

The INSIDE GAME

The Official Newsletter of SABR's Deadball Era Committee

Volume 7, Number 2: "Let's get this lumpy, licorice-stained ball rolling!" May 2007

Chairman's Column: Cultural and Social Questions

By **David Jones** (crawjo@gmail.com)

I must admit that during the three years I have spent as Chair of the Deadball Era Committee, I do not feel that I used this space to its best advantage. My three years at the helm have been so consumed by work on the Deadball Stars of the American League project that many of the other things I would have liked to have done got lost along the way. Nonetheless, I will take the tradeoff: despite a few dissenters, the vast majority of responses to the book have been overwhelmingly positive, including online postings about the book, personal emails I have received from SABR members, and letters of appreciation sent to SABR headquarters. I thank everyone—no matter their views of the book—for taking the time to share their thoughts. Response of any kind is encouraging; no author or editor likes to release a book into a void of silence.

One of the things I would have liked to have done with my chairman column would have been to raise questions about how we should research the Deadball Era, what questions we should be trying to ask, and how we should go about answering them. Coming from my perspective as an African historian-in-training, I have come to believe that the greatest strength—and the greatest weakness—of baseball history is its wealth of sources. Often when

Continued on page 3

Interview with John Thorn: A Base Ball Enthusiast

Well-known baseball historian John Thorn was kind enough to answer a few questions about his newest journalistic endeavor, *Base Ball*, whose first issue will be coming out soon.

Charles Crawley: You've done a myriad of baseball books and magazines. What motivates you to start a new one?

John Thorn: Frankly, I had had no thought of starting a new magazine until Gary Mitchem of McFarland approached me with the specific idea of a journal about the early game. Within twenty-four hours, I said yes, surprising both Gary and myself. Of course the period to 1920 (and, lately, prior to 1820) is my meat, and I am a publishing lifer with a long and continuing passion for print as well as an acquired comfort with digital media. Echoing Charles Foster Kane, I said to myself "I think it would be fun to run a magazine." And so far, it is. The Deadball era and to a lesser extent the nineteenth century have received plenty of ink over the years, but the accretion of secondary-source varnish has obscured the beauty and truth of the history. It's a delight to think that there is so much yet to be discovered and understood and that with the journal *Base Ball* I might continue to facilitate new study.

CC: You have a lot of heavy hitters on your masthead, include Deadball writers such as Charles Alexander, Tom Simon, and David Pietrusza. How do you convince such busy people to put more work on their baseball plate?

Continued on page 3

What's Inside...

Rex Hamann gives the inside scoop on grave hunting for baseball heroes

Book reviews:

- Cap Anson, reviewed by Ralph Christian
- Frank "Home Run" Baker, reviewed by Norman Macht
- Grover Cleveland Alexander, reviewed by David Shiner
- The Unforgettable Season, reviewed by Steve Steinberg



Cap Anson, the Grand Old Man of Baseball, Warts and All. See page 4 for more.

Baseball Grave Hunting

by **Rex Hamann** (pureout@msn.com)
web address: www.AmericanAssociationAlmanac.com
blog address: www.theoldaa.wordpress.com

It wasn't like we didn't have some practice at this grave hunting thing. Two years ago, my wife and I covered a considerable portion of the Midwest, even locating the previously unknown cemetery for the grave of pitcher Clyde Hatter in Kentucky. My principal interest being the American Association (1902-52), I chose to visit the graves of the players associated with that league. The following represents the first leg of our 2006 grave hunting foray.

After ample legwork, we were ready to embark upon this year's trek in search of ballplayer graves. Using Grand Rapids, Michigan as our "first base," we located the final resting place of Walter "Lefty" Anderson, listed as the youngest player in the major leagues when he joined up with the Philadelphia Athletics in 1917, at Fair Plains Cemetery on a steamy August first. Anderson owned a 6-1 record with the A.A.'s Louisville Colonels in 1919; he served in World War I. Also at Fair Plains, we found the grave of former catcher Al DeVormer who appeared in nearly 200 major league contests (five seasons, 1918-21), but who made his mark in the

