburn hit 17 of his homers on the road and 12 in his home park.
- During his years with the Phillies, Ashburn hit 16 homers on the road and only six in Philadelphia.
- Approximately 75 percent of Ashburn's home runs were hit toward right field.
- While Ashburn hit only 29 home runs in 15 years, he hit two homers in a game three times!
- Ashburn hit 11 of his home runs (nearly 38 percent of his total) during doubleheaders.
- Don Newcombe and Johnny Antonelli were the only pitchers to surrender more than one home run to Ashburn. They each allowed two homers to him.

The significance of this research lies not only in revelations regarding an often overlooked aspect of Ashburn's career, but also in the development of contrasts between Ashburn's home-run statistics and those of his peers. (Those analyzing Ashburn's offensive achievements should be aware that *Baseball-Reference.com* fails to mention that his round-tripper on June 4, 1951 and his second homer on June 23, 1962 remained within the ballpark. Also, the website states that Ashburn's inside-the-park home run at the Polo Grounds on April 29, 1956 was hit to left field, although reliable accounts in the *New York Times* and the *Philadelphia Inquirer* stated that the ball was hit to right.) Mays, Mantle, Snider, and Doby were—like Ashburn—elected to the National Baseball

Hall of Fame, but their power numbers were entirely different. Mays hit 660 home runs in his career, of which only eight were of the inside-the-park variety. Mantle hit 536 home runs, and only six within the fences. Snider's comparable totals were 407 and three; Doby's 253 and three. Even the accomplished contemporaries of Ashburn who lacked Hall of Fame credentials far surpassed him in the home-run category while registering fewer inside-the-park totals: Bell (206 and two), Piersall (104 and two), Bruton (94 and two), and Virdon (91 and one).¹⁶

Given the discrepancies between Ashburn's slap-and-run talents and the power-driven tendencies of the truly exceptional ballplayers who were dominant at his position throughout the era, a conclusion can be drawn that those differences were unquestionably remarkable and perhaps unique. ■

ENDNOTES

1. Dan Daniel, "All-Star Squads List 15 Newcomers; Ashburn Only First-Year Man Selected," *The Sporting News*, July 14, 1948, 2. The eight starters—all but the pitchers—were picked in a nationwide fan poll; the managers selected the remainder of their squads. Ashburn was voted onto the National League's team as the center fielder.
2. David Vincent, Lyle Spatz, and David W. Smith, *The Midsummer Classic: The Complete History of Baseball's All-Star Game*, 139.
3. Rich Marazzi and Len Fiorito, Aaron to Zverink, 15.
4. The dry spells occurred from April 29, 1956, to April 27, 1958, and between July 2, 1959, and June 10, 1962.
5. Stan Baumgartner, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 25, 1949.
6. Stan Baumgartner, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 9, 1950.
7. Philip J. Lowry, *Green Cathedrals*, 138.
8. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 30, 1954.
9. Joseph M. Sheehan, "Monzant Holds Phils to One Hit and Strikes Out Nine to Win, 8-1; Meyer, Relief Hurler, Belts Homer in Tenth to Beat Giants Earlier, 5-4," *New York Times*, April 30, 1956.
10. Art Morrow, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 30, 1956.
11. The account of the game by United Press stated that the ball went 355 feet; the *New York Times* said it traveled 375.
12. Lowry, 54.
13. Bob Stevens, "Mays Gets 1,000th Hit As Giants Sweat to Regain Bat Touch," *The Sporting News*, July 2, 1958, 9.
14. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 11, 1962.
15. Philip Lowry, 200; Craig Carter, Editor, *Take Me Out to the Ball Park*, 167; *The Sporting News*, May 6, 1953, 11; *The Sporting News*, June 30, 1962, 9.
16. Ballpark factors and the number of years played could have obviously affected these totals in varying degrees.

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- The New York Times*
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- Retrosheet.org*
- The Sporting News*



Kids Snatch a Flag

Francis Kinlaw

*Scouts and managers extoll as a kernel of truth:
“Experience will trump the value of youth”;
That theory is touted at the most crucial times,
When pressure is greatest, with so much on the line.*

*One team turned that thought on its ear
With a measure of fame that lasts to this year;
In baseball’s annals, the “Whiz Kids” are unique
Despite a closing act that was just a bit weak.*

*In the spring of ’50, enthusiasm was tepid at Shibe Park
The Phils’ ambitions were accompanied by a
question mark;
Most writers picked them for fourth place
With the Dodgers given the nod in the pennant chase.*

*Hopes were dim for the club’s pursuit of a flag
Because most players were young, a potential snag;
The men who assumed the eight everyday slots
Averaged 26 years—they could be green in tight spots.*

*The key pitchers were younger, with two graybeards
thrown in,
Konstanty and Heintzelman, at least, had “hair
on the chin”;
The rest of the staff averaged a mere 24 years,
And was considered to be “wet behind the ears.”*

*The starters are framed by position in the mind,
Waitkus at first base, no longer medically confined;
Goliat and Hamner around second base
Turned double plays with style and grace.*

*The hot corner was covered by Willie “Puddin’ Head”
Jones,
25 homers and 88 ribbies were career milestones;
An outfield patrolled by Ennis, Ashburn, and Sisler, from
left to right,
Exhibited various attributes that gave fans delight.*

*Andy Seminick served as the normal backstop,
And with 24 homers contributed pop;
To handle each hurler and his precious flipper,
He conferred with Eddie Sawyer, the amiable skipper.*

*There was surely enough talent on the mound,
Robin Roberts and Konstanty were the most renowned;
Robin won 20, Jim made 74 trips from the ’pen,
Russ Meyer did well when nothing was under his skin!*

*Curt Simmons won 17 from the left side, Bob Miller
was steady,
Easing the burden of “Manager Eddie”;
And solid performances by Bubba Church
Helped lift the Phillies to their high perch.*

*They jumped ahead of the Dodgers by July Fourth’s play
And led Brooklyn by seven games on Labor Day;
The margin was then cut but not erased
’Til Sisler’s tenth-inning homer ended the race.*

*Facing Bombers in the Series was a challenge too steep
The result was a quick and not unexpected sweep;
But three games were decided by a single run—
With a clutch hit or two, the Yanks might have been done.*

*So let us recall this team and its season so grand,
Its lasting attraction reflected by the “Whiz Kids” brand;
No wonder Gene Kelly’s listeners raised so many cheers,
On the path to a pennant after 35 long years!*

*When that letdown came at the hands of Casey’s crew,
Fans were disappointed but not terribly blue;
For the youngsters had gone to the finish line
And hoisted their city onto cloud nine.*



A FINAL SEASON: The 1954 Philadelphia Athletics Finish Eighth, 60 Games Back

Thomas E. Van Hying

Bill Renna was playing winter ball for the 1953–54 San Juan Senators, managed by Harry Craft, after his 1953 rookie season with the world champion New York Yankees, when a local sportswriter got the news Renna had been traded to the Philadelphia A's in an 11-player deal. Renna, the San Juan right fielder, "was surprised when he (the sportswriter) told me. Then (I) played three-to-four more weeks for San Juan. (Eddie) Joost phoned me; he told me to come back to the states." Little did Renna know the 1954 last place A's would finish 51–103, a full 60 games behind Cleveland, and 52 games behind the 103–51 Yankees.

PRESEASON TRADES AND ACQUISITIONS

Renna, Puerto Rican prospect Victor Pellet Power (Vic Power), first baseman Don Bollweg, third baseman Jim Finigan, catcher Jim Robertson, and pitcher Johnny Gray went to the A's on December 16, 1953, in exchange for first baseman Eddie Robinson, infielder Loren Babe, outfielders Tom Hamilton and Carmen Mauro, and starter Harry Byrd. Five of six players traded by the Yankees made the A's 1954 Opening Day roster.¹ Robinson and Byrd were the key A's targeted by the Yankees, but neither spent much time in New York. Robinson was dealt to Kansas City in 1956 and Byrd was part of a 17-player Yankees-Orioles trade prior to the 1955 season.

It was a busy offseason for the A's. They released Bobo Newsom on November 19, 1953, drafted second baseman Forrest "Spook" Jacobs from the Brooklyn Dodgers in the Rule 5 Draft on November 30, and sold their 1953 second baseman Cass Michaels (who made his major-league debut a decade earlier under his real name of Casimir Eugene Kwietniewski) to the Chicago White Sox on December 8. Jacobs was having another fine 1953–54 winter baseball season in Cuba. "I played six years in Cuba, three in Panama, plus part of a season in Puerto Rico," recalled Jacobs. "The Dodgers kept me at Mobile, 1949–52; they didn't want to send any black players South. Played some at St. Paul (1952) and then had a real good season at Ft. Worth (1953).²

The 26-year old Power got ready for 1954 spring training by playing third base for the champion Caguas

(Puerto Rico) team, managed by Mickey Owen. This club featured a 19-year-old second baseman-outfielder named Henry Aaron and Jim Rivera, the 31-year-old Chicago White Sox flychaser and MVP of the 1954 Caribbean Series. "I had two good seasons with the Kansas City Blues and one with Syracuse (1951–53)," recalled Power. "But the (New York) Yankees did not call me up. They traded me to the A's and they gave me the opportunity to play in 1954."³

Other pre-1954 season trades had pitcher Joe Coleman and Frank Fanovich going to Baltimore for Bob Cain on December 17, 1953 and a February 19, 1954 deal that sent outfielder Dave Philley to Cleveland for hurlers Bill Upton and Lee Wheat. Coleman, a 1948 AL All-Star with the A's, won 13 games in 1954 for the O's, almost a quarter of their 54 wins. Upton and Wheat pitched ineffectively for the 1954 A's, a combining for an 0–2 mark. Dave Philley was the starting right fielder for AL champion Cleveland. "Sugar" Cain was released by the A's in May 1954.

AN ECLECTIC 1954 ROSTER

Bob Trice, the Newton, Georgia native and the A's first African American player (he made his debut on September 13, 1953), won 21 games for the 1953 Ottawa A's. Trice was the only member of the 1954 A's who played in the Negro Leagues, having done so for the Homestead Grays. He was penciled in to join a starting rotation of lefties Bobby Shantz and Alex Kellner, and righty Arnold Portocarrero. The latter spent the past two years in the military but showed promise with the 1953–54 San Juan club, one with pitchers Bob Turley of the 1954 Orioles and Jack Harshman of the 1954 White Sox. Portocarrero was a "New York Rican"—a New Yorker of Puerto Rican descent. Alex Kellner had qualified for a Major League Baseball pension by virtue of five full seasons with the A's, 1949–53. He pitched over 200 innings each of those seasons and won 20 games in 1949.⁴

Bobby Shantz, winner of the 1952 AL MVP Award with a 24–7 record and 27 complete games, was cautious heading into 1954. "Joost replaced Jimmy Dykes as our (1954) manager. Dykes told me (in 1953) not to pitch

that much and give it rest; took a lot of cortisone shots from 1953-55,” Shantz said. “Had that (opening day) start in 1954 but a sore arm kept me from starting any more games that season. We bought our home in Ambler (Pennsylvania) in 1954—and still live in it.”

Shantz stated the 1954 A’s had “good (camaraderie) guys—(shortstop) DeMaestri, Bollweg, Renna” and that “Renna comes in to sign autographs during Philadelphia A’s Historical Society events,” adding, “My brother Billy was a good catcher with a good arm who missed out on an MLB pension. We went to 1954 (and 1955) home games in separate cars. Spook (Jacobs) was a good little player in 1954 that lived in Milford, Delaware about sixty to seventy miles from Philadelphia. He came to the Historical Society shows. Vic Power was a really good ballplayer and fielder.”⁵

Gus Zernial was limited to 87 starts due to a collarbone injury sustained before the 1954 All-Star break. He hit fourth in the 1954 A’s lineup 56 times, fifth 30 times, and sixth once. His 232 home runs during the 1950s were third in the AL behind Mickey Mantle’s 280 and Yogi Berra’s 256. The 177 home runs clubbed by Zernial from 1950–55 tied him with Cleveland’s Al Rosen for the most in the AL during that six-year stretch. Zernial is credited with facilitating Joe DiMaggio’s first date with Marilyn Monroe, according to a SABR bio written by Marc Aaron.⁶

Lou Limmer, a native of the Bronx, tore a muscle in his left shoulder when a fire broke out as the crew was fueling a B-29 in the Army Corps in Biloxi, Mississippi. After this injury, Limmer was never able to pitch again, and became a first baseman. He played for the 1951 A’s before returning to the minors in 1952–53. He “knew Vic (Power) from (my) playing for the Aguadilla club in Puerto Rico (1949–50, 1950–51).”⁷ Limmer was used almost exclusively as a pinch-hitter by player-manager Joost the first part of the season, but eventually got more playing time, with 73 starts at first base for the 1954 A’s, hitting second in the order 61 times.

APRIL 13 TO JUNE 1

The A’s defeated Boston, 6–4, on April 13, 1954, Opening Day at Connie Mack Stadium, before a large home crowd of 16,331. Bobby Shantz (1–0) pitched five frames before Ozzie Van Brabant (hold) and Bill Upton (save) hurled two innings each. Vic Power scored the team’s first run on a Bollweg single off Mel Parnell in the home first. Bill Renna then doubled in Bollweg and Zernial to make it 3–0. Gus Zernial cracked a two-run homer in the home fifth with Power on to make it 5–2. Spook Jacobs went 4-for-5. The A’s traveled to New York

and lost, 3–0, on April 15. They split a twin-bill at Fenway Park on April 18, via a 6–4 win by Trice in game one, before losing game two in 13 innings, 4–3. Their April highlight game was a 1–0 home shutout by Trice on Saturday, April 24, where he bested ex-A’s hurler Harry Byrd. Joe DeMaestri’s fifth-inning homer was the only run. Trice (3–0, 1.67) also pitched a 5–1 (April 30) home win over Baltimore, helped by Bill Renna’s three RBIs.

April was the only month the A’s sported a winning record: 6–5. Five A’s—Jacobs (.326), Power (.304), Zernial (.324), Renna (.325), and Billy Shantz (.316)—got off to a good start at the plate. Player-manager Eddie Joost started twice at third base versus New York (April 24–25) and, also in the leadoff spot, at shortstop against Baltimore (April 30–May 1). Joost suffered from astigmatism, and began wearing glasses for the 1948 A’s, a franchise that set an all-time home attendance record at Shibe Park with 945,076 paid fans. He had 119 walks in 1948, during a six-year run (1947–52) in which he had 100-plus walks per season. “I didn’t want Mr. Mack to know it (he had astigmatism),” related Mr. Joost to a reporter in 1994. “But it got worse ... I finally got up the nerve to tell Mr. Mack that I’d probably have to wear glasses.”⁸

Saturday, May 1, featured a game-winning single by third baseman Jim Finigan, to give the A’s a 2–1 win over Baltimore in the home 10th. Lou Limmer, who pinch-hit for Spook Jacobs, was a reserve player early in the season. The third-place A’s, with a 7–5 mark after games of May 1, trailed the 10–5 White Sox and 8–4 Tigers. They were a half-game ahead of 7–6 Cleveland and two up on the 6–8 Yankees. Baltimore (5–9) and Boston (4–9) brought up the rear. Philadelphia was tied for the league lead after their home opener—the only day they would claim a share of first place.

The next 30 days presented a more realistic view of the A’s as they won seven of 29 games. Baltimore won nine but lost 17. The A’s (15–27) held a half-game lead over the Orioles through June 1, and this race for seventh was tighter throughout 1954 than the pennant chase. Cleveland (28–13), Chicago (28–15), and New York (26–17) held the top three spots, with Detroit (21–17) fourth. Washington (17–24) and Boston (13–22) were fifth and sixth.

Bobby Shantz’s sore arm precluded him from mound work so Joost scrambled to find other starters. Carl Scheib, who also had a sore arm in spring training, had his only start on May 3 versus Chicago, but lasted two innings and gave up five runs in a 14–3 loss. The A’s hosted Cleveland for the first time on May 4—a 3–2 complete game win by Bob Trice (4–0) with 6,071 onlookers. Cleveland took the next two games, 7–2 and 3–2, behind Bob Lemon and

Early Wynn. Vic Power homered in each game.

Philadelphia traveled to New York for a weekend series, May 7–9. Morrie Martin pitched well in the Friday contest except for back-to-back homers by Mickey Mantle and Yogi Berra, in a 2–0 Yankee win. Scheib was sent to St. Louis in a conditional deal that same day. A May 9 twin bill resulted in Trice's first loss, followed by a tie. Harry Byrd (1–3) got his first win in a Yankees uniform in the opener. Spook Jacobs took over the leadoff spot and Limmer got his first start of 1954, hitting fourth. Vic Power played center field and hit third. In game two, a 1–1 tie, the A's only run came on a Renna homer. The A's then took the train to Baltimore for a two-game series, May 10–11. Trice, in his only relief appearance, blew a save in the opener as Baltimore scored four times in the ninth, to win 7–6. Joe Coleman outdueled Arnie Portocarrero, 2–0, in the next game.

The A's boarded a train to Chicago, Cleveland, and Detroit for a May 13–19 Midwest swing, and took one win in seven games, a 3–2 contest with the White Sox on May 13. They played in Washington Friday, May 21, and lost their seventh straight, 7–3. Rookie Art Ditmar struggled, lasting one inning, forcing Marion Fricano and Van Brabant into long relief duties. Arnie Portocarrero (1–3) got his first major-league win the next day in a 10–3 romp, as Zernial hit his fifth homer and Jacobs got three hits. The A's won three of their next eight, including a 6–5 win over the Red Sox on May 26, when Zernial hit a grand slam. They traveled to Boston for a doubleheader on May 31. Boston took the opener, 20–10, and the nightcap, 9–0. A Ted Williams' three-run homer in the first frame of game one came off Art Ditmar, a Massachusetts native, who lasted one inning. Ditmar was sent to the Ottawa A's for more seasoning, but rejoined the parent club later in the season. Ted Williams left the game early, with a .400 batting average thus far in 1954. The A's defeated the Red Sox, 16–6, in a June 1 day game before heading home for a 13-game homestand. Gus Zernial hit two homers in that A's win, and had 11 homers and 35 RBI—on pace to hit 40 and drive in 128. Bob Trice (5–3) went the distance. Finigan (.333), Joost (.321), and Jacobs (.304) were all hitting over .300.