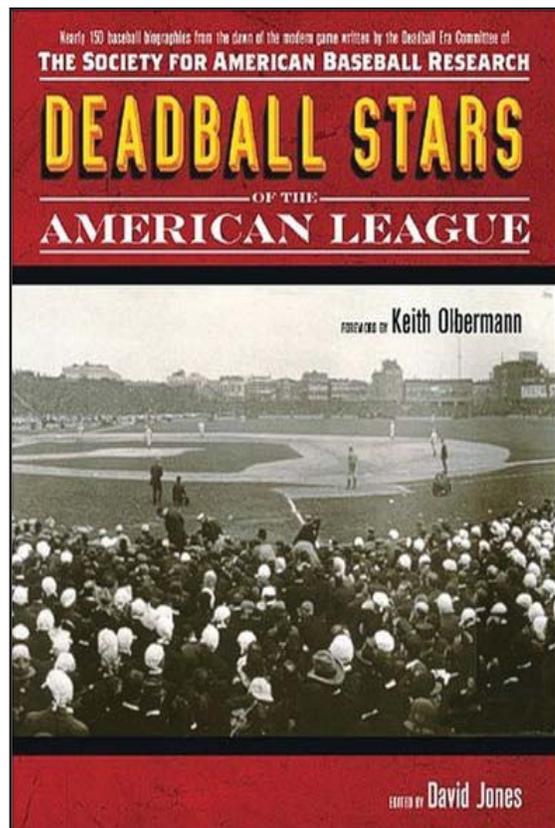
A.A. with Louisville when he hit .368 in 400 at-bats in 1926. Some 15 miles to the north was the grave of Alfred Platte (say Platty), an outfielder whose baseball career included Detroit (1913) and Louisville (1915-17) and Kansas City (1920). Platte was also a World War I vet; his father held office in the city of Grand Rapids. He hit .321 in 77 games/302 at-bats. Lady luck was with us that day as we happened to find the cemetery's longtime caretaker available by phone; he later met us at the graveyard.

Along the grave-hunting base paths, one is likely to find a jewel in the strand of cemeteries included in the agenda. Such was the case as we encountered the historic Oak Hill Cemetery in Battle Creek, Michigan. Our intention was to locate the grave of Allan Collamore who pitched with

the Toledo Mud Hens in five seasons from 1912-19 and compiling a record of 41-40. But the highlight had to be the discovery of early civil rights advocate Sojourner Truth.

Another hot day ushered in our second round of scouring the Michigan countryside for obscure cemeteries. Rex DeVogt's grave we found at Alma's picturesque Riverside Cemetery. DeVogt was a catcher who appeared in three games with the Boston Nationals in 1913; he was with Toledo from 1913-16. Beginning a southward trajectory around midmorning, we finally found the cemetery for the town of North Star in a remote location. Here is where outfielder Jesse Altenburg (Pittsburgh, 1917-18; Kansas City, 1917) is buried.

Since February, I had hoped to find the grave of former early 20th-century pitching star Charlie Ferguson (Chicago-NL, one game, 1901). A resident of Lansing, he was killed in a boating accident on Lake Superior in 1931, not far from Sault Ste. Marie. The search for his burial location required every salvo in this grave hunter's arsenal. "Fergie" is buried at Mount Hope Cemetery in Lansing. His grave sits on a hilltop beneath an ancient tree alongside many members of the Ferguson family. He was one of the American Association's first 20-game winners, compiling a record of 21-10 for the St. Paul Saints in 1902. (Internet users please go to www.baseballreference.com/f/ferguch02.shtml). ♦



Amazon.com: Average Customer Review: 5 Stars!
See page 8 for unbiased paean...

The
INSIDE GAME

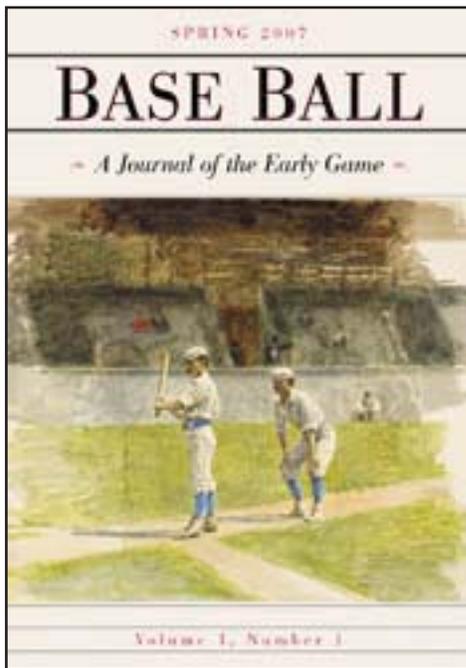
The Official Newsletter of SABR's Deadball Era Committee

Committee Chair
David Jones: dcj063077@yahoo.com

Newsletter Editor
Charles Crawley: crcrawley@yahoo.com

Assistant Editor
John McMurray: mcmurrayj@aol.com

Database Manager/Distributor
Dan Desrochers: desrochsox@comcast.net



A Base Ball Enthusiast, cont. from page 1.