JUNE 2 TO JULY 11

Bill Renna was a pro in every sense of the word. He enjoyed hitting at Connie Mack Stadium where “the wind didn't blow too much and the visibility was good.” Renna first played at Shibe Park—before it became Connie Mack Stadium during the 1953 season—where he roomed with Don Bollweg on road trips as a Yankee. They also roomed with the 1954 A's. Renna rented a Philadelphia row house

near the stadium and adjusted to his new team. “We took the train with New York (1953) and Philadelphia (1954),” stated Renna, adding: “Zernial and Joost didn't get along; Joost did have some problems with players, Zernial for sure.” Renna experienced no problems with Joost, and kept in touch with Joost and Joe DeMaestri over the years.

The June 2–13 homestand included three doubleheaders, starting with two wins in three games versus Baltimore. The A's won the series with a 7–6 game three win, Friday, June 4, Bob Trice's sixth victory. Attendance figures for the three games were 2,717, 2,187, and 1,092. Cleveland then swept the A's: 4–1, 11 innings, on June 5, and a Sunday twin bill sweep, 2–1 and 7–5. Cleveland was just ahead of White Sox for first place, while the A's and Orioles were deadlocked for seventh.

Chicago toppled the A's, 9–3, on June 8 and 9–4 on June 9, behind Virgil Trucks and Bob Keegan, to hold a one-game lead over Cleveland. These White Sox were a talented bunch with a lineup of Chico Carrasquel, Nellie Fox, Minnie Minoso, Ferris Fain, George Kell, Sherm Lollar, Jim Rivera, and John Groth. Cass Michaels was their utility infielder. Philadelphia traded pitcher Morrie Martin and outfielder Ed McGhee to the White Sox on June 11 for pitchers Sonny Dixon and Al Sima, and outfielder Bob Wilson. This trade helped the A's, who trailed Baltimore by a game. The A's won four out of the five games versus Detroit, only losing game one of the June 11 doubleheader, 16–5, before getting a split thanks to Marion Fricano's fine start. They then won again on Saturday, June 12, and swept the June 13 twin bill, 4–3 and 6–3. Bob Trice won his seventh, and final, game on June 12 with a Sonny Dixon save. Dixon then saved game two on Sunday, June 13. Lou Limmer hit his first homer of the season off Don Weik in Detroit's only win. He hit another homer in the last game of the series. The Tigers left town with a 25–29 record.

Philadelphia then went on a 12-game road trip, June 15–27, starting with three games at Chicago. The A's took the first game, 11–4, behind good relief pitching by Moe Burstchy, and Al Sima's save. A Renna homer, a Limmer triple, and Jacobs' three hits propelled the A's to a win. But, Trice and Kellner were ineffective in the next two games. Renna and Limmer went yard in the middle game, and Zernial cracked his 12th homer in the finale won by Jack Harshman. The A's then swept both games with the faltering Tigers to reach .400 (24–36). Portocarrero won his fourth game on June 18 in front of 23,216 fans, and Dutch Romberger got his only win the next night, in relief of Fricano, when the A's scored five times in the eighth, en route to a 5–4 victory. The A's won two of three at Cleveland, June 22–24, to improve to 26–37, in sixth place.

TABLE 1. AL STANDINGS, JUNE 24, 1954

Cleveland	45-20 .692	--
Chicago	43-22 .662	2
New York	42-25 .627	4
Detroit	28-34 .452	15.5
Washington	27-37 .422	17.5
Philadelphia	26-37 .413	18
Boston	22-39 .361	21
Baltimore	23-42 .354	22

Philadelphia ended the road trip with four straight losses at Baltimore, culminating in a June 27 twin bill sweep. Two of the four defeats were one-run, extra-inning games. Ex-A's pitcher Joe Coleman won the final game and scored the winning run. The 27-42 Orioles (.391) moved into sixth place, slightly ahead of the 26-41 A's (.388) and the 24-41 Red Sox (.381). The A's returned home and finished the month with 3-2 and 8-7 wins over Washington. Bill Wilson's ninth-inning walk-off homer off Conrado Marrero won the latter contest. Philadelphia split their 28 games in June 1954 and were on a pace to win 62 games, but they would fall short of this total.

Bobby Brown retired as an active major-league player on June 30, 1954, after getting two hits in Boston against the last place Red Sox—who trailed the sixth place A's by two games—and flew to San Francisco to begin his residency on July 1, 1954. He recalled that the Yankees stayed at the Warwick Hotel in Philadelphia, located in the Rittenhouse Square District, when they played the A's. The exact address was 200 South 17th Street, a cab ride to Shibe Park/Connie Mack Stadium.

July 1-11, 1954, was not kind to the A's. They went from 28-41 to 30-49 at the All-Star break. The A's came into Boston for a Fourth of July weekend series, winning the middle game, 7-3, as Kellner got win number four and Zernial hit his 14th homer. When they left Boston on Sunday evening, July 4, it would be the last time the 29-43 A's (.403) had a winning percentage above .400. Back-to-back losses to the Yankees, in a Connie Mack Stadium doubleheader on July 5, started the downward spiral. Harry Byrd (4-5) pitched seven-plus innings in game one, a 7-4 New York win. Then Tom Morgan won game two, 11-2. The A's went to D.C. for a make-up game the next day and Bob Trice took the loss, 5-2. Philadelphia then hosted Boston in four pre-All-Star break games, winning only the Friday, July 9 contest, 9-3, behind Alex Kellner. Vic Power returned to the A's lineup after an injury-related absence, and played first base. The A's most embarrassing loss of 1954 was in game one of the Sunday twin bill, an 18-0 Red Sox rout. Trice departed in the fourth inning, and Gus Zernial broke his

left collarbone after he tripped on a water spigot trying to catch Billy Consolo's double. Some A's fans booed Zernial as he came off the field. Zernial would return later in the 1954 season but did not have the same pop in his bat that he had pre-injury.¹⁰ The Red Sox then took game two of the July 11 doubleheader by a slightly less embarrassing 11-1 margin. Boston's three (out of four) wins enabled the Red Sox to go into the break in sixth place, one game ahead of the A's.

TABLE 2. AL STANDINGS, JULY 11, 1954: LEAGUE ALL-STAR BREAK

Cleveland	56-27 .675	--
New York	56-28 .667	0.5
Chicago	54-31 .635	3
Detroit	35-44 .443	19
Washington	32-47 .405	22
Boston	31-48 .392	23
Philadelphia	30-49 .380	24
Baltimore	31-51 .378	24.5

JULY 15 TO AUGUST 31

Jim Finigan, the only A's player selected to the All-Star Game, did not play in the 11-9 AL win at Cleveland, Tuesday, July 13. He rejoined the A's in Philadelphia to face Cleveland, July 15. Cleveland swept the A's to extend their skid to six games, as Kellner, Portocarrero, and Sima were no match for Wynn (11-7), Garcia (12-5), and Feller (7-1). Wynn and Feller threw shutouts while Garcia gave way to Ray Narleski for three innings. Cleveland denied the Yankees a sixth straight AL pennant by playing .765 baseball after sweeping the A's July 15-17.

The White Sox swept the A's, Sunday, July 18, by 10-2 and 4-3 scores. Renna homered off Jack Harshman in game one, while Sandy Consuegra and Minnie Minoso (4-for-4) starred in game two. The A's losing skid reached 10 after Detroit swept them in Philadelphia two days later. A two-run homer by Lou Limmer on Wednesday, July 21, helped the A's tame the Tigers, 4-1, with Dixon pitching a complete game to get the win. Charlie Bishop—one of 15 pitchers Joost used as a starter in 1954—took the loss the next night versus Detroit. Baltimore then came in for a four-game set, July 23-25. The A's won the last three to take a three-game lead over the O's and improve their record to 34-58.

Philadelphia won just one of five at Detroit, July 27-29, a route-going effort by Fricano in game two on the 27th. Limmer's 10th home run in the fifth paced a 13-hit attack. The White Sox then hosted the A's from July 30 through August 1 and swept their guests (including a twin bill on the last day). Baltimore came next and Bob

Turley, the 1954 AL strikeout king, got a 10–2 win at Memorial Stadium, August 2. The A's won the next two games behind the hitting of Don Bollweg. Joe Astroth was catching more A's games and Pete Suder spelled Jacobs at second, while Elmer Valo got much more playing time due to Zernial's injury. The A's led the Orioles by one game.

TABLE 3. AL STANDINGS, AUGUST 4, 1954

Cleveland	72-31 .699	--
New York	71-35 .670	2.5
Chicago	68-39 .636	6
Detroit	47-57 .452	25.5
Washington	43-58 .426	28
Boston	41-60 .406	30
Philadelphia	37-67 .356	35.5
Baltimore	37-69 .349	36.5

An August 6–8 weekend in Cleveland had the A's on the losing end of another sweep, leaving them with a 37–71 record—just behind the 38–72 Orioles, who lost three of four against Boston. Bob Lemon (15–5) homered off Portocarrero (7–11) in game one on Sunday, August 8. Bill Renna opined that Cleveland was second to none in 1954 with of Hall of Famers Bob Lemon (23 wins), Early Wynn (23 wins), Bob Feller, Hal Newhouser (in the pen), and Larry Doby (led the AL with 32 homers and 126 RBIs). Jim Hegan was fabulous behind the plate. Vic Wertz furnished power. Bobby Avila, the 1954 AL batting champ, played second, and Al Rosen was a force at third. Al Smith and Dave Philley produced. The bench included Hal Naragon, Hank Majeski, Dale Mitchell, and Wally Westlake.

A four-game series at New York resulted in four more A's defeats, one each for Bishop (0–5), Gray (1–5), Portocarrero (7–12), and Kellner (6–14). Harry Byrd (7–6) won game two of the series (August 10) going the distance, while Eddie Lopat (9–4) won on August 12 when Mantle's 25th homer broke a 4–4 tie. The 1954 Yankees won more games than any of the 1949–53 world champions. Yogi Berra, their clean-up hitter, was the 1954 AL MVP, Mantle hit third, and rookie Bill Skowron performed well. But Eddie Robinson did not hit for power in 1954 after replacing the retired Johnny Mize. Hank Bauer and Irv Noren were fine outfielders. Bob Grim, Whitey Ford, Allie Reynolds, Eddie Lopat, Tom Morgan, Byrd, and closer Johnny Sain made up a solid staff.

A short train trip to D.C. gave the A's a chance to retool and win back-to-back games, August 13–14, before losing the series finale. Marion Fricano (5–8) won the first game, helped by an eighth-inning double-steal, where Finigan stole home and Power stole second. Finigan went

3-for-3 to up his average to .302. Charlie Bishop (1–5) got his first win the next day, an extra-inning thriller, when Bollweg's two-run double drove in Renna and Wilson with the deciding runs in the 11th. The 39–76 A's now led the 39–77 Orioles by half a game. Cleveland, which swept four from Baltimore that weekend, led the Yankees by three games. The A's then returned home to play New York. Harry Byrd (8–6) once again bested the A's in an 11–1 Yankee rout on August 17. Whitey Ford (13–6) and Eddie Lopat (10–4) then took care of the A's on August 18–19 to complete the sweep.

Eddie Joost took a leave of absence August 20–25, and coach Rollie Hemsley took over the managerial reins. Hemsley caught in the majors for 19 seasons, including Bob Feller's Opening Day no-hitter in 1940. He managed the 1950 Columbus Red Birds to the American Association crown, and the Little World Series title over the International League champion Baltimore Orioles. Ellis "Cot" Deal played for Hemsley at Columbus in 1950 (and for the 1950–51 San Juan Senators). Deal said he was a "lovable guy, and easy and fun to play for."¹¹ The A's were 2–3–1 in the six games managed by Hemsley, including a 4–4 tie in game two of the August 22 doubleheader versus Washington. Limmer and Renna each hit their 11th homer in the tie game, while Joe DeMaestri's 12th-inning walk-off single gave the A's a 3–2 win in game one. The Nationals came back the next day to sweep the A's, 8–5 and 10–3. Alex Kellner (6–16) gave up 16 hits and eight earned runs in seven innings of work in game two. Washington's Harmon Killebrew made his major-league debut in the field, playing second base and going 3-for-4 with two RBIs. The 40–81 A's led the 39–84 Orioles by two games.

Cleveland came in for the last two contests (August 24–25) that Hemsley managed. Johnny Gray (2–7) outpitched Mike Garcia (15–7) on the 24th, but Garcia saved Bob Lemon's (19–5) win the next evening by getting one out in the 10th inning of a 4–3 Cleveland victory.

The long home stand continued with four games versus Chicago and two each against Detroit and Baltimore. The A's got one win in the Chicago series, lost to Detroit twice, and swept the Orioles in two games on August 31. Zernial was activated for the White Sox series and made two pinch-hitting appearances, then he hit cleanup versus Detroit in game one of their August 29 twin bill. The highlight of the August 31 doubleheader was Lou Limmer's home run in the bottom of the fifth in game one, leading to an 8–6 win. DeMaestri and Astroth singled, with Fricano pinch-running for Astroth. Jacobs then walked before Limmer hit the final A's grand slam at Connie Mack Stadium, to give Burtschy (4–1) the win.

For Limmer, “It was the highlight of my 1954 season. (Philadelphia) A’s fans still reminded me of that (blast) decades later.” The “race for seventh place” was interesting since Jimmy Dykes, the 1954 O’s manager, had managed the A’s from 1951–53. A number of 1954 A’s played for Dykes in the early 1950s but Art Ditmar, the A’s rookie hurler, did not. Ditmar did comment on Joost. “Joost was a good manager,” he Ditmar. “It’s the players who play the game—that’s the way it is. We were not good on the playing field in 1954.”

TABLE 4. AL STANDINGS, AUGUST 31, 1954

Cleveland	95-36 .725	--
New York	89-41 .685	5.5
Chicago	85-47 .644	10.5
Detroit	57-73 .438	37.5
Boston	56-72 .438	37.5
Washington	53-76 .411	41
Philadelphia	44-87 .336	51
Baltimore	43-90 .323	53

SEPTEMBER 1–26

Baltimore went 11–10 in September to overtake the A’s for seventh place. Cleveland eclipsed the Yankees’ 1927 AL single-season record of 110 wins. The A’s wound up with seven wins in September: one versus Boston on September 4; game-two at Washington, September 6; at Detroit on September 10; game two at Baltimore on September 12; at Chicago on September 14; and two at New York, September 24 and 26, in the season’s final weekend. The A’s players witnessed history in game one of the September 6 twin bill at Washington, when Carlos Paula—a Cuban—became the first black player to wear Nationals flannels. Paula went 2-for-5. The Orioles hosted the A’s later that week (Sunday, September 12) in a doubleheader, with both teams tied (47–95) going into the action. Bob Turley (12–15) fanned 10 A’s in winning game one, a 4–3 A’s loss. The A’s earned a split with a 5–4 win in game two behind newcomer Joe Taylor’s key pinch-hit, two-run double. Spook Jacobs drove in DeMaestri with the winning run when he drew a bases-loaded walk in the ninth. The A’s and O’s were both 48–96 with two weeks left.

Arnold Portocarrero pitched a 1–0 shutout at Chicago on September 14, and the A’s returned home, trailing 50–96 Baltimore by half a game. Meanwhile, the Yanks were eight back of Cleveland. New York swept the A’s, and the O’s took two of three at Chicago to take a two-and-a-half-game lead over the A’s. Cleveland then won three straight at Detroit to clinch it. Art Ditmar started the last A’s game held at Connie Mack Stadium, on Sunday, September 19.

“I pitched five scoreless innings,” He recalled.

Joost called Ditmar back to the bench with two outs in the home fifth, after rookie shortstop Jack Littrell walked and catcher Joe Robertson singled. Don Bollweg pinch-hit for Ditmar, and made it to first when Eddie Robinson muffed his grounder. Marion Fricano then pinch-ran for Bollweg. Leadoff hitter Pete Suder hit a two-run single to break the scoreless tie. Lou Limmer got the last hit and stolen base by an A’s player at home when he singled in the seventh, after Yogi Berra dropped his foul pop-up. Limmer then stole second off Johnny Sain. Charlie Bishop held the Yanks scoreless for two frames before Moe Burtshy (5–4) gave up a game-winning, three-run homer to Gil McDougald in the eighth. Johnny Sain (6–6) won it and Jim Konstanty got the save. The 4–2 New York win took 2:30 and was watched by 1,715 people.

Three straight losses to Boston, from September 20–21, sealed the A’s fate. Baltimore (53–98) clinched seventh place. All the 49–102 A’s could do was end the season at Yankee Stadium. Arnold Portocarrero (9–18) struck out 11 Yankees on Friday, September 24, in a 5–1 win, the A’s 50th. Art Ditmar, who roomed with Portocarrero in 1954, recalled “Arnold had nine wins—tops for us” and “lived in Long Island during the offseason, and had a pretty good arm.” Lou Limmer’s 13th homer (and his next-to-last one in the majors) came on Friday. He hit number 14 the next day off Sain, in a 10–2 Yankee win.

The stage was set for the last game in Philadelphia A’s history. Art Ditmar was optimistic he could beat the Yanks since he pitched so well against them a week earlier. “Casey (Stengel) shifted his players around that day—Berra played third base, Mantle was at short, I think Skowron played second (he did) the entire game,” noted Ditmar. “They were the Yankees. We had nothing to lose.”

Ditmar pitched into the sixth, departing with the bases loaded, one out, and a 6–4 lead. Fricano came in and threw a wild pitch that scored Lou Berberet, and sent Enos Slaughter to third and Joe Collins to second. Mantle was walked intentionally and Berra smashed a grounder to first, which Vic Power turned into a 3-6-3 double play. Joe DeMaestri’s two-run single in the seventh gave the A’s two insurance runs, and the final score was 8–6. Mantle, hitting .299 going into the game, struck out once and walked twice versus Ditmar (1–4), but his eighth-inning hit off Fricano gave him a .300 batting average for 1954. Lou Limmer, pinch-hitting for Power in the ninth, lined a single to right field—the final pinch-hit in Philadelphia A’s history—to finish at .231.

TABLE 5. AL FINAL STANDINGS, 1954

Cleveland	111-43 .721	--
New York	103-51 .669	8
Chicago	94-60 .610	17
Boston	69-85 .448	42
Detroit	68-86 .442	43
Washington	66-88 .429	45
Baltimore	54-100 .351	57
Philadelphia	51-103 .331	60

The 1954 AL season was the first time in the twentieth century that two teams won more than 100 games and two teams lost more than 100. When the 1915 A's finished 43–109, the Red Sox (101–50) and Tigers (100–54) won 100 games, but Cleveland was 57–95. The 1915 A's finished 58.5 games behind Boston. The 1954 A's set a franchise record finishing 60 games behind Cleveland.¹² Home attendance for the 1954 A's totaled 304,666 paid fans, the team's lowest total since the 285,173 in the Depression era of 1936. In their first year in Baltimore, the 1954 Orioles drew 1,060,910 fans to Memorial Stadium, more than triple the 1954 A's total. New York had the highest AL home attendance in 1954 at 1,475,171, ahead of second-highest Cleveland's 1,335,472.

The A's had the worst home (29–47) and road records (22–56) in the league (Baltimore was 32–45 at home and 22–55 away). These A's were outscored 875–542, or by over two runs per game. Philadelphia was 46–94 in nine-inning games, 4–8 in extra innings, and 1–1 in shortened games. They were a respectable 22–26 in one-run games, but 7–43 in blowouts of five runs or more. The A's had a winning record against the Orioles (12–10) but were 4–18 versus Cleveland and the Yankees, 5–17 versus the White Sox, 7–15 against the Red Sox, 9–13 versus the Tigers, and 10–12 against the Nationals.

The A's hit a league-worst .236, compared to the league's .257. Jim Finigan (.302) was the only regular that hit over .300 (Eddie Joost hit .362 in 47 at-bats). Their 94 homers tied Chicago for fourth place—Bill Wilson led the team with 15 homers in 323 at-bats followed by Limmer with 14 in 316 at-bats, Zernial with 14 in 336 at-bats, and Renna with 13 in 422 at-bats. The team stole 30 bases, 17 of them by Spook Jacobs.

The A's ERA of 5.18 was 1.5 runs higher than the league's 3.72. Portocarrero led the team in wins with nine in 33 starts and 248 innings of work. Moe Burtzschy and Sonny Dixon had four saves apiece. The A's had three shutouts (Portocarrero, Kellner, and Trice) but were shut out 13 times. A's pitchers fanned 555 hitters and gave up 685 walks. The team's .971 fielding percentage was the league's worst, but Vic Power (8.0) and Bill Renna (6.1)

were second and fifth in the AL, in terms of outfield fielding runs saved. Pundits may call the 1954 A's one of the all-time worst major-league teams, but they had talented players and fine human beings, among them Art Ditmar, Spook Jacobs, Vic Power, Bill Renna, and Bobby Shantz. ■

ENDNOTES

1. Johnny Gray made his MLB debut for the A's on July 18, 1954. Gray was a native of West Palm Beach, Florida, where the A's did their spring training.

2. Phone interview with Spook Jacobs, September 27, 2010. Jacobs played 14 seasons in the minors, finishing with a .300 career batting mark. Jacobs retired after his 1960 season with Chattanooga. He got four hits in his first MLB game, on April 13, 1954, in the first, third, sixth, and eighth innings (retired in the fifth on pop fly). Jacobs was playing winter ball in Cuba when the A's selected him. He represented Cuba in the February 1954 Caribbean Series hosted by Puerto Rico and played against Vic Power's Caguas team. Jacobs was inducted into the Cuban (pro) Baseball Hall of Fame in January 2009, along with Negro Leagues stars Josh Gibson and James "Cool Papa" Bell. He was also inducted in Baseball Hall of Fames of Delaware, South Jersey, the Eastern Shore (Delaware, Maryland and Virginia), and the Columbus (Ohio) Jets.

3. Lee MacPhail—a classmate of the author's mother at Swarthmore College (Philadelphia area)—in his autobiography, page 49, stated that Vic (Power) was "making his presence felt by 1954 . . . was an outstanding fielder at first base—I am not sure I have ever seen anyone any better—and a good right-handed hitter with power. He was an aggressive player with an aggressive attitude, and the latter had caused a few problems in the clubhouse. (George) Weiss and (Dan) Topping wanted to be certain that the first black player to play for the Yankees would be a role model. We thought we had the ideal man in (Elston) Howard." Power hit .328, with 101 doubles, 32 triples, and 38 homers in his three AAA seasons—Syracuse (1) and Kansas City (2).

4. Dr. Bobby Brown, in a phone interview, recalled the A's—late 1940s—had a very good pitching staff with Kellner, Joe Coleman, Phil Marchildon et al plus solid position players: Buddy Rosar behind the plate, Ferris Fain (1B), Pete Suder (2B), Hank Majeski (3B), Eddie Joost (SS), Barney McCoskey, Ben Chapman, Elmer Valo, and Wally Moses in the outfield.

5. Bobby Shantz won eight Gold Gloves: four in the AL, 1957–60, with the Yankees, and four in the NL, 1961–64. Vic Power earned seven AL Glove Gloves with Cleveland, Minnesota, and Los Angeles, 1958–64. Bobby told me his career highlight was a 14-inning, 2–1 win over the 1952 Yankees where Mickey Mantle hit a third-inning homer. Dykes tried (unsuccessfully) to take Shantz out of the game a few times and Bobby related: "I told Dykes that our bullpen wasn't that good and if I'm going to lose it, will lose it myself. Threw 300 pitches." Shantz echoed Bobby Brown's remarks about earlier A's teams with two-time AL batting champion Ferris Fain.

6. Marilyn Monroe posed for several publicity shots, in high heels, with Zernial, at the 1951 Chicago White Sox training camp in Pasadena, California, prior to a trade which sent Zernial to the 1951 Philadelphia A's. Joe DiMaggio first noticed Monroe when he saw footage of those shots and wondered why Zernial was so lucky. Zernial suggested that DiMaggio contact the press agent who coordinated these publicity photos (and he did).

7. Lou Limmer, via a phone interview, related how he left Aguadilla on December 18, 1950, at 3:30 a.m. on a jitney from the town plaza to San Juan. Limmer caught a flight to New York before Island police made it to the airport. Limmer was suspended from winter ball for two years due to his fugitive stunt but returned to Puerto Rico five years later and helped Caguas (led by league MVP Vic Power) win the title. Limmer recalled earning a lifetime supply of single-edged razor blades by hitting for the cycle in the 1950–51 Puerto Rico season. His 244 career homers in the minors culminated with 30 for the 1958 Birmingham Barons in the AA Southern Association. Limmer's World War II-era shoulder injury was documented by Peter Epross with Martin Abramowitz in their 2012 book: *Jewish Major Leaguers in Their Own Words*.

8. Frank Fitzpatrick, Philadelphia Inquirer staff writer, shared this on April 14, 2011. Eddie Joost helped spark a final revival for the A's, who had won five World

Series (1910–11, 1913, 1929–30) earlier in the century. The '47 A's drew a franchise record 911,566 fans. With Mr. Joost as their acknowledged leader, Mack's fourth-place team went 84–70 the following year and again broke its attendance mark with 945,076 fans. Joost hit .263 with 23 homers and 81 RBIs in 1949. He was an AL All-Star in 1949 and 1952. The San Francisco native died in California at age 94.

9. Bill Renna phone interview February 11, 2013. Renna noted it took a good clout to hit it over center field (447 feet from home), and it was 363 feet to left-center (published data: 358 feet to left-center, 355 feet to right-center at Connie Mack Stadium). Renna, in right field, was near the scoreboard that was 400 feet from home plate, 50 feet high, and once had a 60-foot Ballantine Beer sign attached to it. Bobby Brown recalled it was 330 feet down the right-field line (329). The left-field foul line measured 334 feet. This was the first concrete-and-steel stadium in MLB history. William Steele and Sons built it in less than a year, and had it ready for 1909. The land cost \$141,918.92. Stadium building costs totaled \$315,248.60. Seating Capacity (1954) was 33,608.

10. Marc Aaron's SABR bio of Gus Zernial stated this injury was the result of the left fielder's foolishness and competitiveness. It was 17–0, and Zernial was tired of the team taking a beating.

11. Hemsley's first major-league coaching job came with the 1954 A's. He also coached the 1961–62 Washington Senators. His best MLB playing seasons were with the 1934–35 St. Louis Browns, managed by Rogers Hornsby. He hit .304 for the 1934 Browns with 31 doubles, and .290 with 32 doubles in 1935. Hemsley was an AL All-Star with the 1935–36 Browns, 1939–40 Cleveland, and 1944 Yankees. He managed against Rogers Hornsby during the 1950–51 Puerto Rico season, when Hornsby's Ponce Lions played Hemsley's San Juan Senators. Hemsley passed away in Washington, D.C. at age 65.

12. The Philadelphia A's lost 100 or more games in 11 seasons: 1915–16, 1919–21, 1936, 1940, 1943, 1946, 1950, and 1954. They finished 50–59 games behind the first-place team in six seasons: 1915–16, 1919–20, 1939, and 1946. The 1939 St. Louis Browns (43–111) finished 64.5 games behind the New York Yankees. The 1932 Boston Red Sox (43–111) trailed the Yankees by 64 games at season's end. The 1935 Boston Braves (38–115) finished 61.5 games behind the Chicago Cubs in the NL, in Babe Ruth's last season as a major leaguer. Ruth's 1927 Yankees (110–44) finished 59 games ahead of the last place Boston Red Sox (51–103). In 1961, the Yankees won 109 and Detroit won 101, while Kansas City and Washington lost 100 games each. The 1962 San Francisco Giants (103–62) and Los Angeles Dodgers (102–63), along with the 59–103 Cubs and 40–120 Mets expansion team accomplished this feat in the NL.

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The author deeply appreciates the insights furnished by all the persons cited, in particular: Dr. Bobby Brown, “Cot” Deal, Art Ditmar, “Spook” Jacobs, Vic Power, Bill Renna, and Bobby Shantz. Thanks to Jerry Moses for furnishing Bobby Shantz’s contact information.

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Handy in a Pinch: Dave Philley

Cort Vitty

Fans of the 1958 Philadelphia Phillies had little to cheer about at the end of a rather dismal season. When the final standings were posted, the club was firmly planted dead last in the National League. One bright note was the team's pinch-hitting performance: It led both major leagues with an impressive batting average of .308 and 11 home runs.¹ A leading contributor to this clutch performance was a well-traveled veteran named Dave Philley, who hit .404 off the bench and ended the season with a remarkable streak of eight consecutive pinch safeties to set a major-league record. Not bad for a 38-year-old journeyman making his second tour of the city.

Philadelphians likely remembered Philley from his first stint in the City of Brotherly Love during the early part of the decade. Back then he was a defensive stalwart for the Philadelphia Athletics, regularly patrolling center field, where he covered lots of ground with his long, graceful strides and exceptional speed. He also possessed a rifle arm, fully capable of cutting down opposing baserunners. Dave Philley's career was radically transformed during the decade of the 1950s and he did it in his own workmanlike style.

Born May 16, 1920, in Garrett's Bluff, a suburb of Paris, Texas, David Earl was the second son of Maxie and Leila Philley. Baseball ran in the family; Dave's dad played semi-pro ball in East Texas, while older brother Noel and younger brother Frank each had brief professional careers. In addition to baseball, Dave excelled at football, track, and boxing at Chicota High School, where he also became a local Golden Gloves champ.

As a youngster, Dave naturally batted left and threw right-handed, until a fall from a tree cracked a bone in his left arm. The injury made it impossible for the eight-year-old to swing from his natural side, but wanting to continue playing the game he loved, he learned to hit right-handed. Proper healing was a long, drawn-out process, so he had lots of practice batting right-handed and became so adept that he continued to switch-hit after the arm fully recovered.²

Signed by the Chicago White Sox as a catcher in 1940, he was quickly shifted to the outfield to capitalize

on his fine speed. Although an outfield novice, Philley did well enough to warrant a brief (seven-game) trial with the parent White Sox late in 1941. When Manager Jimmy Dykes cautiously inserted the rookie into the lineup against the Washington Nationals, Philley completely lost one ball hit in his direction and, later, a scorching line drive barely missed his head. A Washington sportswriter commented: "A rookie named Dave Philley played left field for five innings and escaped without serious injury." Dykes later preemptively "removed the youngster before being charged with manslaughter."³ Philley carried the tattered news clipping in his wallet for many years.

Philley served in the United States Army from early 1942 until after the end of WWII. He was discharged in 1946 and returned to work out the kinks with Milwaukee in the American Association, hitting .329 in 130 games, which was good enough to warrant another late-season call-up by the White Sox. He became Chicago's regular center fielder in 1947, hitting .258 in 143 games. His 21 stolen bases ranked second in the league and his 11 triples placed him third in that category. White Sox General Manager Frank Lane admired Philley's style, calling him "a battler not afraid of anything."⁴

The six-foot, 188-pound Philley improved to a .287 mark in 1948, while leading all AL outfielders with 22 assists. A 1949 move to right field didn't affect his hitting or fielding one bit, as Philley posted a .286 average, while again leading the league with 16 assists.

Realizing he hit about 100 points higher from the port side of the plate, Philley toyed with the idea of becoming strictly a left-handed batter in 1950. The test ended early in the season at Yankee Stadium, when he was jammed with a pitch.⁵ The close call prompted him to resume switch-hitting—at the time he was the only regular in the American League to do so. He finished the season with a career-best 14 home runs, although his average dipped to .242. Philley later acknowledged his productivity suffered at this point in his career, due to his self-imposed tendency to swing for the fences.

By 1951, his former skipper Jimmy Dykes was running the Philadelphia Athletics, and on April 30, he acquired Philley as part of a rare three-team deal, involving the A's,

White Sox, and Cleveland. Dykes had always admired Philley's style of play and was happy to have him back. Philley settled into center field, while fellow acquisition (and roommate) Gus Zernial patrolled left. Right fielder Elmer Valo filled the remaining slot among the outfield corps. It's interesting to note that all three would go on to become prominent pinch-hitters later in their respective careers.

After hitting .263 in 1951 with Philadelphia, and again in 1952, Dave decided to switch bats early in 1953. He'd been using a 47.5-ounce model as a left-handed hitter, but from the right side he preferred a 34-ounce piece of lumber. The monstrous war-club was a thick handled model brought to the clubhouse one day by Father William J. Casey, an old friend of Manager Dykes. Father Casey visited the team, accompanied by the 47.5-ounce bat he used in college. Dykes passed it around and intimated that modern players couldn't handle such a bat. Zernial later recalled: "We all swung it around a little for warm-up, but Dave got to fooling around with it more than the rest of us. He began going up to the plate with it and one day at Yankee Stadium he lined one right into the stands. Well after that, it was his regular bat and he did well with it."⁶ Philley abandoned the bat early in 1953, however, and began using his 34-ounce model from both sides.

The lighter bat produced immediate results and helped Philley enjoy his most productive offensive season yet, hitting .303 in 157 games for the A's. Philley worked hard at his craft and practiced to become an exceptional bunter, and he once led the A's in sacrifices. Defensively, he again led all AL outfielders with 18 assists.

After his success in 1953, the A's simply couldn't meet Philley's salary demands. As a result, he was traded to Cleveland just prior to the start of the 1954 season. He learned of the transaction while negotiating a cattle deal in Oklahoma, and he couldn't have been happier. "With Cleveland, I'll have a chance at the pennant. They're nice people and fine players. It's a real break for me." Cleveland GM Hank Greenberg added: "He's fast of foot, a good defensive man, and an outstanding hustler. We've got another solid outfielder who can be very helpful to us. He's the kind of ballplayer we've been looking for."⁷

The hard-playing Philley liked to win and called himself "the most hated player in the American League." He confidently stated, "I never look for trouble,"⁸ but teammates and opposition alike agreed he never ran from it either. "I play so hard to win that if a man gets in my way, I go into him, knock him down. If I was a manager and one of my men didn't go into the second baseman to break up the double play, I'd fire him. That's part of team play."⁹

In 1954, Cleveland was pennant bound. Cleveland teammates and fans agreed that the Paris outfielder was the man who built the pennant fire under the team, even though he hit only .226 for the season.¹⁰ Philley made his only World Series appearance that October, as the New York Giants swept favored Cleveland in four straight. Philley started the first and third games, both against right-handed pitching. In the first inning of Game 1, he narrowly missed a two-run homer when Don Mueller, with his back firmly planted against the right-field fence, hauled in his deep drive.

In 1954, the St. Louis Browns became the Baltimore Orioles, but despite relocating, the team still finished a dismal seventh. Under manager Paul Richards, 1955 started out even worse: the O's opened the season at a 20-53 clip. Desperate to add offensive punch, Richards learned that Philley was available and promptly plucked the big Texan off the waiver list from Cleveland. The acquisition immediately sparked the club, with Philley hitting .299 as a regular outfielder. The Orioles went 37-45 after his arrival and the media voted him *Most Valuable Oriole* for 1955.

Philley was traded by Baltimore back to the White Sox, in a multi-player deal on May 21, 1956. Hitting .265, while adding first base to his growing resume of defensive positions, he helped Chicago finish third in the American League. The versatile Philley also saw action in the outfield for the White Sox. Traded to Detroit on June 14, 1957, Philley was primarily a pinch-hitter and hit .400 off the bench, while posting an overall mark of .283 for the fourth-place Tigers.

Philley was sold to the Phillies on December 11, 1957, giving the veteran his first opportunity to face National League pitching. Although he was acquired specifically for pinch-hitting duties, the 38-year-old was still agile enough for outfield or first-base duties. On May 17, 1958, while chasing a foul ball, the hard-playing veteran broke his nose while diving into the first base stands. The collision kept Philley out of the lineup for six days.

Overall, he feasted on NL pitching to the tune of a .309 average, producing 18 hits as a pinch-hitter, with eight coming consecutively at the end of the season. The last safety was on September 28, 1958, against the Pirates. It broke the previous record of seven consecutive pinch hits, set by Debs Garms of the Pirates in 1941. Although the Phillies finished in last place, their pinch-hitting corps, led by Philley and Bob Bowman, paced the club to a league-leading pinch-hitting average of .308. Also prominent off the bench were Rip Repulski and Wally Post. Philley remarked about his approach to pinch-hitting: "I guess you'd call it a battle of wits up there. You

learn more about pitchers. You have to keep learning.”¹¹

Philly believed he became a better player at this point in his career. Although he relished the opportunity to play every day, Philly acknowledged he did more thinking about the game as a reserve than he did when he was in the regular lineup. He studied opposing pitchers, learned their best pitches, and became better prepared when called upon in the late innings.

Philly extended his streak to nine hits in a row when he connected in his first appearance of the 1959 season. His seventh-inning double came in Milwaukee on April 16, 1959, against right-hander Lew Burdette, in a 7–3 Phillies loss. Philly elaborated on his overall approach to pinch-hitting: “I walk to the plate with all the confidence in the world. I figure I’ve got only one shot at it. I relax as much as possible, yet manage to bear down. Of course it helps to know the opposing pitchers. I study them as much as I can.”¹² Confidently standing at the plate in a significant crouch with his knees bent, Philly utilized a slightly open stance and level swing, usually offering at the first pitch in the strike zone.