JT: With little irony, I invite them to help me whitewash my fence. They know I'm as busy as they are and if I can find time for this sort of learned fun, maybe they can too. This stance goes a long way to securing great articles too.

CC: What are some of the Deadball Era articles that our readers can look forward to in the upcoming issues?

JT: I've got a couple of great items in hand and more on the way. Of particular interest to Deadball enthusiasts will be Tim Copeland's piece about Stormy Kromer, inventor of the Elmer Fudd "Kromer Cap" and a baseball manager whose odd theories led one of his teams (Blytheville, Arkansas, in the Tri-State League) to lose 35 games in a row. Tom Simon is readying a tribute to Larry Ritter from those whose careers or research activity owed so much to him and to *The Glory of Their Times*. Among the earlier pieces will be one by Fred Ivor-Campbell on the sesquicentennial of the first National Association meeting, Bob Schaefer's paean to Erastus Wiman and his New York Mets of the American Association, a story by James Brunson on the little known "colored champion" St. Louis Black Stockings of the early 1880s. And besides a "Philadelphia Story" on the Olympics of that city by yours truly there will be, assuredly, more.

CC: What can Deadballers learn from studying the era that preceded it? We tend to be rather protective of our 1901-1919 time frame.

JT: Deadballers might be encouraged to think that their slice of the pie, while to them more delicious than those adjoining it, is all the same cut from the same pie. I offer my own experience of having been romanced by *The Glory of Their Times* to think no part of baseball more enthralling than the Deadball era, and now I spend most of my research time joyfully in the period before league baseball began in 1871. The hip bone IS connected to the thigh bone, etc.

CC: Are there any areas of the Deadball Era that you don't think have been sufficiently researched yet, that you would like to see articles for?

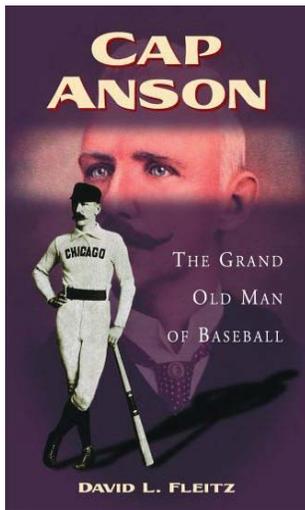
JT: Oh, sure. I'd love to see articles about: (1) John Brush, from his Indianapolis department store ("the WHEN store," named for its delayed opening) to Brush Stadium, a.k.a. the Polo Grounds, (2) the Addie Joss tribute game and how the tradition of benefit games led to the all-star game of 1933, (3) the Chicago City Series that wrecked Ed Walsh's career, (4) Who was Abner Graves?, and more. I'd love to hear from you! ♦

Chairman's Column, cont. from page 1.

researching Africa's past, historians have to pursue their topic with a finely-tuned methodological rigor due to the lack of source materials available. This is particularly the case for Africa's precolonial past, where, in most cases, no written records of any kind exist to document the lives of individuals and the changes in societies over time. By contrast, for baseball historians the well of sources is often overflowing. Because major league baseball players were celebrities, their lives were often chronicled extensively in dozens upon dozens of newspapers. Every game they ever played has been dissected statistically from nearly every possible angle. Just go to the box scores and game accounts and you will find the day-to-day professional activities of even the most mediocre of baseball players. This wealth of information is a tremendous blessing—it allows baseball historians to document the history of the sport with a specificity unattainable in virtually any other field. It is also, however, a handicap, precisely because the wealth of information available in particular areas can encourage researchers to focus on the information most readily available, rather than the information that falls outside the archives.

Thus, I would like to close my last column by raising some questions about things that we could be researching about the Deadball Era; questions that perhaps cannot be answered by a trip to the Hall of Fame library or a search through Retrosheet or Baseball-Reference.com. These questions strive to push us towards a history of the Deadball Era that is more cultural than statistical, more social than biographical. When I consider these areas, it seems to me that the biggest gap missing from our understanding of the Deadball Era is the issue of race. This committee produced a two-volume history of the Deadball Era that included more than 260 white men, one white woman, a few American Indians and individuals of Hispanic origin, and no African-Americans. This is significant because it is exactly how the architects of the color barrier would have wanted us to view their times. They would have wanted historians of the Deadball Era to ignore blacks the way they did, to push them outside the margins of history. Indeed, in this respect the combined

Continued on page 7.



Cap Anson: The Grand Old Man of Baseball

by David L. Fleitz.

Jefferson, N.C and London:

McFarland & Company, Inc., 2005

[ISBN: 786322386]. 346 pages.

\$29.95, softcover.

Reviewed by **Ralph J. Christian**

(Ralph.Christian@iowa.gov)

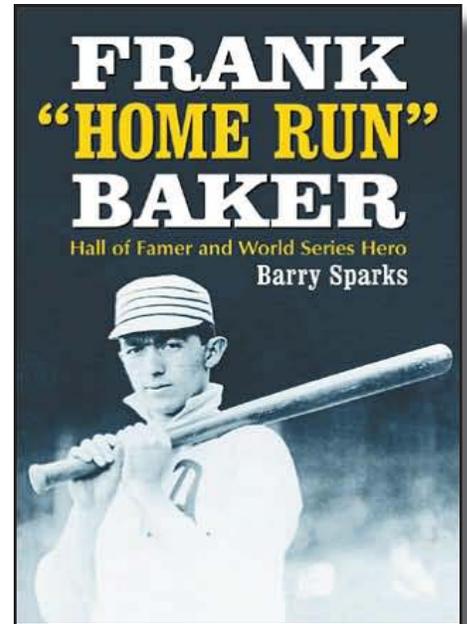
Despite his status as one of baseball's first superstars and the first predominantly nineteenth century player in the Baseball Hall of Fame, Adrian C. "Cap" Anson until recently has attracted little attention from biographers. In fact, the only work approaching a full length biography was his autobiography published in 1900, some twenty-two years before his death. During the past four years, however, Cap Anson has begun to receive his due with the publication of Howard Rosenberg's four volume, nearly 2,000 page magnum opus and David L. Fleitz's one volume work, which is the subject of this review. Fleitz has put together a well-researched and well-written volume which provides a broader and fuller picture of Anson's life in and outside of baseball, including the nearly quarter century of his life after the publication of the autobiography. As one might expect, Fleitz has relied heavily on Anson's memoirs, but the author has supplemented that account with extensive research in contemporary newspapers and a wide variety of published primary and secondary accounts that enable one to

understand Anson within the context of his era and the people with whom he interrelated.

Anson emerges from the pages of Fleitz' account as a somewhat engaging character possessed of a certain degree of charisma, filled with a type of self assurance that often approached arrogance, and exhibiting a personality that at times seemed larger than life. Viewed by the media of his era as the epitome of the ideal ballplayer, Anson often exhibited a type of cleverness bordering on the devious and behavior that to modern observers appears extremely prejudiced and, at times, outright cruel. While he played a major role in drawing the color line in baseball and his status in the national game helped cement into place the "gentlemen's agreement" that made this possible, Anson had numerous accomplices that included team management, players, fans, and a general public ready to embrace separation of the races. Anson's prejudices, however, were not confined to African Americans but were bestowed almost equally on Native Americans, the Irish, particularly some of his own players, and virtually every foreigner and country outside the United States. His anger over being admonished about throwing baseballs at the Sphinx in Egypt and not being allowed to play a game in the Coliseum in Rome on the 1888-89 world tour provides ample proof that the "Ugly American" was not just a twentieth century phenomenon.

Warts and all, Fleitz' Anson is a magisterial figure, truly the grand old man of baseball and clearly worthy of his enshrinement in the Baseball Hall of Fame. Baseball's first real superstar, he established many early records for hitting, being the first player to record 3,000 hits, thus establishing that mark as the gold standard for career achievement. An innovator par excellence, he introduced the concept of spring training and he practically created the modern role of manager in terms of strategy, the platoon system, and the use of psychology in dealing with his own players and the opposition. Most importantly, he had great influence on ballplayers to come. One of the most noteworthy was

a sixteen-year-old Tyrus Raymond Cobb, who purchased Anson's autobiography in Atlanta shortly after its publication in 1900, and according to Al Stump "marked the most important information with checks in the margins." ♦



Frank "Home Run" Baker: Hall of Famer and World Series Hero

by Barry Sparks

McFarland & Company, 2005. [ISBN:

0786423811]. 288 pages. \$29.95,

softcover. (Order at 800-253-2187 or

at www.mcfarlandpub.com).

Reviewed by **Norman L. Macht**

(nlm@grandecom.net)

Frank "Home Run" Baker was a man of sterling character, but he was no "character" in the colorful sense. He played no pranks, giped no jests, executed no escapades. For a brief span of four years, he brought excitement to thousands of fans, but he was not an exciting person and was seldom controversial.

Baker fit perfectly into the 1910-1914 Athletics baseball machine created by Connie Mack that performed with such robotic precision they bordered on boring to the general public. During his older, injury-plagued years with the Yankees from

1916 to 1922, he was overshadowed by his rollicking, carefree teammates.