A productive .291 mark for the 1959 Phillies resulted in his sale to the San Francisco Giants at the start of the 1960 season. Philly hit only .164 in 39 games. He was reunited with the Orioles and former manager Paul Richards on September 1, 1960. Although 40 years old at the time and once again obtained specifically for pinch-hitting duties, the veteran was immediately pressed into the lineup when starting left fielder Gene Woodling was injured. Philly hit .265 in 14 games.

By 1961, the Baltimore Orioles had become very respectable, winning 95 games and finishing a strong third in the American League. Coming off the bench, 41-year-old Dave Philly laced 24 safeties to establish an American League record. Despite his success as a pinch-hitter, the Orioles released Philly at the end of the season. By then, former boss Paul Richards was developing the expansion Houston Colt 45’s. He signed Philly as a free agent in 1962, and subsequently traded the veteran to the Boston Red Sox, where he wrapped up his big league career. Philly then returned to work for Richards as a minor-league manager in the Houston organization, helping to develop future stars in spring training, including Joe Morgan and Rusty Staub—the latter went on to tie Philly’s major-league pinch-hitting record. Philly also served as an instructor and scout for the Boston Red Sox.

Overall, Philly’s 1,700 hits in 6,296 at-bats produced a lifetime batting average of .270, with a total of 84 home runs, in a career spanning from World War II to the Kennedy administration. “I figured I’d play five or six

years,” said Philly. “I had one thing on my mind and that was to play big-league ball. Nothing was going to interfere with that.”¹³

Philly was a competitor and strived to improve every aspect of his game. A believer in top physical conditioning, he was a proponent of fingertip push-ups, as taught to him by Ted Williams.¹⁴ Former Oriole teammate Willy Miranda related a story from the spring of 1956 when the holdout Philly and the tardy Miranda showed up late for spring training in Arizona. Arriving on the same evening, they were temporary roommates. Miranda commented how Philly arose the next morning at 6 A.M., sprang out of bed, hit the floor, and did 50 push-ups without even losing his breath. He then coaxed Miranda out of bed to do the same. Philly regularly turned in early, always got plenty of sleep, watched his diet, and strictly adhered to training rules. The strongest drink he would consume was soda pop, and an admitted vice was smoking an occasional cigar.¹⁵

Dave Philly played major-league baseball with the same no-nonsense efficiency he successfully utilized in operating his 557-acre Texas ranch and managing his other business enterprises. In retirement, he became an active community leader and held several local elected posts. He enjoyed fishing and quail hunting with fellow Texan and former major leaguer Eddie Robinson. Often in demand as an after dinner speaker, Philly would happily appear before youth and church groups. A devout Baptist, he spoke frankly about his religious views, and had no patience for major leaguers who set bad examples with partying and carousing.¹⁶ Philly was tending his Texas ranch when he passed away from an apparent heart attack on March 15, 2012, at the age of 91.

Primarily remembered as one of the game’s finest pinch-hitters, fans in Philadelphia could attest that Philly was much more. He actually had two very distinct careers while wearing the uniform of eight different major-league teams. In addition to his pinch-hitting prowess, he earlier played as a regular at multiple positions. He was fast afield and a threat to steal bases. A more than adequate switch-hitter, he possessed some power and a strong throwing arm. “Durable Dave” was quite handy to have around for over 20 years. In many respects, he was the exceptionally rare pinch hitter, possessing all five tools. ■

ENDNOTES

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2. “Dave Philly is Fighting Slump,” *Salisbury Times*, April 24, 1956.
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4. Art Morrow, “Hoodooed Hitter Philly Swings on Jinx,” *The Sporting News*, May 17, 1953.

5. "Hats Off," *The Sporting News*, May 6, 1953.
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12. Allen Lewis, "Philly and Bowman Give Phillies Top Clutch Hitting Team," *The Sporting News*, May 20, 1959.
13. Tom Waits, "Memories Vivid for Philly," *Paris News*, June 20, 1990.
14. Dan Dunkin, "Dave Philley, Still a Ballplayer After All These Years," *Paris News*, July 3, 1983.
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16. "Dave Philley: Baseball is His Business," *Paris News*, March 8, 1959.

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Philadelphia Area Teams that Have Participated in the Little League World Series

Mark Kanter

There have been a number of baseball pennants and world championships in the Philadelphia and nearby New Jersey area over the last 120 years. The Phillies have participated in seven world championships, the A's won nine pennants and participated in eight world championships, and the Philadelphia Stars won the 1934 Negro National League championship. However, participating in baseball championships is not confined to the professional rung. Amateur boys and girls play for the Little League World Series. Boys began play in 1947 and girls in 1974. Former LL players include President George W. Bush, vice presidents Dan Quayle and Joe Biden, Basketball Hall of Famer Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, as well as major-league baseball players Dusty Baker, Lloyd McClendon, Boog Powell, and Mike Schmidt among many others. Little League Baseball has become part of the fabric of America.¹

By the 1950s, Little League had sprung up all over the United States. In particular, New Jersey and eastern Pennsylvania were fertile ground. Eighteen teams from communities within 65 miles of Philadelphia have played in the Little League World Series. Five of those teams won the championship.

Early on, the Little League World Series, held each year in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, had more of a local flavor. Many of the participating teams were from locations that were relatively close to Williamsport. By 1960, Berlin, Germany was added as it had sons of troops stationed nearby. By the mid 1960s, it included teams from Asia, most notably Japan and Taiwan. In 2012, a team from Uganda, Africa, which was spurred on by Phillies shortstop Jimmy Rollins, appeared in the Little League World Series. As the Series has grown over the past 65 years, participating teams travel from almost all over the world to compete in this highly competitive tournament.

The Philadelphia area has had five communities win the Little League World Series: Hammonton, New Jersey in 1949; Morrisville, Pennsylvania, in 1955; Levittown, Pennsylvania, in 1960; Lakewood, New Jersey, in 1975; and Toms Rivers, New Jersey, in 1998.

Hammonton, New Jersey, was incorporated in 1866 and is referred to as the Blueberry capital of the world,

though other towns in the US also claim that moniker. The Hammonton team was made up of kids who just played ball all the time. "We basically lived on the ball field in those days. You would wake up in the morning and go right to the field, because there wasn't much else for you to do," said Sidney Norcross, 72, of Winslow Township in Camden County. "To us, this was just another chance to play ball."² The team used pitcher Joe DiGiacomo as often as possible. Because he would frequently pitch in consecutive games, Little League changed the rule: A player would no longer be allowed to pitch in consecutive games. DiGiacomo would later pitch in the Cubs organization in Iowa.

Morrisville, Pennsylvania won the Little League World Series in 1955. Morrisville is an old town that sits on the Delaware River, about 30 miles north of Philadelphia, across from Trenton, New Jersey. At one time, Morrisville was considered to be so important that it fell two votes short of becoming the capital of the United States. It is an old established community that served as George Washington's headquarters during the Revolutionary War, in December of 1776. Morrisville won the Series against Merchantville, New Jersey on a walk-off home run—Rich Cominski's leadoff homer in the bottom of the seventh, which was the first extra inning of the game. One player from that team, Dick Hart, played in the Milwaukee Braves organization before becoming a professional football player, playing guard for the Philadelphia Eagles.³ Billy Hunter, the recent National Basketball Players Association (NBPA) head, was one of the star players for Merchantville (Delaware County). In fact, he was their star pitcher, who could not pitch more than six innings in that game. His replacement gave up the home run to Cominski.⁴

Five years later, in 1960, Levittown became the next and most recent team from Pennsylvania to win the Little League World Series. Although Morrisville and Levittown are separated by five years and a mere five miles, they are polar opposites in terms of community history. Levittown did not even exist a decade earlier, whereas Morrisville had been in existence for more than 200 years.

By 1960, at a mere eight years old, Levittown was

ready to enter the “big time” in Williamsport. It was the brainchild of the Levitt family who understood that World War II veterans, just out of college, and workers at the new steel mill in Fairless Hills needed inexpensive housing. Levittown, which saw its first family move in in 1952 and would grow to 70,000 people by 1957, was just the thing that young people in the burgeoning 1950s needed and desired. Many buyers of these houses were living in cramped apartments and/or with extended family in Philadelphia, Trenton, and New York City. Many were young married couples with growing families, making up for the war’s lost time. There were three Little Leagues in Levittown in 1960. It boasted a high level of baseball competition due to the many 11–13-year-old boys—the first wave of baby boomers—some of them good enough to make the Levittown American Little League All-Star Squad.

The two top players were pitchers Joe Mormello and Julian Kalkstein. Mormello’s father had played under the name of Joe Martin in the St. Louis Cardinals organization. Mormello went to Rider College, hurt his knee, and never played again. But, he struck out 16 Fort Worth batters while tossing a no-hitter in the Little League World Series championship game on August 27, 1960. He also hit a home run in the game⁵ While leading the team to a 5–0 victory.⁶ Mormello became a chiropractor in Levittown, where he still practices. After becoming the winning pitcher in the Eastern Regional tournament, Julian Kalkstein was congratulated by Bob Feller.⁷ Known as Jules Kalkstein, he went on to become a lawyer for the City of New York.

A crowd of approximately 25,000 welcomed the victorious team on Sunday evening, August 28, 1960, at the Levittown Shopping Center.⁸ The author visited that shopping center numerous times throughout his formative years, and his father’s department store provided an advertisement congratulating the team on its victory.⁹ To this day, Levittown’s championship is still remembered through team photographs that can be seen in various restaurants throughout the community.

Lakewood, New Jersey is 65 miles away from Philadelphia. Former major-league baseball players Dick Estelle and Mookie Wilson, as well as current Los Angeles Dodgers part owner Stan Kasten, were born there. Lakewood won the championship in 1975, the year that the Little League did not allow any team from the Far East to participate in the championship. This was in response to the teams from the Far East winning the previous seven of eight World Series. Because of unfavorable reactions, international teams were allowed back into competition in 1976.

None of the players became major leaguers, but Dion Lowe, a pitcher and the best hitter on the squad, played in the Phillies organization.

Toms River is situated 58 miles east of Philadelphia, and was known as Dover Township when it was established in 1768. The 1998 Little League World Series championship team was led by winning pitcher Todd Frazier, who hit a home run in the decisive game. Until 2011, no major leaguer had played for any of the Philadelphia area teams that won the Little League World Series. But, all of that changed when Frazier got called up by the Cincinnati Reds in the summer of 2011. He competed for the 2012 National League Rookie of the Year Award playing both first and third base for the 2012 National League Central winners.

Eleven other Philadelphia-area teams have participated in the Little League World Series. Some of these teams have participated a number of times, including: Hammonton, New Jersey; Delaware Township (Merchantville), New Jersey; Levittown, Pennsylvania; and Toms Rivers, New Jersey. The other communities include: Upper Darby, Pennsylvania; Hamilton Square, New Jersey; Newtown Square, Pennsylvania; Wilmington, Delaware; and Newtown, Pennsylvania.

Hammonton, New Jersey participated in the first two Little League World Series tournaments, in 1947 and 1948, before winning in 1949. Fred Shapiro, pitching for the Delaware Township team in 1956, threw the first perfect game in Little League World Series against Colton, California in a semifinal game. Levittown, in 1961, lost in the first round to El Cajon, California, the eventual champion.¹⁰

In 1992, the team from Hamilton Square—adjacent to Trenton, 35 miles from Philadelphia—beat Lake Charles, Louisiana in the first night game in Little League World Series history. Night games allowed for more contests to be played—each team in the tournament would now play at least three games.¹¹ Then they lost to Long Beach, California, which was managed by Jeff Burroughs. Jeff’s son Sean was the star of the team and pitched a complete-game shutout against Hamilton Square, to win the game 1–0.¹² Long Beach went on to be credited with the World Series win when the Zamboanga City, Philippines team was disqualified due age related improprieties. Sean later played for the Padres, Rays, Diamondbacks, and Twins over seven big-league seasons.

Toms River, New Jersey played in three of the five LLWS tournaments from 1195–99. In 1995, the team participated in the pool play round before the semifinals. They lost two out of three games and were eliminated from the World Series. Jeff Frazier, who played for the

Tigers in 2010, played in this tournament. In 1999, Toms River lost in the semifinal round to Phenix City, Alabama. Colby Rasmus played for Phenix City, which lost in the final game to Japan.

Wilmington, Delaware, in 2003, Newtown, Pennsylvania, in 2005, and Toms Rivers, in 2010, all lost in the pool play round and were eliminated from the tournament.

In 1956, *Sports Illustrated's* Jimmy Jemial interviewed members of the Little League World Series teams. Upper Darby, Pennsylvania and Delaware Township, New Jersey participated in the World Series, and two players from each team were interviewed: Jimmy McGlynn and Dick Costello from Upper Darby and Wilbur Robinson and Fred Shapiro from Delaware Township. When asked about their life ambitions they all suggested that they wanted to keep playing baseball and go to college. McGlynn seemed to be very serious as he said that he wanted to study mechanical engineering. Costello wanted to have fun, and that there was time before he had to think about what he wanted to do after college. Shapiro, the perfect-game pitcher, wanted to work with the "brain machines." The author assumes that this means computers. Robinson wanted to study business administration.¹³

Newtown Square, situated 25 miles from Philadelphia, finished third in the 1967 World Series, losing, 4–1, to the eventual champion West Tokyo, Japan. The team did beat Linares, Nuevo León, 2–1, in the consolation game to grab third place.¹⁴

Early on, the Little League World Series did have a number of participating teams from the host state and New Jersey. Specifically, the 1940s, 50s, and 60's were fertile for local teams. However, the Little League World Series soon became "big time" and now hosts teams from many parts of the world. This did not stop teams close to Philadelphia from participating, they just had to compete with the rest of the world. New Jersey did make a comeback in the 1990s as it played a prominent role in World Series competition. ■

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Mitch Williams' Amazing Month: Eight Wins Out of the Bullpen

Bob Bogart

The Phillies concluded July 1991 having lost seven straight games on a West Coast trip. A pair of wins on July 30 and 31 over the Padres at Veterans Stadium, however, moved them to within one game of the Montreal Expos, with whom they had usually rivaled for the NL East basement.

NL EAST STANDINGS FOLLOWING THE GAMES OF JULY 31, 1991

Team	W	L	PCT	GB
Pittsburgh Pirates	60	39	.606	-
New York Mets	55	45	.550	5.5
St. Louis Cardinals	53	47	.530	7.5
Chicago Cubs	48	52	.480	12.5
Montreal Expos	3	57	.430	17.5
Philadelphia Phillies	42	58	.420	18.5

On April 7 of that season, the Phillies traded pitchers Chuck McElroy and Bob Scanlan to the Chicago Cubs to acquire Mitch Williams, a 26-year-old left-handed pitcher. Phillies skipper Jim Fregosi designated him as the club's late-inning reliever and through the end of July, Williams had posted a 1-3 record with 19 saves and an ERA of 2.70.

The Phillies began that August with a four-game road trip to Montreal. Philadelphia continued its winning ways on the evening of August 1, defeating the Expos at Olympic Stadium, 4-1, in a complete-game effort by Terry Mulholland, who improved to 10-10 with the victory.

But then ... it began: Mitch Williams' amazing month.

A month in which Williams would be the winning pitcher in eight ballgames, challenging the National League's record of nine wins in a month, first set by Christy Mathewson in August 1903 and 1904, and then tied by Grover Cleveland Alexander in May of 1920. Seventy-one years after "Old Pete," and completely out of the blue, "Wild Thing" was about to threaten these Hall of Famers for the mark.

Many probably think that Williams must have set up his own wins by blowing saves, only to have the Phillies rally in their final at-bat and secure "vultured" victories for Williams. The assumption certainly follows the

reputation Williams carried throughout his career, but it could not be further from the truth. While there were a couple of vultured wins and many tightrope acts along the way, Williams earned most of his victories normally: by holding the opposition scoreless long enough to allow his teammates to score the winning run.

VICTORY #1: AUGUST 2, 1991

With the score tied 5-5, Williams was summoned to pitch the bottom of the ninth in Olympic Stadium. After retiring Larry Walker, he walked Gil Reyes, who left for pinch-runner Eric Bullock. Bullock proceeded to steal second and third, but Williams stranded him by fanning the next two hitters.

The Phils failed to score in the top of the 10th, and once again, Williams had to pitch out of trouble in the bottom of the inning. Delino DeShields led off with a walk and was balked to second by Williams. But Williams killed the scoring threat, retiring the next three hitters.

Dickie Thon led off the top of the 11th with a homer off Mel Rojas. Mike Hartley entered the game in the bottom of the 11th and retired the Expos in order to save the game for Philadelphia. Williams, with the victory, improved his record to 2-3.

Williams did not appear in the next Phillies game on August 3 in Montreal, but the Phils continued their winning ways, defeating the Expos 7-1.

VICTORY #2: AUGUST 4, 1991

With the score knotted at two runs apiece heading to the bottom of the ninth, Mitch Williams was called upon to try to send the game into extra innings.

Larry Walker started the inning by drawing a walk. Mike Fitzgerald attempted to bunt Walker into scoring position, but Williams fielded the ball and threw errantly to first base, allowing Walker to reach third and Fitzgerald to reach second with no outs. Bret Barberie was walked intentionally to load the bases. The high-wire act had a successful outcome, though. Junior Noboa popped out to second for the first out. Delino DeShields then hit a grounder to first baseman Ricky Jordan, who threw home for the force on Walker for out number two. Finally,

Williams retired Marquis Grissom on a pop to Jordan for the third out, sending the game into extra innings.

In the top of the 10th, Lenny Dykstra legged out an infield single with one out, stole second, and scored on Dale Murphy's RBI double to put the Phillies ahead, 3-2. Williams remained in the game and set down the Expos in 1-2-3 fashion in the bottom of the inning to secure the win, evening his record at 3-3.

VICTORY #3: AUGUST 6, 1991

Following an off day on August 5, the Phillies returned home on August 6 for the start of a three-game series against the Chicago Cubs.