Barry Sparks, who was born and grew up during Baker's lifetime just seven miles from Baker's rural home town of Trappe, Maryland, knew firsthand Baker's reputation as a highly respected solid citizen, a straight arrow farmer described by his hunting buddy Bill Werber as "the finest man I have ever known."

As the years went by, Baker's fame faded, his league-leading home run totals of 10 and 12 became quaint, almost laughable to new generations of post-Ruthian fans. He had virtually no support for election to the Hall of Fame until a massive letter-writing campaign persuaded the Veterans Committee in 1955.

It bothered Sparks that nobody outside of his native Eastern Shore cared enough about the life of his boyhood idol to chronicle it. Finally, 45 years after the 11-year-old Little Leaguer had met Baker for the only time, Sparks decided the time had come to tackle the job himself.

A subject like Baker can be a real challenge to a biographer. Given Baker's taciturn, retiring nature (the only joke about him concerned his perennial declaration to retire from baseball and stay on the farm), Sparks concentrates on Baker's year-by-year accomplishments on the field. Relying primarily on contemporary newspaper reports, Sparks offers a thorough account of Baker's batting exploits, his teams' pennant chases, the two years when he chose not to play (1915 and 1920), and the context of his time.

During his career, Baker was acclaimed for his hitting, sometimes denigrated for his fielding. Sparks does a good job of debunking this criticism, describing how much more difficult it was to catch a ball and throw it in Baker's time than it is with today's bushel-sized gloves and clean smooth balls. (I once had the thrill of putting my hand into Baker's mitt. It was like slipping my hand between two pancakes. The fingers extended no more than an inch beyond my fingertips - and Baker's hands were probably bigger than mine. There was an inch-wide strap between the thumb and index finger, no padding at all at the bottom and very little outside the

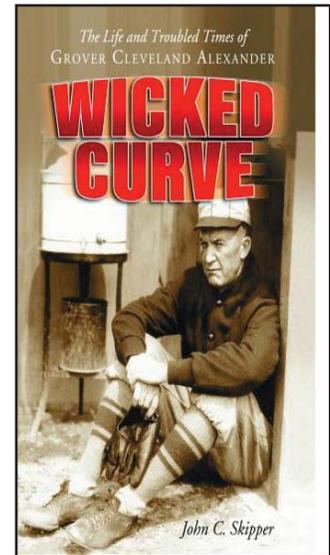
little finger.)

I disagree with some of Sparks' interpretations and speculations concerning Baker and Connie Mack (Mack had not "earned a well-deserved reputation as being tight with his money" in 1914). But most of these are matters of opinion, not facts. To Sparks' credit, he does not repeat the baseless speculation about the 1914 World Series being fixed.

The book could have benefited by interviews with some of Baker's teammates while they were still available, players like Bill Werber, who reminisced about baseball with Baker in duck blinds on cold winter mornings, and access to Baker's papers held by his son and daughter-in-law in Trappe.

But most of all the book would have benefited by a knowledgeable copy editor and proofreader. Sparks' work was ill-served by his publisher in this regard. Any writer who spends years researching, his eyes burning from perusing miles of grainy microfilm by 10-watt bulbs, his brain numbing from repetitious rewriting, is bound to commit some errors on routine plays he would make 99 percent of the time. Like calling Eddie Collins a right-handed batter. Or the Braves playing the White Sox in Boston on September 28, 1914. More egregious are the numerous instances of missing words, misused words and repeated words that a copy editor or proofreader would have caught.

I've done as much editing as writing, so these bugs jump off the page to me. Most readers might brush off these nits, and be rewarded by learning more about what kind of man was Frank Baker, one of baseball's reluctant meteoric heroes of a long-ago time. ♦



Wicked Curve: The Life and Troubled Times of Grover Cleveland Alexander

by John C. Skipper.

Jefferson City, NC: McFarland & Company Inc. [ISBN 0-7864-2412-5], 2006. 238 pages. \$28.50, softcover.

Reviewed by **David Shiner**
(cunegonde@prodigy.net)

The cover of John Skipper's biography of Grover Cleveland Alexander is picture perfect. It depicts Alexander, clearly long past his prime, sitting on the floor of an anonymous dugout in front of an old-time water cooler. Alex is in full uniform, unworn glove dangling from his right hand, staring off into space. Is he drunk? Bitter? Pensive? It's impossible to know.