With the game tied, 2-2, after nine innings, Wally Ritchie held the Cubs scoreless in the top of the 10th, and after the Phils failed to score in the bottom of the inning, Williams was called upon to pitch the 11th. Once again, it wasn't pretty, but it had a nice outcome for Phillies fans. Shawon Dunston started the Cubs' half of the 11th with a walk and stole second. Rick Wilkins was then plunked with a "Wild Thing" pitch, putting the first two Cubs aboard. But Williams settled down: Jerome Walton popped out to first, Chico Walker lined out to right, and Mark Grace grounded out to second to end the Chicago threat. The Phillies then won the game in the bottom of the 11th with a Dale Murphy walk-off grand slam. Williams improved his record to 4-3.

VICTORY #4: AUGUST 7, 1991

Carrying a seven-game winning streak into the contest on August 7, the Phillies battled to a 4-4 tie heading into the 11th inning. Williams was once again brought in to try to keep the game knotted and, in atypical fashion, he retired the Cubs in order.

Les Lancaster entered the game for Chicago in the bottom of the inning, and retired Dickie Thon on a comebacker. But then the wheels came off the bus as Randy Ready singled and went to third when Lenny Dykstra doubled to left. Darren Daulton was intentionally walked, and Wes Chamberlain sent the Veterans Stadium crowd of 26,294 home happy by singling to center to score Ready and give the Phils a 5-4 win in 11 innings. Williams again claimed the victory, upping his record to 5-3.

The following afternoon, the Phils beat the Cubs, 11-1, behind a strong outing by Danny Cox and Steve Searcy, lengthening the Phillies' winning streak to nine games.

VICTORY #5: AUGUST 9, 1991

After the Cubs left town, the Phillies welcomed the Montreal Expos for the start of a four-game series. In the top of the eighth, with one out and runners on first

and third, Williams was summoned from the bullpen. He walked the first hitter he faced, Andres Galarraga, to load the bases.

Delino DeShields then followed by working a walk as well, forcing home Barberie with the tying run, and giving Williams a blown save. But Williams kept the score tied at four by retiring Dave Martinez on a 4-3 ground-ball double play.

Williams benefitted as the Phillies scored a run in the bottom of the eighth, and stayed on to pitch the top of the ninth. Ivan Calderon started the inning by looking at a called third strike, but Wild Thing was in trouble when he hit Larry Walker with a pitch after giving up a double to Tim Wallach. Gil Reyes fanned for the second out, and Barberie ended the game by flying out to right. The Phils had won, 5-4, with Williams emerging as the winning pitcher for the fifth time in seven games, spanning eight days.

The Phillies' winning ways would continue through the weekend, as they beat the Expos, 4-2, on August 10. Williams made an appearance in the game, entering to pitch the ninth inning in an attempt to pick up a save. He retired Mike Fitzgerald on a comebacker to start the frame, and forced pinch-hitter Spike Owen to bounce out to short for the second out. Delino DeShields then doubled to left, bringing Marquis Grissom to the plate as the potential tying run. But Grissom grounded out to short to end the game, giving the Phillies their 11th straight victory and Williams his 20th save of the season.

On Sunday August 11, Williams appeared in his third straight game, entering to pitch the ninth after the Phillies took a 5-4 lead. After Williams retired the first two hitters, Marquis Grissom walked, and then stole second. But Bret Barberie took a called third strike to end the game, providing the Phillies a dozen consecutive wins and Williams his 21st save.

A Monday night game concluded the four-game series. The Phils extended their run to 13 straight victories by beating the Expos, 2-1, behind a complete-game effort by Terry Mulholland. The 13th win tied the Phillies' twentieth century club record for consecutive wins, set August 3-16, 1977. During the streak, the Phillies had gained nine games on first-place Pittsburgh, and were closing in rapidly on the fourth-place Cubs.

NL EAST STANDINGS FOLLOWING THE GAMES OF AUGUST 12, 1991

Team	W	L	PCT	GB
Pittsburgh Pirates	65	45	.591	-
St. Louis Cardinals	58	52	.527	7.0

New York Mets	57	54	.514	8.5
Chicago Cubs	56	55	.505	9.5
Philadelphia Phillies	53	58	.477	12.5
Montreal Expos	44	66	.400	21.0

The Phils then embarked on a six-game road trip that would take them to Pittsburgh for three games and Chicago for three. On August 13, the Phillies' winning streak would end as the Pirates beat them at Three Rivers Stadium, 4–3. The following evening, the Bucs won again, 5–3. Mitch Williams did not appear in either game.

On August 15, the Phils beat the Bucs in the Steel City. With a 6–4 lead heading to the bottom of the eighth, Mitch Williams was called on for a two-inning save. He retired the Pirates in 1-2-3 fashion in the eighth. After the Phils failed to score in the top of the ninth, Williams returned to the hill for the bottom of the inning. He worked his magic once again, retiring the Pirates in order to give the Phils a 6–4 win. It was Williams' 22nd save of the season.

The Phils then moved on to the friendly confines of Wrigley Field for a three-game set against the Cubs. On August 16, Bruce Ruffin could not complete the first inning, allowing six runs in one-third of an inning as Chicago defeated the Phils, 9–1. Williams did not appear in the contest, but the following afternoon he came to the rescue of the Phillies and Terry Mulholland.

Mulholland took a 5–1 lead into the bottom of the ninth on August 17, and after allowing a leadoff single to George Bell, he got Luis Salazar to bounce into a 4-6-3 twin-killing. Needing just one more out for a complete game, Mulholland allowed a triple to Shawon Dunston. Joe Girardi's single to center plated Dunston to cut the Philadelphia lead to 5–2. Williams was called upon to record the final out.

Williams walked the first batter he faced, Chico Walker, to bring the potential tying run to the plate. Hector Villanueva pinch-hit for Jerome Walton, and Williams retired him on an easy fly to right, preserving the 5–2 Philadelphia win and earning his 23rd save.

On the afternoon of August 18, Williams would prove that he was indeed still fallible—he lost a game. It would be his only defeat in the month of August.

Williams entered the game in the bottom of the ninth inning with the score tied at six. In the top of the 10th, Paul Assenmacher set down the Phillies in order, and Williams returned for the bottom of the 10th.

Mark Grace started the inning by bouncing out to second baseman Randy Ready. Ryne Sandberg reached on an infield single to third before Andre Dawson popped

out to third for the second out. Sandberg then stole second, and scored when Shawon Dunston singled to left, giving Chicago a 7–6 win in 10 innings, and hanging the loss on Williams, who fell to 6–4 on the season.

August 19 was an offday for the Phillies, and on the 20th the team opened a three-game series at the Vet against Pittsburgh. Despite the Phillies using five pitchers in their 6–5, walk-off win against the Bucs, Williams did not appear in the game.

VICTORY #6: AUGUST 21, 1991

In the top of the eighth inning, Pittsburgh was rallying against Phillies starter Jose de Jesus. After Gary Varsho's two-out double plated Mike Lavalliere and John Wehner to bring the Pirates back to within one, at 5–4, Williams entered the game to try for the four-out save. It did not work.

The first batter Williams faced was Gary Redus, who promptly stroked a single to right, scoring Varsho from second to knot the game at five runs apiece. Redus then swiped second, but Williams fanned Jay Bell for the third out.

The game remained tied entering the bottom of the ninth against the Bucs' Bob Kipper. Ricky Jordan led off with a double to right, and was replaced by pinch-runner Braulio Castillo. Lenny Dykstra's single to center moved Castillo to third, and Kipper was lifted in favor of Bill Landrum. Dykstra stole second. With the infield drawn in, Randy Ready grounded to third for the first out, with the runners holding their bases. Wes Chamberlain fouled out to first, and Landrum could see his way out of the inning. John Kruk was walked intentionally to load the bases and bring up Williams' spot in the order. Wally Backman hit for Williams, singling into right-center to score Castillo. The Phillies had emerged victorious once again, winning for the second straight night in walk-off fashion, 6–5.

VICTORY #7: AUGUST 22, 1991

The Phillies and Pirates were tied, 3–3, at the end of nine, so play proceeded into extra innings with Mitch Williams taking over the Philadelphia pitching duties in the top of the 10th. Despite a leadoff walk, Williams escaped the inning unscathed. The Phillies failed to push home a runner from second with two outs in the bottom of the 10th, and the game went into the 11th. Once again, Williams kept the Bucs' bats in check.

Bill Landrum started the bottom of the 11th for Pittsburgh, allowing a leadoff single to center by Wes Chamberlain. A walk to John Kruk advanced Chamberlain to second, and both runners advanced a base when

Charlie Hayes put down a perfect sacrifice bunt. Bob Kipper replaced Landrum, and intentionally walked Jim Lindeman to load the bases. Darren Daulton then singled to right, scoring Chamberlain to give the Phillies a 4–3 win in 11 innings, and a sweep of the Pirates in three straight walk-off wins. Williams was the beneficiary, winning the game to improve to 8–4.

The sweep allowed the Phillies to move to within 1 1/2 games of the front-running Pirates, and to within one game of fourth-place New York.

NL EAST STANDINGS FOLLOWING THE GAMES OF AUGUST 22, 1991

Team	W	L	PCT	GB
Pittsburgh Pirates	70	49	.588	-
St. Louis Cardinals	64	55	.538	6.0
Chicago Cubs	61	59	.508	9.5
New York Mets	59	61	.492	11.5
Philadelphia Phillies	58	62	.483	12.5
Montreal Expos	48	71	.403	22.0

Philadelphia headed on the road to Atlanta on August 23 to start a three-game weekend set with the Braves. Williams did not see action in the Friday evening game, as Tom Glavine and the Braves defeated the Phillies, 4–2.

VICTORY #8: AUGUST 24, 1991

In Saturday night's game, the Phils took a 5–4 lead into the bottom of the eighth, when Phillies manager Jim Fregosi called on Williams for a two-inning save. But the Braves had other ideas. Terry Pendleton started the bottom of the eighth by singling to center, and moved to second when David Justice drew a base on balls. Ron Gant also worked a walk to load the bases with no one out. Williams retired Brian Hunter on an infield fly to second for the first out. However, Greg Olson tied the game on a sacrifice fly to center that plated Pendleton. Jeff Blauser was caught looking to end the inning, and the teams advanced to the ninth inning, knotted at five.

Tony Castillo came on to pitch for Atlanta in the ninth, and struck out Lenny Dykstra for the first out. But Charlie Hayes homered to left to put the Phils back on top, 6–5. Williams came out to pitch the bottom of the ninth and try to lock down his eighth win of August.

Williams surrendered a walk, but otherwise stymied the Braves. The Phillies had a 6–5 win, with Williams picking up the victory to run his record to 9–4. It was Williams' third win in four days, and pulled him within one victory of tying the National League record for wins in a calendar month.

Williams also saw action in the final game of the

series. With the Phillies ahead 6–5 in the bottom of the eighth and the Braves having the tying run at third with two outs, Williams relieved Wally Ritchie. Williams retired Terry Pendleton on a liner to center, ending the Atlanta threat. After the Phillies went down 1-2-3 in the top of the ninth, Williams promptly walked the first batter, Ron Gant. But Gant would never reach second base as Williams retired David Justice on a fly to left, Brian Hunter on a fly to center, and then whiffed Francisco Cabrera to end the game. The Phils had yet another August win, defeating the Braves 6–5 with Williams notching save number 24 on the season.

After Atlanta, the Phils continued their road trip by moving on to Cincinnati for two games. Williams did not appear in either game at Riverfront Stadium as the Reds won both: 5–4 on August 26 and 4–2 on August 27.

The team returned home for a two-game series against Houston on August 28. With the Phillies ahead, 8–7, going to the top of the eighth, Williams came into the game. Once again, he was in hot water from the outset as Rafael Ramirez reached on an infield single and moved to second when Jeff Bagwell singled to left. Ken Caminiti then hit a grounder to third. Charlie Hayes stepped on the bag for the force on Ramirez, then fired to second for the force on Bagwell. Wally Backman's relay to first was late, but the Phils had recorded two outs on the play. Casey Candaele then ended the inning by striking out. The Phillies were retired in order in the bottom of the eighth, and action moved to the ninth with Williams still in the game.

Again, Williams was in trouble from the start. Steve Finley singled to right. Andujar Cedeno fanned, but Finley stole second on the third strike. Craig Biggio walked, and Luis Gonzalez was hit by a pitch to load the bases with Astros. Gerald Young hit a sacrifice fly to right, scoring Finley and tying the game, 8–8. Rafael Ramirez then struck out swinging to end the Astros threat.

If the Phillies could muster a run off Rob Mallicoat in the bottom of the ninth, Williams could pick up yet another win. Unfortunately, it wasn't meant to happen. Charlie Hayes started the inning by flying to left, but Randy Ready worked a walk. With the potential winning run at first, Xavier Hernandez was called into the game by Astros manager Art Howe. Hernandez struck out Ricky Jordan for the second out. Jim Lindeman, hitting for Williams, also fanned, sending the game into the 10th, still tied at eight. The Astros scored twice off Mike Hartley in the top of the 10th, but sacrifice flies by John Kruk and Darren Daulton re-tied the game. Charlie Hayes' RBI single with two outs scored Dale Murphy, and the Phillies wound up winning, 11–10, in 10 innings.

Williams did not appear the rest of the month, and

concluded August 1991 with an amazing eight wins.

Had August been just one day longer, however, Williams would have tied the record. On September 1, Williams entered a 4–4 game in the top of the ninth and pitched two scoreless innings against Atlanta. John Morris led off the bottom of the 10th with a homer, giving the Phils a 5–4 win, and Williams his 10th victory of the season.

Williams would go on to win two more games, picking up a win on September 19 against Montreal, and another October 4 against the Mets. He finished the season with a 12–5 record and 30 saves in 69 appearances.

In the month of August 1991, Williams posted these statistics:

G W L SV ERA IP H R ER BB SO WP HBP HR 2B 3B
 15 8 1 5 1.21 22.1 10 3 3 16 22 0 3 0 2 0

The Phillies finished August 1991 with a 20–9 record, the best month they had enjoyed since going 22–7 in September 1983.

NL EAST STANDINGS AFTER THE GAMES OF AUGUST 31, 1991

Team	W	L	PCT	GB
Pittsburgh Pirates	77	51	.602	-
St. Louis Cardinals	69	59	.539	8.0
Chicago Cubs	65	64	.504	12.5
New York Mets	63	66	.488	14.5
Philadelphia Phillies	62	67	.481	15.5
Montreal Expos	52	76	.406	25.0

The Phillies would finish the season in third place with a 78–84 mark, 20 games behind the NL East champion Pittsburgh Pirates. This had to give hope to Phillies fans who had expected a season where the club would struggle to avoid 100 losses. But thanks to Mitch Williams and his amazing August, the 1991 Phillies finished in the top half of the division standings for the first time since 1986. ■

FINAL 1991 NL EAST STANDINGS

Team	W	L	PCT	GB
Pittsburgh Pirates	98	64	.605	-
St. Louis Cardinals	84	78	.519	14.0
Philadelphia Phillies	78	84	.481	20.0
Chicago Cubs	77	83	.481	20.0
New York Mets	77	84	.478	20.5
Montreal Expos	71	90	.441	26.5

Pitch Perfect: Reexamining Brad Lidge's Performance in 2008 Using Win Probabilities Added and Leverage Index

Jim Sweetman

When Brad Lidge announced his retirement late in 2012, some commentators pointed to the home run he gave up to Albert Pujols in the 2005 NLCS as the defining moment of his career. To Phillies fans, though, the image of Lidge on his knees, arms raised in triumph after recording the final out of the 2008 World Series defines that magical season, if not Lidge's career as a Phillie. The association of this image to fond memories of 2008 is even more appropriate when one considers Lidge's overall contributions that year: a perfect record in 41 regular-season and seven postseason save opportunities. He became only the second player in major-league history to record at least 40 saves in a single season without blowing an opportunity.¹

And yet, while Lidge was perfect in save opportunities, he was not completely perfect. On July 25, he entered the game in the ninth with the Phillies down, 1–0, and gave up five runs to the Braves without recording an out. A month later he gave up two earned runs to the Mets in a game he entered with the score tied. He gave up single runs in six games in which he earned a save, thanks to a cushion provided by the potent Phillies offense. Surely, no full-time reliever has ever had a completely perfect season, and these few blemishes offer only the slightest hint at the decline in performance Lidge would experience in subsequent seasons. However, they do raise the question of how much better Lidge's performance was than other championship Phillies closers.

For the purposes of this exercise, we define a championship closer as a pitcher who earned half or more of the Phillies' saves in a year in which they won at least a division title since the adoption of the save as an official statistic in 1969: Ron Reed (1978), Tug McGraw (1980), Al Holland (1983), Mitch Williams (1993), Brett Myers (2007), Ryan Madson (2011), and Lidge himself in 2008, 2009 and 2010.² For additional context we've added Steve Bedrosian, who earned a Cy Young Award as Phillies closer in 1987, becoming the first pitcher in team history to record 40 saves in one season.

Using traditional statistics, Lidge's 2008 season stacks up very well against the comparison group (see Table 1). His ERA is second only to McGraw's in 1980 and more

than a run better than the group as a whole. He won only two games, but that was two more than he lost; the rest of the group averaged roughly even win-loss totals. Also, while Lidge never took a loss or blown save in 2008, on average, the others in the championship closers group failed to close out games left in their hands through a loss or blown save roughly nine times per year.

TABLE 1: PHILLIES CHAMPIONSHIP CLOSERS, TRADITIONAL STATISTICS

		W	L	S	BS	ERA
Reed	1978	3	4	17	2	2.24
McGraw	1980	5	4	20	5	1.46
Holland	1983	8	4	25	7	2.26
Bedrosian	1987	5	3	40	8	2.83
Williams	1993	3	7	43	6	3.34
Myers*	2007	5	5	21	3	2.87
Lidge	2008	2	0	41	0	1.95
Lidge	2009	0	8	31	11	7.21
Lidge	2010	1	1	27	5	2.96
Madson	2011	4	2	32	2	2.37
Average	(ex 2008)	3.8	4.2	28.4	5.4	3.05

* Throughout this paper, Myers' stats reflect only relief appearances and exclude his 3 starts in 2007.

source: Analysis of data from mlb.com

However, traditional statistics have well-known limitations in measuring the performance of relief pitchers. For example, ERA does not capture a pitcher's ability to keep inherited runners from scoring. Wins can be added and losses avoided when a pitcher is backed by an offense that has the ability to win games with late runs. A save can be awarded to a pitcher facing a single batter with a one-run lead, or one allowing two runs when entering with a three-run lead. This partly explains McGraw's average number of losses and blown saves despite a significantly better-than-average ERA.

These statistics can also have limited utility in comparing pitchers if there are significant differences in how the pitchers were used, a factor that has varied over time. In the period covered by our sample, Phillies closers were used for increasingly shorter appearances. Whereas Reed and McGraw averaged almost 1 2/3 innings per appearance, Holland and Bedrosian averaged about an inning and a third, while Williams and most of his

twenty-first century counterparts averaged just under an inning per appearance (see Table 2). This trend was not limited to the Phillies: The top 15 closers in saves in 1980 averaged 1.58 innings pitched per appearance, while the top 15 in 2009 averaged 0.98.

TABLE 2: INNINGS PITCHED PER GAME FOR PHILLIES CHAMPIONSHIP CLOSERS

		G	IP	IP/G
Reed	1978	66	108.7	1.65
McGraw	1980	57	92.3	1.62
Holland	1983	68	91.7	1.35
Bedrosian	1987	65	89.0	1.37
Williams	1993	65	62.0	0.95
Myers*	2007	48	53.3	1.11
Lidge	2008	72	69.3	0.96
Lidge	2009	67	58.7	0.88
Lidge	2010	50	45.7	0.91
Madson	2011	62	60.7	0.98

*relief appearances only
source: Analysis of data from mlb.com

In addition to differences in how closers were used within games, the number of games they appeared in varied, in part due to missed time during the season or changing roles within the pitching staff. McGraw injured himself trying to learn a side-arm pitch and went on the 21-day DL in the middle of the 1980 [source: TSN, 7-19-80, p. 27]. Holland opened the 1983 season on the DL with a sore shoulder [source: TSN, 4-18-83, p. 14]. In 2007, Myers was the Opening Day starter, but made only two more starts before being moved to the bullpen, first as a set-up man, then as closer to replace the injured Tom Gordon [source: PDN, 4-19-2007, p. 94 & 5-3-2007 p. 88]. He subsequently got injured late in May [source: Phila. Inquirer, 5-26-2007, p. E1] and then returned as closer in July. Lidge missed time with a sprained knee in 2009 and opened the 2010 season on the DL after elbow surgery [source: mlb.com transactions]. Ryan Madson started 2011 as a set-up man for Jose Contreras, then took over as closer in late April [source: Phila Inquirer 4-25-2011 p E12] before missing a month with a hand injury [source: PDN 7-16-2011 p. 29].

More recently adopted statistics can control for some of these differences by normalizing performance measures on a per-inning or per-batter basis. For example, WHIP (walks plus hits per inning pitched) and OBP (opponents' on-base percentage) both aim to measure how well pitchers perform their primary task, keeping batters off base. Using these measures, Lidge's 2008 season looks about average: not as good as McGraw or Holland, but not nearly as bad as the notorious tightrope walkers like Williams or the 2009 version of

Lidge (see Table 3). Instead of helping to explain Lidge's success in 2008, these stats instead raise a new question: How could he have been so successful at closing out games when he was just average at keeping runners off the basepaths?

TABLE 3: PHILLIES CHAMPIONSHIP PHILLIES CLOSERS, NORMALIZED STATISTICS (WHIP AND OBP)

		WHIP	OBP
Reed	1978	1.01	0.273
McGraw	1980	0.92	0.250
Holland	1983	1.01	0.254
Bedrosian	1987	1.20	0.297
Williams	1993	1.61	0.368
Myers*	2007	1.20	0.294
Lidge	2008	1.23	0.297
Lidge	2009	1.81	0.398
Lidge	2010	1.23	0.300
Madson	2011	1.15	0.296
Average	(ex 2008)	1.24	0.303

*relief appearances only
source: Analysis of data from mlb.com

One reason for the apparent inconsistency is that, like the traditional pitching statistics, normalized statistics also ignore the reliever's responsibility for keeping inherited runners from scoring. They are also similar in that they treat all at-bats equally. However, even casual fans recognize that some game situations are more risky than others. A pitcher facing a batter with a one-run lead and the bases loaded with no outs is in a far more critical situation than one facing the same batter with two outs, a three-run lead, and no one on.

A number of attempts have been made over the years to quantify these contextual differences by analyzing the results of actual games to determine the likelihood that a play would affect a game's final outcome, taking into account the specific game situation—like score differential, number of outs, and number and position of baserunners.³ Using the results for a specific situation, we can then go a step further by comparing the probability that a team will win in that situation with the same team's win probability after the next event (at-bat, stolen base, etc.) The result of this comparison, called Win Probability Added (WPA), can then be allocated to the players involved in the play, mainly the pitcher and batter. For example, on June 6, 2008, Lidge entered a game in Atlanta in the bottom of the 10th with two-run lead and retired the first batter of the inning, Brian McCann. Before that at-bat, historical data tell us that the Phillies had a 90% probability of winning the game. After the strikeout, that probability rose to 95.1%. As a result, we can credit Lidge with a WPA of 0.051 for recording the out and increasing his team's chances of

winning, and assign McCann a WPA of $-.051$ for making the out and decreasing his team's chances.

Tom Tango took this analysis a step further by calculating the likelihood that a positive or negative change would occur in each circumstance to come up with a Leverage Index (LI), an estimate of the criticality of each game situation.⁴ LIs below 0.8 are considered low leverage, and make up most game situations. An LI of between 1.6 and 2.9 is considered high leverage and LIs of 3.0 or more are classified as very high leverage.⁵

WPA and LI, then, provide additional context about the situations in which a player is used. These measures are particularly relevant for a relief pitcher because of his team's ability to control the situation in which he is brought into and taken out of a game. Using the data published by FanGraphs.com,⁶ we can examine the situational use and performance of our group of closers to better understand their relative contributions, and potentially explain the apparent inconsistency between Lidge's performance as measured by normalized and traditional statistics.

For example, one possible way a pitcher could appear good at saving games even when he's only average at keeping runners off base is if he came into games in primarily low-leverage situations. Tango's Leverage Index can shed some light on whether this is the case. As shown in Table 4, the average LI when Lidge entered a game in 2008 was roughly the same as the average as most of his contemporaries, at least since 1993. The differences in first-batter LI are greater with earlier closers who entered more games earlier than the ninth inning—in fact, half of Reed's appearances in 1978 began in the seventh inning or earlier. Remember, too, that most of the closers in our sample did not spend the entire season in that role, so they made more appearances in non-save situations. For a more precise comparison, we can look at only those instances where a pitcher entered the game at the start of the ninth inning (which Lidge did in 2008 in all but five of his 72 appearances). In those cases, the differences in LI when they entered are even less pronounced. If anyone could be considered to have pitched in less stressful closing situations, it's more likely to be Myers or Madson than Lidge in 2008.

TABLE 4: AVERAGE LI UPON ENTERING ALL GAMES VS. ENTERING AT START OF NINTH INNING

		Average LI When Entering Game	Average LI When Entering Game at Start of Ninth Inning
R Reed	1978	1.07	1.63
T McGraw	1980	1.84	1.93
A Holland	1983	2.02	1.92
S Bedrosian	1987	1.76	1.62
M Williams	1993	1.62	1.67
B Myers*	2007	1.56	1.53
B Lidge	2008	1.61	1.63
B Lidge	2009	1.52	1.57
B Lidge	2010	1.70	1.68
R Madson	2011	1.51	1.49

*relief appearances only

source: analysis of data from FanGraphs.com

Since Lidge did not apparently have an advantage stemming from the situations at the start of his appearances, we should next look to see if he had any situational advantages during the rest of his time on the mound. To do so, we examine the LI for every game event⁷ while a pitcher was on the mound and assign each to one of the four leverage categories (low to very high). By comparing the number of events in each category for each pitcher to the total events for that pitcher, we can determine the percentage of events at each of the leverage categories. As shown in Chart 1 [insert], the distribution of high and low leverage events for Lidge in 2008 was not significantly different than those during other years in the sample. Specifically, 55% of the events while Lidge was pitching in 2008 were either low- or average-leverage situations, and 20.4% were very high-leverage situations. In comparison, an average of 54.6% of all situations in the sample were low or average leverage, while 20.7% were very high-leverage situations. Here, too, there does not appear to be a significant situational advantage to Lidge's performance.

Since Lidge's relative success cannot be significantly explained by the situations in which he found himself, we should next look to his individual contributions. We can gain some insight into a pitcher's effectiveness by comparing those instances where he increased his team's chances of winning (resulting in a positive WPA) to those where he decreased its chances of winning (resulting in a negative WPA). As shown in Table 5, as a group, our championship closers were generally successful, averaging roughly two positive contributions to each negative contribution. In fact, Lidge's 2008 ratio of 1.81:1 is slightly below the group average. Like many of the other measures discussed previously, however, this comparison does not include any assessment of the relative importance of the contributions made, either positive or negative.

TABLE 5: POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS BY PITCHER (PER-EVENT WPA)

Pitcher	Year	Positive WPA Events	Negative WPA events	Positive/negative WPA ratio
R Reed	1978	319	126	2.53:1
T McGraw	1980	266	96	2.77:1
A Holland	1983	276	112	2.46:1
S Bedrosian	1987	264	122	2.16:1
M Williams	1993	176	126	1.40:1
B Myers*	2007	156	82	1.90:1
B Lidge	2008	205	113	1.81:1
B Lidge	2009	174	134	1.30:1
B Lidge	2010	135	76	1.78:1
R Madson	2011	177	77	2.30:1
Total	(ex 2008)	1943	951	2.04:1

*relief appearances only

source: analysis of data from FanGraphs.com

To better assess performance in context of the importance of each situation, we can add the WPA assigned for each individual play instead of just counting them. Because events that are more important to the outcome of a game receive a proportionally higher WPA score, players with a higher WPA can be shown to have had a greater impact on their team's success. Conversely, players that racked up higher negative WPA counts caused more damage to their team's chances. Table 6 shows the results of this analysis: a quantitative measure of each pitcher's relative contributions to his team's chances of winning. Overall, even successful closers showed a fairly close balance between positive and negative events, with a few more positive WPA points than negative. While this finding initially seems inconsistent with the data in Table 5, the data sets can be attributed to the fact that the negative impact of squandering a team's existing advantage generally has a greater impact on the team's chances of winning than just maintaining that advantage. For example, on June 12, 2011, Ryan Madson entered a home game against the Cubs at the start of the ninth inning with a 4–3 lead. In that situation, the Phillies had a 92.3 percent chance to win. No matter how he reduced the team's chances by letting batters reach base, the greatest positive impact he could have for the whole inning was a 7.7% increase. Conversely, two months later, on August 19, Madson was pitching in Washington with a two-run lead, nobody out, and runners on first and second. He allowed a single to the next batter, driving in a run to tie the game and reducing the Phillies' chances of winning by 19.4%.

TABLE 6: TOTAL POSITIVE, NEGATIVE, AND NET AVERAGE WPA

Pitcher	Year	Total Positive WPA	Total Negative WPA	Net WPA per 100 events
R Reed	1978	7.633	-5.914	0.539
T McGraw	1980	10.656	-6.487	1.567
A Holland	1983	11.959	-9.827	0.772
S Bedrosian	1987	14.41	-10.935	1.316
M Williams	1993	10.925	-11.117	-0.109
B Myers*	2007	7.137	-6.691	0.286
B Lidge	2008	10.819	-5.452	2.618
B Lidge	2009	8.232	-12.774	-2.610
B Lidge	2010	7.307	-5.48	1.353
R Madson	2011	7.987	-5.654	1.318
average	(ex 2008)	9.583	-8.320	0.585

*relief appearances only

source: analysis of data from FanGraphs.com

These data also reveal that Lidge's 2008 performance differed significantly from the group's in that his positive contributions were twice as large as his negative contributions. To control for differences in the number of events for which each pitcher was responsible, we can also average the net impact of the player's WPA score and normalize it for a set of 100 events, in effect, estimating a percentage that the pitcher increased his team's chances of winning for each event he was on the mound. By that measure, we see that Lidge increased the 2008 Phillies' chances of winning by an average of 2.6 percent for every event (at-bat, stolen base, etc.) while he pitched, while the rest of the group contributed roughly 0.6 percent. It would seem on the surface, then, that Lidge's success was due to his avoidance of negative events (i.e., retiring batters more often than letting them reach base or advance). However, that assumption is inconsistent with the data in Table 5, that show that Lidge was slightly below average in his ratio of positive to negative contributions. To resolve this discrepancy, we'll have to dig a little deeper.

One likely explanation for the apparent disconnect between the number of negative events for a pitcher and their value is an unequal distribution of higher-than-average WPA events. Because we're particularly interested in the role of closers, we should focus on appearances in the ninth inning or later. This subset of events is also the group most likely to include high-impact events. Within our sample, events in the ninth inning or later average a WPA of 0.006, but with a standard deviation of 0.099. Assuming a normal distribution, roughly two-thirds of the events in this group should range between 0.105 and -0.093. As a result, we can examine very high-impact events by looking at events outside of this range.

Using these criteria, we can analyze the percentage of events for each pitcher that had a high impact, and their cumulative effect on team winning percentage. As shown

in Table 7, Lidge’s distribution of high-impact events was, in fact, uneven.

TABLE 7: PERCENTAGE OF HIGH-IMPACT EVENTS

Pitcher	Year	Total WPA for events >0.11	Pct of events with WPA > 0.11	Total WPA for events < -0.11	Pct of events with WPA < -0.11	Total Events 9th inn. or later
R Reed	1978	1.329	6.4%	-3.131	9.9%	141
T McGraw	1980	2.542	8.5%	-4.003	9.5%	201
A Holland	1983	2.514	7.3%	-6.58	10.3%	233
S Bedrosian	1987	4.723	12.5%	-6.372	9.4%	256
M Williams	1993	4.733	8.9%	-6.311	11.1%	280
B Myers	2007	1.801	5.8%	-3.94	8.5%	189
B Lidge	2008	4.388	8.1%	-1.764	3.5%	310
B Lidge	2009	3.28	6.5%	-8.938	10.6%	292
B Lidge	2010	3.574	10.9%	-3.648	7.5%	201
R Madson	2011	1.824	6.0%	-2.823	6.0%	216
average	(ex 2008)	2.924	8.2%	-5.083	9.3%	

First, Lidge’s high-impact events were overwhelmingly positive. Where the group averaged roughly 8 percent high-impact positive events and roughly 9 percent high-impact negative events, Lidge recorded more than two high-impact positive events for every high-impact negative event. In other words, where the group as a whole mostly failed in the most critical points of the game, Lidge was overwhelmingly successful.

Second, the cumulative WPA of Lidge’s high-impact events was higher than the average, but the total WPA for his high-impact failures was far and away the lowest in the group. By this measure, too, we can see that whenever Lidge had a major impact on his team’s chances of winning, it was overwhelmingly positive. Compare his performance to the others with higher than average positive WPAs in high-leverage situations: They also have even higher total negative WPAs from negative events.

Alternately, we can look at Lidge’s performance in only the events with the highest LI (> 3.0), regardless of inning. As shown in Table 8, in the most critical game situations, Lidge made positive contributions in roughly the same percentage of events as the others in the group. However, the effect of those contributions was significantly more positive than the group’s as a whole. Specifically, the rest of the group averaged an 11 percent improvement in their team’s chances of winning every time they recorded an out, but a 16 percent decrease in those chances when they did not. Lidge, in contrast, averaged a 14 percent improvement in winning percentage for each out, but only a nine percent decrease in those chances in non-out events. Thus, while he made roughly the same percentage of mistakes, his mistakes generally did less damage, and his outs were more valuable.

TABLE 8: MOST CRITICAL GAME SITUATIONS

Pitcher	Year	Events with LI > 3 and Positive WPA	Events with LI > 3 and Negative WPA	Avg Positive WPA for Events with LI > 3	Avg Negative WPA for Events with LI > 3
R Reed	1978	20	10	0.1052	-0.2092
T McGraw	1980	46	19	0.0945	-0.1505
A Holland	1983	56	26	0.1040	-0.1753
S Bedrosian	1987	60	27	0.1177	-0.1538
M Williams	1993	51	39	0.1347	-0.1490
B Myers	2007	28	20	0.1150	-0.1842
B Lidge	2008	43	22	0.1354	-0.0895
B Lidge	2009	40	41	0.1195	-0.1985
B Lidge	2010	31	22	0.1379	-0.1283
R Madson	2011	46	18	0.0944	-0.1127
Average ex 2008		42.0	24.7	0.1133	-0.1628

Some specific game examples can further illustrate the point. In 2008, Lidge’s biggest mistake was during the August 27 game discussed previously. By allowing the Mets to score in a tie game, he reduced the Phillies’ chances of winning by 26.8 percent. The rest of the group made mistakes with a greater negative impact on 43 occasions. The most damaging were:

- September 5, 2007: With the bases loaded, two out, and a two-run lead, the Phillies have an 82% chance of winning. Brett Myers allows a three-run double to Matt Diaz, resulting in a 9–8 Atlanta win.
- September 5, 1983: Ninth inning, one out, runners on the corners, and a two-run lead at Shea, the Phillies are nearly 81 percent favorites to win. Al Holland allows a home run to George Foster, and the Mets win.
- June 5, 2009: At Los Angeles in the bottom of the ninth with two outs, a one-run lead, and the bases loaded, the Phillies are better than 74% favorites. Lidge allows a two-run double to Andre Ethier to drop the game to the Dodgers.

CONCLUSIONS

While Lidge’s team-record 41 saves without blowing an opportunity was a rare event, traditional statistics are generally not up to the task of revealing how much of this success was the result of sustained excellence and how much might be attributable to other factors. More recently adopted metrics that measure the criticality of each game situation and an individual’s contribution to his team’s chances of winning can be more illustrative. These metrics reveal that, compared to other Phillies championship closers, Lidge did not gain significant advantages that weren’t related to his own performance. Instead, his accomplishment can be attributed to his own consistent success, mainly in avoiding the big mistakes

that result in blown saves. As a result, his 2008 season should be recognized as a truly outstanding individual achievement. ■

ENDNOTES

1. Eric Gagne's 55-for-55 season for Los Angeles in 2003 was the first. Detroit's Jose Valverde subsequently added his name to this elite list, successfully nailing down all of his 49 save opportunities in 2011. <http://www.foxnews.com/sports/2011/10/28/tigers-exercise-2012-option-on-valverde/>

2. No pitcher recorded at least half of the Phillies' saves in either the 1976 or 1977 division-winning seasons.

3. For brief discussions of these efforts see Dave Studeman's articles "The One About Win Probability" at <http://www.hardballtimes.com/main/article/the-one-about-win-probability/> and "WPA in the USA," *Hardball Times Baseball Annual 2007*: 122–128.