As Skipper's workmanlike biography makes clear, it's impossible to know a number of things about Ol' Pete. We do know that alcoholism caused him a lot of problems and that epilepsy was the source of still more. The balance between those two is unclear, as is Alexander's personal level of responsibility for many of the less exemplary events of his later life. The famed sportswriter Westbrook Pegler was among those who laid the bulk of the blame squarely on

Continued on page 6.

Alexander, cont. from page 5.

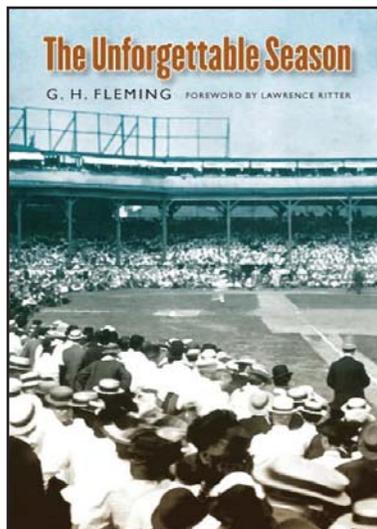
Alexander's shoulders, writing sarcastically, "[D]o you suppose it ever occurred to Alec to turn down his glass some time?" On the opposite side of the debate was Pete's sometime wife, Aimee, who once told a *Sporting News* reporter, "All of these illnesses – epilepsy, cancer, deafness, and alcoholism – would defeat most of us, wouldn't they?"

Skipper is a seasoned baseball researcher and writer, and his latest tome is solidly in the contemporary tradition of biographies of diamond greats. It uses (and credits) the 1996 bio by the late Jack Kavanagh, *Ol' Pete: The Grover Cleveland Alexander Story*, devoting less space to Alex's playing career and more to his personal and professional post-career decline than Kavanagh's book. Skipper summarizes some seasons in a mere couple of pages, devoting the lion's share of the baseball-oriented portions of the text to the championship seasons of 1915 (Phillies) and 1926 (Cardinals). Since Skipper's and Kavanagh's respective books have different emphases, the two volumes together comprise a reasonably complete joint biography of the old-time pitching star.

Skipper is a capable writer, and his book is an easy read. His research and sensibility lead to the inclusion of some nice moments, such as when he augments the pairing of Alexander and Jesse Haines in the 1926 World Series by recounting their first duel as mound opponents six years earlier. He doesn't set a lot of historical context, and what he does on that score makes good sense. The number of errors for a volume of this sort is typical, although a competent fact-checker would have caught most of them.

As Skipper notes, Alexander "did not match up well with three men with whom comparisons were inevitable": Cy Young, Walter Johnson, and Christy Mathewson. Young won many more games; Johnson and Mathewson were role models and national heroes. It is to Skipper's credit that he makes the case for Alexander's greatness as a pitcher without embellishing

his record as a person. It's important that we remember Ol' Pete as one of the greatest pitchers of all time. It's also important to remember that not all great pitchers were exemplary role models, a point painfully but justly brought home in Skipper's worthy book. ♦



The Unforgettable Season

by G.H. Fleming

Bison Books, 2006 (originally published in 1981). [ISBN: 0803269226]. 332 pages. \$15.95, softcover.

Reviewed by **Steve Steinberg**
(ssteinberg@trinorth.com)

Bison Books has reissued Gordon Fleming's classic telling of the 1908 National League pennant race. Late in the season, the famous Merkle game (when New York's Fred Merkle failed to touch second base after an apparent Giants' game-winning hit against the Chicago Cubs) was ruled a tie. When John McGraw's Giants and Frank Chance's Cubs ended the season tied, Mordecai Brown (in relief of Jack Pfeister) beat Christy Mathewson in a one-game playoff (the first in big league baseball) for the pennant.

Fleming follows the same approach in his three books; the others are *The Dizziest Season* (1984) on the 1934 St. Louis Cardinals Gashouse Gang and *Murderers' Row* (1985) on the 1927 New York Yankees. It is refreshingly simple: he tells the daily story of the season from newspapers

of the National League cities, and occasionally *The Sporting News* and *Sporting Life*. "The story will be told by those who saw and heard all that happened," the author writes in the Preface. Larry Ritter's original Foreword is reproduced in this edition of the book.

Fleming adds each day's Giants' score, along with the winning and losing pitchers, and record. The only writings of his own are parenthetical comments to explain what a 1981 reader may not understand or recall. For example, when the *New York Times* mentions "hillbillies" coming out for a game, he inserts, "those who watched free of charge from atop Coogan's Bluff, overlooking the Polo Grounds." When the *Times* quotes James Corbett, Fleming adds, "The former heavy heavyweight boxing champion (1892-97), Corbett was an avid Giant fan."