4. The exact procedures for calculating the Leverage Index are outside of the scope of this paper, but can be found in Tango's article "Crucial Situations" at <http://www.hardballtimes.com/main/article/crucial-situations/>.

5. See Tango's tables of LI by situation at <http://www.insidethebook.com/li.shtml>.

6. <http://www.fangraphs.com/scoreboard.aspx>.

7. Game events are plate appearances plus any other event that can change a games situation without a change in batter, such as stolen bases, caught stealing, balk, etc.



Philadelphia's Other Hall of Famers

Steven Glassman

Many Baseball Hall of Fame inductees are associated with the American League Philadelphia Athletics and Philadelphia Phillies by way of career accomplishments, or by wearing the team ball cap on their Hall of Fame plaque. Many others in the Hall have connections to the city of Philadelphia and the city's baseball teams since the 1860s. They fit into any of the following categories:

- Philadelphia-born
- Nineteenth-century professional-league team members (National Association—Athletics and White Stockings; American Association—Athletics; Union Association—Keystones; and/or Players League—Quakers)
- Negro League teams (Big Gorhams, Cuban Giants, Excelsiors, Giants, Pythians, Quaker Giants, Stars, and X-Giants)
- Employed by Athletics and/or Phillies parent club in a non-playing capacity
- Played in Athletics and/or Phillies minor league farm systems
- Ford C. Frick Award, J.G. Taylor Spink Award
- Inducted into other professional sports Halls of Fame (e.g. Basketball, Football, Ice Hockey)

This article expands upon a 2001 oral presentation made by the author at a Connie Mack Chapter meeting. Originally, there were 12 players mentioned in this presentation. Since then, additional names have been inducted and new information has been discovered through further research.

PHILADELPHIA-BORN

Roy Campanella (1969 Baseball Writers Association of America [BBWAA])

Campanella is the only Philadelphia-born player to be voted into the Baseball of Hall of Fame by the BBWAA. He was born on November 19, 1921, in the Germantown section of the city, and later moved to Nicetown. According his SABR BioProject article by Rick Swaine, “he attended Gillespie Junior High and Simon Gratz High

School.”* Campanella briefly tried Golden Gloves boxing. He also played baseball, basketball, and football during his public school years. The Phillies invited Campanella for a tryout while he was in high school, but “the invitation was rescinded when the Phils discovered he was black.”

* He did not finish high school. The Bacharach Giants, a semi-pro team, offered Campanella his first professional contract when he was 15. He was later signed by the Baltimore Elite Giants of the Negro National League “to spell veteran receiver and manager Biz Mackey on weekends.”

Joseph “Joe” McCarthy (1957 Veterans Committee)

“McCarthy was born in Philadelphia on April 21, 1887,” according to his SABR BioProject article. He grew up in Germantown and played baseball for “his grammar school team as well as a local team in Germantown.” McCarthy did not go to high school, but he “was productive enough to be offered a scholarship to Niagara University to play baseball in the fall of 1905.”

Effa Manley (2006 Negro Leagues Committee)

Manley was born in Philadelphia on March 27, 1897, and grew up in the Germantown section of the city.

NINETEENTH CENTURY MAJOR-LEAGUE TEAM MEMBERS

Adrian “Cap” Anson (1939 Veterans Committee)

Anson was signed by the Athletics of the National Association after the last-place Forest City team disbanded following the 1871 season. He played every position except pitcher. Before the Chicago White Stockings signed Anson after the 1875 season, he was the franchise leader in batting average (.363), hits (384), singles (327), runs scored (248), and walks (29). According to David Fleitz, who wrote about Anson for the SABR BioProject, “The hard-hitting utility man quickly became one of Philadelphia’s most popular athletes. While he was playing for the Athletics, he dated Virginia Fiegal. The daughter of a saloon owner, she was about 13 or 14, and Anson was 20 years old. Despite some obstacles, he got Virginia’s father’s approval to marry. Virginia and ‘Cap’ Anson had seven children (four daughters and three sons). Co-authors William E.

McMahon and Robert L. Tiemann wrote about Anson in SABR's *Baseball's First Stars*: "A salary offer of \$2,000 induced Anson to sign with Chicago in 1876, a move his new bride, a Philadelphia girl, objected to. Adrian offered \$1,000 to buy out his contract, but White Stockings owner William Hulbert held him to his commitment, and Anson began a 22-year tenure in Chicago."*

William "Candy" Cummings (1939 Old Timers Committee as a Pioneer)

Cummings became a member of the Philadelphia Whites of the National Association in 1874 after leaving the New York Mutuals. He pitched nearly every inning for the Whites, throwing 483 of the team's 522 innings, registering a 28–26 won-lost record in his only season for the Whites. He struck out six straight Chicago White Stockings on June 15, 1874.

Wilbert Robinson (1945 Old Timers Committee as a Manager)

Robinson, a catcher, played 372 games for the Athletics of the American Association from 1886–90. He came to the Athletics on the recommendation of Arthur Irwin to Bill Sharsig after Irwin saw Robinson play at Haverhill of the Eastern New England League in 1885. In the book *Uncle Robbie*, Irwin "was impressed by the young catcher's ability to handle his pitchers and direct his infielders during a game."* Robinson stole a career-best 33 bases as a rookie in 1886 and hit as high as .244 in 1888. While playing for the Athletics, he married Mary O'Rourke, a widow with two daughters. After they were married, Wilbert Jr. was born on June 20, 1890, in Philadelphia. Wilbert Sr. signed as a free agent with the Baltimore Orioles late in the 1890 season.

George Wright (1937 Centennial Committee as a Pioneer)

Wright moved to Philadelphia from New York in 1865. The teenage Wright, according to his biography in *Baseball: The Biographical Encyclopedia*, "was both a pro for the Philadelphia Cricket Club and shortstop for the Philadelphia Olympians."* His "amateur" status was not affected by his job with the cricket club because it was considered a teaching position. Wright returned to New York in 1866.

NEGRO LEAGUES

Oscar Charleston (1976 Negro Leagues Committee)

Charleston was a member of the Philadelphia Stars of the Negro National League (1941–44, 1947–50). He was a first baseman-manager during his first two seasons with

the Stars and then was primarily a coach under manager Homer "Goose" Curry during his next two campaigns. In his final four seasons, he was the manager. Two of his players, James "Bus" Clarkson (1952) and Harry "Suitcase" Simpson (1951–53, 1955–59), became major leaguers. He also managed future Hall of Fame pitcher Leroy "Satchel" Paige in 1950. Charleston died on October 5, 1954, in Philadelphia following a stroke, making him one of four Hall of Fame inductees to pass away in Philadelphia. The other three are pitcher "Chief" Bender (Class of 1953) on May 22, 1954, shortstop George Davis (Class of 1998) on October 17, 1940, and manager Connie Mack (Class of 1937) on February 8, 1956.

Andrew "Rube" Foster (1981 Veterans Committee)

Foster was an outfielder and right-handed pitcher for the Philadelphia Giants from 1904 through 1906. Foster came to the Giants from the Cuban X-Giants following the 1903 season and was paid \$90.00 per month. During the 1904 regular season, he struck out 18 batters in a game against the Trenton Y.M.C.A. Foster also defeated another "Rube," Rube Waddell of the Philadelphia Athletics, and threw some no-hitters. In a 1904 postseason series versus his former team, Foster won two games and hit over .400 in the three-game affair. On September 1, at Inlet Park in Atlantic City, New Jersey, he struck out 18 hitters and contributed three hits in the 8–4 Game 1 win. In the third and deciding game, on September 3, Foster struck out five in the 4–2 victory. He also contributed toward the Giants' repeat in 1905, and third straight in 1906. During the winter of 1906, Foster won nine games in Cuba, but in 1907 he became a player-manager for the Leland Giants in Chicago after a salary dispute.

Ulysses "Frank" Grant (2006 Negro Leagues Committee)

Grant played his final two baseball seasons in Philadelphia for the 1902 and 1903 Giants, batting right and playing second base. He hit .222 in the 1903 playoffs versus the Cuban X-Giants.

John "Pete" Hill (2006 Negro Leagues Committee)

The left-handed hitting outfielder came with Foster from the Cuban X-Giants. He was contributing member of the Giants' 1904–06 championship teams, and was a leading batter in 1906. He hit over .300 in Cuba in the winter of 1905 and joined Foster in 1907 with the Leland Giants.

Raleigh "Biz" Mackey (2006 Negro Leagues Committee)
Mackey's first stint in Philadelphia was as a shortstop-

third baseman-catcher for the Philadelphia Royal Giants in the winter of 1925. He returned to Philadelphia as a catcher for three seasons in his mid-thirties (1933–35) for the Stars of the Negro National League. In the 1934 playoffs versus the Chicago American Giants, Mackey hit .368 to help the Stars to their only championship during their 20-year run (1933–52).

Leroy “Satchel” Paige (1971 Negro Leagues Committee)

Paige was the first player inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame by the Negro Leagues Committee. He had two brief stints with the Philadelphia Stars in 1946 and 1950, was signing a one-month contract in his second stint. He “pitched four innings and allowed three hits as the Stars beat the Brooklyn Bushwicks in an exhibition game in his first game back with the Stars.”* Paige also played three seasons (1956–58) for the International League Marlins, the Philadelphia Phillies’ top minor-league affiliate, in Miami, Florida. The Marlins were owned by Bill Veeck and Paige proved to draw quite a crowd—he was paid \$15,000 to play for Miami. In one of his appearances, on August 7, 1956, 57,213 Miami Stadium patrons (then a minor league record) saw the 50-year-old hit a double and beat the Columbus Jets 6–2. He was 31–22 in 105 appearances (33 starts) in three seasons with the Marlins, with a 2.41 ERA in 340 innings. He led the Marlins in appearances with 37 in 1956, and his 27 relief appearances and 11 victories were third on the team. In 1957, Paige was second on the team with 32 relief appearances and third with 10 wins. Despite his three-year success with Miami, the Phillies never called him up to the parent club or purchased his contract.

D. Louis Santop (2006 Negro Leagues Committee)

Santop, who played catcher, was a member of the 1909 and 1910 Philadelphia Giants. He died in Philadelphia on January 6, 1942.

Norman “Turkey” Stearnes (2000 Veterans Committee)

Stearnes played outfield for the 1936 Philadelphia Stars. In his only season for the team, according to *Baseball-Reference.com*, he led the Stars in many hitting categories. After one season in Philadelphia, he returned to the Chicago American Giants in 1937.

Solomon “Sol” White (2006 Negro Leagues Committee)

White wrote the book, *Sol White’s Official Base Ball Guide* in 1907 while he was a member of the Philadelphia Giants. His SABR BioProject article notes, “This is the work which helps to define White the ball player, the historian and the man.” In addition to the Giants (1902–

09), he was also a member of the Big Gorhams (1891) and the Quakers (1909). White had his best success with the Giants, winning three consecutive championships with teams that featured future Hall of Famers “Rube” Foster, Charlie Grant, Pete Hill, “Pop” Lloyd, and Louis Santop. White, along with Harry Smith and *Philadelphia Item* sports editor H. Walter Schlichter, formed the Giants. In his first five seasons, he was a player-manager, then was strictly a manager in his final two. He was also a player-manager for the Quakers before the team disbanded during the 1909 season. By 1903, he began paying his players \$60–90 per month. Following the 1909 season, White was “fed up with Schlichter’s penny-pinching and seeing Foster steal so many of his players.”* He returned to New York, accepting an offer to manage the Brooklyn Royal Giants in 1910.

Ernest “Jud” Wilson (2006 Negro Leagues Committee)

Wilson played for the Philadelphia Tigers in 1928 and the Stars from 1933 through 1939. He led the Stars with a .400 average in the 1934 playoffs versus the Chicago American Giants, and became the team’s player-manager for one season in 1937. Wilson made multiple appearances in the East-West All-Star Game. He returned to the Homestead Grays for the 1940 season and spent the remainder of his career there.

EMPLOYED BY ATHLETICS OR PHILLIES PARENT CLUB IN A NON-PLAYING CAPACITY

William “Judy” Johnson (1975 Negro Leagues Committee)

Prior to the 1951 season, Johnson became the first African American scout hired by the Philadelphia Athletics, and was assigned to scout major-league ready Negro League players. One of his recommendations was to hire Indianapolis Clowns second baseman Hank Aaron for \$3,500. The recommendation was rejected because the Athletics felt signing him was too expensive, and it wasn’t the only one Connie Mack rejected. In 1954, the Athletics hired Johnson as the first African American coach for the Athletics. This came with a new responsibility: “Helping these players adjust to the major leagues on the field and the trials off the field.”* Two of these players were pitcher Bob Trice and infielder Vic Power. Johnson left the team before it moved to Kansas City. The Phillies hired him in 1961 and one his signees, Richie Allen, reached the major leagues. According to his biography in *Baseball—The Biographical Encyclopedia*, “Johnson’s understanding of the game was utilized every year in spring training as the Phillies brought him south to coach the young players.”* He scouted for the team through the 1974 season.

Paul Waner (1952 BBWAA)

In the early 1950s, Waner published a pamphlet entitled, *Paul Waner's Batting Secrets*. He was hired by the Milwaukee Braves in 1954 as the hitting instructor for the parent club and its minor-league affiliates. Poor health forced him to leave the Braves in July of 1958. The St. Louis Cardinals hired him as a hitting advisor on July 26, 1958 and he held that position through the 1959 season, working with the organization's minor-league hitters. The Phillies hired him on January 7, 1960, and again on May 30, 1965 in the same capacity he served with the Braves. On August 29, 1965, he died in his home in Sarasota, Florida due to pulmonary emphysema and pneumonia.

PLAYED IN ATHLETICS OR PHILLIES MINOR LEAGUE FARM SYSTEMS*Thomas "Tommy" Lasorda (1997 Veterans Committee as a Manager)*

Lasorda, a left-handed pitcher, was signed out of Norristown High School as an amateur free agent by the Phillies in January 1945 and began his professional career with the Concord Weavers of the Class D North Carolina State League. Lasorda appeared in 27 games (13 starts), won three times, and compiled a 4.09 ERA. However, as a hitter he batted .274 in 67 games. Pitching for the Schenectady Blue Jays of the Class C Canadian-American League, he appeared in 32 games (18 starts), striking out a career-best 195 batters in 192 innings and winning nine games, but he walked a career-worst 153 batters (tied for second in the league) and led the league with 20 wild pitches. Lasorda set a league record with 25 strikeouts in a 15-inning game versus the Amsterdam Rugmakers on May 31, 1948. He also broke Earl Jones' league-record 22 strikeouts (in nine innings).

Anthony "Tony" Lazzeri (1991 Veterans Committee)

Lazzeri became the manager of the Class AA Toronto Maple Leafs of the International League in June 1939 after he was released by the New York Giants. The Maple Leafs played as an unaffiliated team during the 1939 season before becoming an affiliate of the Philadelphia Athletics for the 1940 season. Among the notable players who played for Lazzeri in 1940 were pitchers Dick Fowler and Phil Marchildon. Lazzeri was released by Toronto following the 1940 season after the Maple Leafs finished in last place with a 57–101 record, 38 1/2 games behind the Rochester Red Wings.

Henry "Heinie" Manush (1964 Veterans Committee)

Following a 56–83 season for the Class A Eastern League Scranton Miners in 1944, the team announced in November that Manush would not be back for the 1945 season. Manush spent five seasons in the Boston Red Sox farm system. He managed the Class C Martinsville Athletics of the Carolina League to a 69–67 record, a third place finish, and a playoff berth—the Athletics lost to the Danville-Schoolfield Leafs in the best-of-seven semifinals four games to two. Before Game 6, according to *The Sporting News* (September 21, 1945), "Martinsville fans presented Manager Heinie Manush with a gold watch and his players gave him a pen and pencil set."* Two of Manush's players, first baseman Jerome Gutt and outfielder Rudolph Adkins, were named to the Carolina League All-Star team. Outfielder and native Philadelphian Tom Kirk, who shared the league lead with three other players with a dozen home runs, made a pinch-hit appearance for the Philadelphia Athletics in 1947. Manush became a Boston Braves scout in 1946.

FORD C. FRICK AWARD (BROADCASTING)*Timothy "Tim" McCarver (2012 Ford C. Frick Award)*

McCarver was acquired by the Phillies on October 7, 1969, from the St. Louis Cardinals with outfielders Byron Browne and Curt Flood and pitcher Joe Hoerner for infielders Dick Allen and "Cookie" Rojas and pitcher Jerry Johnson. McCarver started the season as the Phillies regular catcher until May 2, 1970, when a Willie McCovey foul sent him to the disabled list until September 1, causing him to miss 110 games. McCarver continued as the Phillies regular catcher for 1971 and the beginning of 1972. He was traded to the Montreal Expos for another catcher, John Bateman, on June 14, 1972. More than a week after he was released by the Boston Red Sox, the Phillies signed him as a free agent on July 1, 1975. He spent the remainder of his Phillies (and major-league) career as a backup to Bob Boone. The Phillies released McCarver following the 1979 season and he entered the broadcast booth. McCarver came out of the booth and was signed by the Phillies as a free agent on September 1, 1980, for the pennant drive, mostly as a pinch-hitter. He was released after the Phillies won the World Series and went back to broadcasting. McCarver was also best known as Steve Carlton's personal catcher, working with him in 137 out of 168 games between July 12, 1975, and September 30, 1979.

Robert "Bob" Uecker (2003 Ford C. Frick Award)

On October 27, 1965, the Phillies acquired Uecker from St. Louis Cardinals. Half of his 14 major-league home runs and 74 RBIs came as a member of the Phillies.

In 1966, as a catcher he set career bests with 62 starts, 542 1/3 innings caught, while throwing out 21 baserunners attempting to steal, and recording five pickoffs. Uecker also threw out a career-best 40 percent of baserunners attempting to steal on him in 1966. However, he got off to a very slow start in 1967, batting .100 in 20 at-bats over nine games through early May. After appearing in nine of the Phillies' first 17 games, Uecker played nine of the next 31. He "improved" his batting average to .171 and was traded to the Atlanta Braves on June 6, 1967, for another catcher, Gene Oliver. Uecker finished the season with Braves and was released on October 6, 1967.