While the fierce NL pennant race involved three teams (the Pirates finished just one game out, as the Giants did), the book is very "New York-centric." The overwhelming majority of the quotes are from *New York* papers. First and foremost, it is a book about the 1908 *New York* Giants.

Yet the variety—from *New York* alone—is wonderful. The city had a large number of daily papers, and Fleming uses twelve of them. Legendary columnists Sam Crane, Charles Dryden, Sid Mercer, and Tim Murnane—all recipients of the J.G. Taylor Spink award—as well as James Crusinberry, I.E. Sanborn, and Joe Vila are among the contributors.

They brought to their readers the texture and flavor of the Deadball Era, more than a decade before radio broadcasts. Fleming brings us their vivid pictures, the likes of which are absent from today's papers. Crusinberry writes of Mathewson after he tossed a shutout, "His speed may not be so great as in the past, but his wits are greater." The *New York Times* describes pitcher Harry "Slim" Sallee as "pretty nigh as tall as those windmills we read about in the farm journals." When the paper talks of all the fans crowding Coogan's Bluff to watch the playoff game, it writes, "Never in the history of the game have there been so many to see a game who

didn't see it."

Fleming brings back nuggets that have been long forgotten, which were part of the fabric of 1908. Examples include:

National League Secretary-Treasurer (and future NL president) John Heydler speaks out against rules to increase hitting, saying, "A ball can be made so lively that a batting average of .500 will be commonplace."

A quote from 1890s spitball pitcher Billy Hart on his use of the "wet" pitch, a decade before the supposed "invention" of the pitch in the early 1900s

A Giants' game (on June 16) is cancelled, so the Yale-Princeton Ivy League championship game can be played at the Polo Grounds

Tim Murnane comments on the improved gloves (!?) now being used and reminds us that even in 1908, old-timers (from the 19th century) were talking of the "good ol' days." He suggests, "Bar big gloves from baseball and batting averages will bob up.... The old-timers worked without gloves. Take the mitts off present players and see how many great stars are left."

Sam Crane talks about the new game of 1908: "Sentiment no longer figures in the sport. It is now only a battle of dollars. The business end of baseball has so superseded the real sport."

One of the congratulatory telegrams the Cubs received came from an Illinois fan and Illinois federal judge by the name of Keneshaw [sic] M. Landis."

Most of all, this is a book about a truly "unforgettable season." Fleming brings back accounts of historical significance. The *New York American* writes (on August 4) about NL president Harry Pulliam, who would take his own life the following year, from depression and stress brought on at least in part by his ruling against the Giants in the Merkle game.

"It looks as if President Harry Pulliam...realizes the advantage of having them [the Giants] 'cop' the flag. The worthy executive is casting no stones in the runaway of McGraw. Indeed, he is even bringing pressure to further Giant interests, so it is hinted by those who know."

The momentum shifts of the

pennant race are no better on display than in the last week of August. After sweeping the Pirates four games in Pittsburgh, the Giants then lost three straight to the Cubs in Chicago. Of course there are accounts of the three times in the last week of the season that Harry Coveleski of the Phils beat the Giants. The famous Brown-Mathewson playoff meeting was foreshadowed by two of the many classic matchups between these hurlers: a 1-0 Brown win on July 17 and a 3-2 Brown win on August 29.

On September 4 in Pittsburgh, the Cubs lost 1-0. More significantly, like the Merkle game 19 days later, the winning run scored though the Pirate runner on first base never touched second. Umpire Hank O'Day didn't see the play yet became very aware of it and the usually overlooked rule when the Cubs protested the game. O'Day would be the umpire near second base in the Merkle game.

On September 8, Harry Pulliam upheld the Pirates' win yet Fleming notes that only one New York paper (the *Globe*) mentioned that there was a protest and the later ruling against it. Even then, the *Globe* didn't provide details on the protest. John McGraw and his Giants may have not been real familiar with the incident or the possibility that O'Day was primed to enforce the rule involved.* The stage was thus set for what Fleming calls "the most celebrated, most widely discussed, most controversial contest in the history of American sports."

When William Morrow published Fleming's *The Dizziest Season* and *Murderers' Row*, the publisher italicized his commentary, rather than placing it in parentheses. This made the author's additions easier to spot and separate from the newspaper text. It is hoped that the University of Nebraska Press will bring back the other two Fleming books. And perhaps a SABR member will mirror Fleming's style and pull together newspaper accounts about another classic pennant race for a book.

* A review reveals that both *Sporting Life* (Sept. 12) and *The Sporting News* (Sept. 17) did mention the incident. The former wrote, "If the umpire did not see the play how can he pass upon it?" It went on to note,

"mistake or neglect of that official must be accepted as philosophically as possible, as part of the fortunes of the game." The latter wrote that "The Chicago Club's protest was ill-advised, inasmuch as there was not even a remote chance that it would be sustained on the evidence submitted." It did note, however, that had the ball "been relayed to second base ahead of Gill, the runner on first base, a force-out would have occurred and the run would not have counted." ♦

Chairman's Column, cont. from page 3.

Deadball volumes would have met with the approval of racists such as Cap Anson, Ty Cobb, Charles Comiskey, and others. Is this the history we should be creating? It is an important question to ask. If we decide that it is not, then I think we must do more than try to "reclaim" the lives and careers of famous black ballplayers. There is certainly a need to engage in such biographical history, and I have advocated for it in this space before. But we should do more. The popular history of the color line in baseball goes something like this: After a brief period in which a few blacks were allowed to play in the major leagues during the nineteenth century, the rulers of the game made an agreement among themselves to bar dark-skinned players from all of "organized baseball." Between this decision and the signing of Jackie Robinson, a few efforts were made by individuals to circumvent this "gentleman's agreement," most notably John McGraw's effort to pass Charlie Grant off as an American Indian. Otherwise, however, all the leaders of the game agreed to this de facto rule, and it was not challenged in any coherent form until the 1940s. As far as the Deadball Era is concerned, I find this explanation unsatisfactory in some respects. I would like to know how the color line operated, what mechanisms were used to enforce it, and how some individuals (a few Cubans and American Indians chief among them) were able to expose gaps and fissures in the "gentleman's agreement" in order to play in the

Chairman's Column, cont. from page 7

major leagues, while others were not. I am less interested in the what, why, and when of the “gentleman’s agreement,” than in the how. I also think more research should be done attempting to understand the racial scaffolding of the game during the Deadball Era. In particular I think there is a tremendous opportunity to further research the role that black “mascots” played in the game, how they were treated by players and fans, who they were, and what became of them.

In training our lens on the cultural and social history of the Deadball Era, I also think more work should be done on ethnic, religious, and regional conflicts during the period. What tensions existed in clubhouses between Southerners and Northerners? How did this change over time? What of the conflicts between Protestants and Catholics, Jews and non-Jews, Italians and Germans, those of Irish and British ancestry? Were there any patterns of conflict between immigrants and second-generation Americans? Attention to such questions could help us to deconstruct the “whiteness” that ruled the game during the Deadball Era.

The above suggestions are not intended to denigrate the work of those who want to study statistical history, game tactics, or to continue the work of producing biographies of players. We are a large committee and we have members with diverse interests and talents. There is room in our tent for any and every kind of history.

The DEC has enjoyed a fantastic first seven years, publishing two major books and growing from a small committee with a handful of members to a heterogenous group more than 300 strong. I have particularly enjoyed the last three years serving as the Chair of this wonderful committee. Thank you for the opportunity. With John McMurray stepping in to fill my shoes this summer, I am confident that the DEC will continue to grow, both in raw numbers and in the diversity of projects we tackle and questions we engage. ♦



Walter Johnson at South Side Park, 1909.
SDN-054941, Chicago Daily News negatives collection,
Chicago Historical Society

On First Looking into Jones’ Deadball Stars of the American League

By **Charles Crawley**

With apologies to John Keats, “On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer” (1816)

Much have I traveled in the realms of ball,
And many goodly players and managers seen;
Round many MLB circuits have I been which bards in fealty
to Ban Johnson hold.

Oft of one wide diamond had I been told
That deep-browed Simon rules as his demesne;
Yet never did I breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Jones speak out loud and bold:

Then I felt like some bug in the stands
When a rookie leaves his dugout
Or like stout Mack when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Senior Circuit—and all his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise
Silent, upon a mound, in Shibe Park.

Johnson’s Curveball a Joke

By Grantland Rice

(As it appeared in *The Sporting Life*, June 4, 1913)

How do they know what Johnson’s got?
Whether he uses a curve or not —
Whether his break is set?
How can they tell where his outshoots fall?
Whether his curve’s big or small?
How do they know what he has on the ball?
Nobody’s seen it yet.

How do they know how his curve ball looks?
Whether it rises, shoots or hooks?
Whether he’s dry or wet?
I asked the Yanks and the Mackian crew
To tip me straight what the Big Smoke threw;
No one answered, for no one knew —
Not having seen it yet.

Courtesy of RJ Lesch, Adel, Iowa