J.G. TAYLOR SPINK AWARD (JOURNALISM)

Timothy "Tim" Murnane (1978 J.G. Taylor Spink Award)

Murnane joined the Athletics in 1873 after the Mansfield (Middletown, Connecticut) club folded the previous season. In his first season with the Athletics, Murnane did not hit well, as his .222 average and 13 strikeouts in 41 games were the worst among Athletics regulars. However, the center fielder walked eight times which tied fellow outfielder John McMullin for the team lead and was second to McMullin with eight steals. The right fielder-second baseman did not play as much (21 games) or hit as well (.207) for the Athletics in 1874, but he was part of the Athletics' midseason European trip with the Red Stockings. According to his SABR BioProject article by Charlie Bevis, "For the 1875 season Murnane took advantage of the league's mobility principle to negotiate with other clubs after fulfilling his one-year contract." Murnane had a career season for the 1875 Philadelphia Whites, leading the team with 313 at-bats, posting a National Association best 30 stolen bases, and walking seven times. Murnane also shared the team lead with 69 games played and 71 runs scored, and was second on the club with 79 singles. Murnane played first base, center field, and second base in his only season with the Whites. After the National Association folded, he joined the Boston Red Stockings in the National League's first season in 1876. After his playing career ended he wrote for the *Boston Referee* (his own publication), *New York Clipper*, and *Boston Globe*.

William "Bill" Conlin (2011 J.G. Taylor Spink Award)

Conlin was born on May 15, 1934, in Philadelphia and was a 1961 Temple University graduate. *The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* gave him his first journalistic opportunity. In 1965, *The Philadelphia Daily News* hired Conlin as the Phillies beat writer, a position he held through 1986. He was a *Daily News* sports columnist from 1987 through

2011 and was also a National League columnist for *The Sporting News*. Conlin wrote the books, *The Rutledge Book of Baseball* (Rutledge Press, 1981) and *Batting Cleanup, Bill Conlin* (Temple University Press, 1997).

INDUCTED INTO OTHER PROFESSIONAL SPORTS HALLS OF FAME

Edward "Eddie" Gottlieb (1972 Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame)

Gottlieb, who was born in Kiev, Ukraine, grew up in Philadelphia, attending South Philadelphia High School and a Philadelphia teacher's college. Gottlieb was heavily involved in African America baseball, booking and promoting games and selling equipment. In 1931, Pittsburgh Crawfords owner Gus Greenlee named Gottlieb as the Negro National League (NNL) booking agent. Gottlieb also formed a partnership with Ed Bolden to establish the Philadelphia Stars before the 1933 season, with most of the money invested coming from Gottlieb, not Bolden. In 1934, the Stars won their only Negro National League championship, led by future Hall of Famers Raleigh "Biz" Mackey and Ernest "Jud" Wilson. Gottlieb had multiple positions with the Stars (and the NNL): booking agent, owner, promoter, officer, and secretary. When major-league baseball was integrated in 1947, it affected Negro League baseball. Two major-league and multiple minor-league teams in the tri-state area cut into the Stars' attendance figures. Also, African-Americans playing for all-white semipro teams made black semipro teams an endangered species. This, and a number of factors, led to the end of the NNL in 1948. The Stars' home ballpark, Parkside Park, was torn down and Gottlieb sold off some of his best players to organized baseball to help keep the Stars financially afloat. Gottlieb's partner, Ed Bolden, died in December 1949. By 1950, Gottlieb had settled with Bolden's daughter, Dr. Hilda Bolden Shorter, to purchase most of Ed's shares, which were valued at \$1,000 according to his will. Oscar Charleston was really running the team at that point, and attendance and gate receipts were dwindling badly by 1952. The Stars had the worst record and eventually dropped out of the Negro American League after the 1952 season ended. Hilda wanted to revive her father's position with the Stars and bring the team back to the point where they could still financially succeed in Negro League baseball. However, the plans fell through and Gottlieb put the Stars up for sale for \$10,000. No one wanted to buy the Stars, and Gottlieb announced the team was folding and its players could sign with anyone.

Gottlieb established, and was the coach for, the South Philadelphia Hebrew Associations (SPHAS) in 1918.

They won multiple Eastern and American Basketball League Championships from the late 1920s through the 1940s. He also helped found the Basketball Association of America (BAA) in 1946, and his Philadelphia Warriors won the Association's first championship in 1947. Gottlieb held multiple positions with the Warriors—owner, coach, general manager, and ticket seller. The NBA was merged out of the National Basketball League and the BAA, coming together through Gottlieb's efforts. He remained the Warriors coach through 1955, winning two divisional titles, and the owner through 1956 when the team won its second title. Gottlieb was the NBA's Rules Committee chairman for 25 years and the Association's schedule maker for 30.

Alfred "Greasy" Neale (1969 Professional Football Hall of Fame)

Neale was acquired by the Phillies in an offseason trade with the Cincinnati Reds. On November 22, 1920, he was acquired with pitcher Jimmy Ring for pitcher Eppa Rixey. The right fielder played 22 games for the Phillies, but hit .211 with one RBI. He was put on waivers by the Phillies and claimed by the Reds, his original team, on June 2, 1921, and finished his career with them in 1924.

Neale coached the Philadelphia Eagles from 1941 through 1950. He changed the team's offensive and defensive schemes, turning it around and winning three straight NFL Eastern Division Titles (1947–49), including the franchise's first two league championships in 1948 and 1949. Some of the future NFL Hall of Fame players he coached included Chuck Bednarik, Pete Pihos, and Steve Van Buren. Altogether, Neale won 63 games and compiled a .594 winning percentage.

Clarence "Ace" Parker (1972 Professional Football Hall of Fame)

Parker played football and baseball at Duke University. His head baseball coach at Duke was former Athletics pitcher Jack Coombs, and it was the Philadelphia Athletics that signed him. On April 30, 1937, in a 15–5 road loss to the Boston Red Sox, Parker hit a ninth-inning, pinch-hit home run off Wes Ferrell in his first major-league at-bat. He became the 12th major leaguer, and third in the American League, to accomplish that feat. Parker was also the first of two Philadelphia Athletics hitters to hit a home run in his first major league at-bat. His two best games were a pair of three-hit, four-RBI games (July 28, 1937, versus Cleveland and August 16, 1938, at Boston). Parker, who played mostly in the infield, played parts of two seasons with the Athletics, hitting .179 in 94 games.

Parker was a 1936 All-American tailback at Duke

and finished sixth in the Heisman Trophy voting before becoming the second-round draft choice of football's Brooklyn Dodgers in the 1937 NFL Draft. He was either a first or second All-NFL from 1937 through 1940. He led the league with 865 passing yards in 1938, then in 1940, Parker paced the league with six interceptions and 146 interception return yards, 9 extra points, and 22 attempts, while placing second with 10 passing touchdowns. As a punter, he was third in the league with 49 punts and 1,875 yards. Not surprisingly, Parker was given the Joe F. Carr Trophy as the league's 1940 Most Valuable Player.

Harry Stovey

Nineteenth-century player Harry Stovey, originally born with the last name Stowe, was born in Philadelphia on December 20, 1856. He made his amateur (Defiance Club) and professional baseball (Athletics of the League Alliance) debuts in Philadelphia in 1877. Stovey came to the Athletics of the American Association in 1883 after the Worcester club of the National League folded following the 1882 season. He played seven seasons for the Athletics (1883–89), including the 1883 championship campaign. Before he went on to play for the Boston Reds of the newly formed Players League in 1890, Stovey was the Athletics franchise leader in every offensive category, except for batting average.

He finished his American Association career as the all-time leader in homers (76) and runs scored (883), was second in total bases (1,654), and third in slugging (.483). He was also in the top 10 in games played (824), batting average, and hits (1,035). Stovey led the Association in runs scored four times, homers three times, and triples, total bases, and slugging twice each. He also averaged more than one run scored per game (1.07).

In his career as a whole, he led his league in home runs five times (10 times in the top five), runs scored four times (nine times in the top five), triples four times (five times in the top five), total bases three times (seven times in the top five), slugging three times (seven times in the top five), and stolen bases at least twice (at least four times in the top five). Stovey also led his league in doubles once, but was in the top five on five occasions. He never led in walks, but was in the top five four times. Unofficially, Stovey led his league in RBIs once, but was also in the top five on five occasions.

When Stovey retired, he was major-league baseball's all-time home run leader with 122. He was also among all-time leaders in slugging percentage (.461), total bases (2,832), runs scored (1,492), doubles (347), and triples (174). Over his career Stovey averaged more than one run scored per game (1,492 runs in 1,486 games).

Stovey appeared on the BBWAA Veterans ballot once, in 1936, with other nineteenth century players, receiving six votes (7.7%) and tying for 14th on the ballot. Out of the 60 players who appeared, 31 are now in the Hall of Fame, including 15 of the 19 players who received six or more votes. Stovey did not appear on any more ballots.

Stovey is no stranger to SABR. On December 20, 1971, he finished 12th out of 66 pre-1952 eligible players in a survey of SABR Members (The results appeared in the *1974 Baseball Research Journal*). Stovey and Pitcher Carl Mays, who finished eight votes ahead of Stovey, are the only players left on this ballot who are not in the Hall. In the *1977 Baseball Research Journal*, players from the 1871–1911 were ranked in a survey of Hall of Fame candidates and Stovey finished fifth ahead of Vic Willis (sixth), Deacon White (ninth), and “Bid” McPhee (15th). At the 2011 SABR convention in Long Beach, California, Stovey was selected by the Nineteenth Century Committee members as its Overlooked 19th Century Legend. ■

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The National Pastime

Contributor Biographies

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MARK KANTER grew up in Bristol, PA where he became a life-long Philadelphia Phillies fan. He got the itch while watching the last few outs of Jim Bunning's perfect game on Father's Day in 1964. He has written several articles for SABR's *Baseball Research Journal* and was the editor for Boston SABR 2002 Convention Publication. He has won a number of National SABR trivia contests since 1997. He and his wife, Lynne, who is also a great baseball fan in her own right, live in the idyllic seaside community of Portsmouth, RI.

JIMMY KEENAN has been a SABR member since 2001. His grandfather Jimmy Lyston, his great-grandfather John M. Lyston, and John's two brothers Marty and Bill were all professional baseball players. He is the author of the book *The Lystons: A Story of One Baltimore Family and Our National Pastime*. His biography of Cupid Childs was published in SABR's *The National Pastime* in 2009. In addition, he was the writer and historian for the original *Forgotten Birds* documentary that chronicles the fifty-year history of the minor league Baltimore Orioles. His pre-recorded interview about the 1921 Baltimore Orioles can be heard at the "Second Inning" display at the Sports Legends Museum in Baltimore, Maryland. He has also written biographies for SABR's Bio-Project and has contributed to five SABR book projects. Jimmy is a 2010 inductee into the Oldtimers Baseball Association of Maryland's Hall of Fame and a 2012 inductee into the Baltimore's Boys of Summer Hall of Fame.

STEVEN A. KING is a physician specializing in pain management and a clinical professor at the New York University School of Medicine. The primary focus of his baseball research is New York City baseball at the beginning of the twentieth century. His most recent baseball publication was on the myth of the Amos Rusie-Christy Mathewson trade that appeared in the Fall 2012 issue of *Base Ball: A Journal of the Early Game*.

FRANCIS KINLAW has contributed to 13 SABR convention publications (the number of shutouts registered by the Philadelphia Phillies pitching staff in 1950) and attended 17 SABR conventions (the number of plate appearances by Richie Ashburn in the 1950 World Series). A member of SABR since 1983, he resides in Greensboro, North Carolina and writes extensively about baseball, football, and college basketball.

JEFFREY LAING is a retired English teacher who has published more than 150 articles on arts and culture, pedagogy, and sports. His baseball writing has appeared in *The National Pastime*, *Fan Magazine*, *Base Ball: A Journal of the Early Game*, and *Black Ball: A Negro Leagues Journal*.

JIM LEEKE is the creative director of Taillight Communications. He contributes to the SABR Baseball Biography Project and has written or edited several books on American and military history. His latest book is *Ballplayers in the Great War*. He is also the author/editor of several books on Civil War and naval history.

MORRIS LEVIN is a member of the Athletic Base Ball Club of Philadelphia, and of the Business Association of West

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NORMAN MACHT hopes to complete the third and final volume of his Connie Mack biography before reaching the age at which Mr. Mack retired. He is considering calling it “My 66 Years in Researching Connie Mack.” His book *Connie Mack and the Early Years of Baseball* won the 2008 Larry Ritter Book Award and was a finalist for the Seymour Medal that year. His book *Connie Mack: The Turbulent and Triumphant Years, 1915-1931* was a finalist for the 2013 Seymour Medal.

PETER MANCUSO is Chairman of SABR’s Nineteenth Century Committee. A native of Staten Island, New York, he is the former Assistant Director of Training for the NYPD. He is an owner and partner of Mancuso Show Management which organizes and presents quilting festivals, antiques shows, and antiquarian book fairs.

JENNIFER MCGOVERN earned her PhD in sociology from Temple University. She has presented and volunteered at past SABR conferences. She is primarily interested in sport and equality, sport fan narratives, and social issues within sports, though baseball is her favorite sport to study and to watch.

BRIAN MCKENNA was born, raised, and lives in Baltimore County, not too far from the old Memorial Stadium. He has been an avid fan of the game since he was eight years old in 1974 trading Brooks Robinson cards. His first book, *Early Exits: The Premature Endings of Baseball Careers*, offers small biographies and listings of ballplayers who had their careers shortened under unforeseen circumstances. His most recent full-length work, *Clark Griffith: Baseball’s Statesman*, was written on and off over a five year stretch. He has also contributed over fifty entries for the Society for American Baseball Research’s Biography Project and an article on two-sport players that was published by both SABR and the Professional Football Researcher’s Association. He is currently working on several projects including a documentary and accompanying biography of Eddie Plank titled *Gettysburg Eddie* and another work titled *Baseball History Research 101: A How-to-Guide to Producing Factual, Quality Work and Unearthing Never-Before-Presented Material*.

ANDREW MILNER is a freelance writer has written for the SABR Review of Books, The Cooperstown Review,

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MITCHELL NATHANSON is a professor of legal writing at Villanova University School of Law. He authored *The Irrelevance of Baseball’s Antitrust Exemption: A Historical Review* in 2006. His books *The Fall of the 1977 Phillies: How a Baseball Team’s Collapse Sank a City’s Spirit* was published in 2008 and *A People’s History of Baseball* in 2012. His most recent article is “Who Exempted Baseball, Anyway: The Curious Development of the Antitrust Exemption That Never Was.” He is at work on a biography of Dick Allen, to be published in 2015.

JOE NIESE is a librarian and member of the Society for American Baseball Research. He has written several articles on baseball’s Deadball Era. His first book, *Burleigh Grimes: Baseball’s Last Legal Spitballer*, was published in spring 2013 by McFarland.

BILL NOWLIN has written or edited four books on Ted Williams, and has another one on the drawing board. As a 12-year-old, he was inspired by Williams’s 1957 season, when Ted hit .388—in the year he turned 39. Bill has been vice president of SABR since 2004.

RON SELTER is a retired economist, formerly with the Air Force Space Program. He is a member of the Ballparks, Minor League, Statistical, and Deadball Committees, and his area of expertise is twentieth-century major-league ballparks. Selter served as text editor for *Green Cathedrals* (2006 edition, SABR) and as a contributor to *Forbes Field* (2007). He is the author of *Ballparks of the Deadball Era* (2008).

DOUG SKIPPER has contributed to a number of SABR publications and profiled more than a dozen players and managers for the SABR Baseball Biographical Project. A SABR member since 1982, he is active in the Halsey Hall (Minneapolis) Chapter and the Deadball Era Committee, and is interested in the history of Connie Mack’s Philadelphia Athletics, the Boston Red Sox, and old ballparks. A market research consultant residing in Apple Valley, Minnesota, Doug is also a veteran of father-daughter dancing. Doug and his wife have two daughters, MacKenzie and Shannon.

BRYAN SODERHOLM-DIFATTE is devoted to the study of baseball history. He is author of the online manuscript, www.thebestbaseballteams.com, which identifies the

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JAMES D. SZALONTAI is the author of three books published by McFarland, including a history of the 1945 major league season, and *Small Ball in the Big Leagues: A History of Stealing, Bunting, Walking and Otherwise Scratching for Runs*. Two of his favorite subjects are World War II baseball and spring training.

THOMAS E. VAN HYNING grew up in Santurce, Puerto Rico, rooting for his beloved Santurce Crabbers (Cangrejeros) in Puerto Rico's Winter League (PRWL). His two books are a Crabbers team history, plus a PRWL history. Tom's articles have appeared in *The National Pastime*, *Baseball Research Journal*, and the SABR Bio Project: Atley Donald, Joe Gibbon, Ruben Gomez, Jerry Moses and Jack Reed. Tom is the Research Program Manager for Mississippi's Tourism Division since 1994, with a BBA from the University of Georgia and two Master's degrees. His mother (Paula) was a Swarthmore College classmate of Lee MacPhail, class of 1939.

CORT VITTY is a native of New Jersey and a graduate of Seton Hall University. A lifelong fan of the New York Yankees, he has been a SABR member (Bob Davids Chapter) since 1999. Vitty's work has appeared in *The National Pastime* and *Go-Go to Glory: The 1959 White Sox*. Web articles are posted at Seamheads.com and PhiladelphiaAthletics.org. Vitty has authored SABR biographies of Buzz Arlett, Lu Blue, Mickey Grasso, Goose Goslin, Babe Phelps, Dave Philley, and Harry "Suitcase" Simpson. Vitty resides in Maryland with his wife, Mary Anne.

ROBERT D. WARRINGTON was born in Philadelphia and works for the Central Intelligence Agency. He is a member of Society for American Baseball Research and the Philadelphia Athletics Historical Society.

RICH WESTCOTT is a former newspaper and magazine editor and writer, and is the author of 23 books, including the recently published *Philadelphia's Top 50 Baseball Players*. Considered the leading authority on Phillies and Philadelphia baseball history, his books include eight on the Phillies, three on Philadelphia's old ballparks, and a history of Philadelphia sports in the twentieth century.

Among his other books are collections of interviews with former baseball players, plus books on no-hitters, 300-game winners, home run hitters, Mickey Vernon, and Eddie Gottlieb. He is the immediate past president of the Philadelphia Sports Writers' Association.

SAM ZYGNER is chairperson for SABR's South Florida Chapter. His article, "Racing the Dawn," appeared in the *Baseball Research Journal* 2012 fall edition. He has written sports- and travel-related articles for *La Prensa de Miami* from 2001–2005, and is writing a book, *The Forgotten Marlins: A Tribute to the 1956–1960 Original Miami Marlins*.