

The Official Newsletter of SABR's Deadball Era Committee

Vol. XVIII, No. 4: "LET'S GET THIS LUMPY LICORICE-STAINED BALL ROLLING!" SEPTEMBER 2018

## DEADBALL AT SABR 48 RECAP

The 600+ attendees at SABR 48 had a decent number of Deadball-related presentations available to them, including the Doug Pappas Award winner as the convention's best by Callie Batts Maddox. DEC chairman John McMurray led off, analyzing the causes behind the inability of Babe Ruth to realize his publicly-declared ambition to become a major leagues manager. John identified no fewer than nine managerial posts that Ruth might have been tendered had club owners been inclined to hire him. In addition to the oft-stated rationale that no club boss was going to offer field leadership to a man who seemed unable to manage his own behavior, the presentation also engaged the recent contention, first advanced by Ruth's daughter Julia Stevens, that owners feared the Babe's intention to racially integrate whatever club he was given the reins to. Although a provocative thesis, McMurray, like others, found no evidential support for it.

Newsletter book review editor Dan Levitt explored the evolution of baseball innovation, from the Deadball Era to today's tech-ball. Dan identified four off-the-field means that club



Callie Batts Maddox delivers Doug Pappas Award presentation on early 20<sup>th</sup> century women's collegiate baseball

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leaders have employed to improve their team's fortunes: (1) increasing the available talent pool via vertically-integrated farm systems; (2) the use of analytics; (3) enhanced player scouting and training, and (4) enlarged and more technologically-sophisticated operational structure. Recognition of the need to constantly innovate and the personnel required to accomplish this has led to the enlargement of the one-man or small staff front offices of the late-Deadball Era to the roughly 70 person baseball-related staff of the 2018 Chicago Cubs.

Homage to the convention's host city and Pirates Hall of Fame owner Barney Dreyfuss was paid by Bob Trumpbour. The focus of the presentation was the 1909 construction of the Forbes Field, not the first of baseball's concrete and steel stadiums (Philadelphia's Shibe Park was), but arguably its finest. Built at the cost of \$1 million, Forbes Field set technological milestones, using three times more steel than Shibe. Forbes Field was also the first ballpark to provide on-site underground automobile parking and public telephones for those attending the games, and home and visitor locker room washing machines so that those playing would be wearing freshly laundered uniforms. Perhaps more important,



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Trumpbour advised, Forbes Field became a point of civic pride and did much to improve Pittsburgh's self-esteem.

First-time presenter Callie Batts Maddox, an assistant professor of the Sports Leadership and Management program at Miami University of Oxford, Ohio, took conventioneers on a journey to previously unexplored terrain: early 20th century Ohio women's collegiate baseball. Making illuminating use of power point images, Maddox surveyed the development of the women's game at seven Ohio colleges, the rules variants used on different campuses, and the cultural and gender norms affected by female embrace of the game. To document how popular baseball became among women students, Callie noted that 67% of the coeds registered at Miami in 1914 signed up for indoor baseball. And that 57 women's team games were played that winter-spring. She also profiled Hazel Bay, the female Ty Cobb of Ohio college ball. Original and highly informative, the Maddox presentation was deemed the convention's best and was the recipient of the prestigious Doug Pappas Award.

Committee stalwart Steve Steinberg closed out the Deadball-related presentations by reminding conventioneers of the now-forgotten contender in the celebrated 1908 National League pennant race: the Pittsburgh Pirates of Hall of Famers Honus Wagner and Fred Clarke. Had the Giants beaten the Cubs (and not vice versa) in the season-ending Merkle Boner makeup game, the campaign would have ended in a three-way Chicago-New York-Pittsburgh tie. In recounting the season's highlights, Steve noted that Johnny Evers had claimed a game-continuing force-out on Pittsburgh's Warren Gill only weeks early. But on that occasion, umpire Hank O'Day, the same arbiter who would later declare Fred Merkle out and cancel a seeming Giants win over the Cubs. dismissed Evers' claims and a crucial Pirates 1-0 victory over Chicago was allowed to stand.

The annual convention meeting of the Deadball Era Committee featured chairman John McMurray's overview of DEC activities and events during the past year, and the presentation of the Larry Ritter Award in absentia to author Jim Leeke for his fine work *From the Dugouts to the Trenches: Baseball During the Great War* (University of Nebraska Press, 2017). Gary

Mitchem, Senior Acquisitions Editor for McFarland Publishing, described changes coming to the journal Base Ball, now to be an annual published in paperback book form and re-titled: Base Ball: New Research on the Early Game. Distinguished DEC member Don Jensen has assumed the post of managing editor, and under his direction Base Ball will continue to publish cutting-edge research about the game through the 1920 season. Steve Steinberg then took the podium to provide insight into the process that vielded SABR's handsome new offering The World Series in the Deadball Era: A History in the Words and Pictures of the Writers and Photographers. A combination of vintage reportage and more than 250 often rarely-seen photos, the book is a must see/read for DEC members.

The meeting's featured speakers were Dennis DeValeria and Jeanne Burke DeValeria, coauthors of the seminal *Honus Wagner: A Biography* (Henry Holt, 1995). Speaking alternatively, the couple recalled the travails of doing research on turn-of-the-century baseball in the days before the Internet. Dennis and Jeanne also recounted the effort required to separate Wagner fact from Wagner legend, a task complicated by their subject's fondness for telling Paul Bunyan-type tales about his playing days. Thoroughly researched and gracefully written, the DeValeria work remains the definitive bio of the Pittsburgh Pirates Deadball Era star.







Dan Levitt: Innovation from Deadball to Techball



Bob Trumpbour: the erection of Forbes Field



Steve Steinberg: the 1909 Pittsburgh Pirates



John McMurray: Babe Ruth's unfulfilled managerial ambitions



Dennis DeValeria, Jeanne Burke DeValeria, and DEC chairman John McMurray



McFarland Senior Acquisitions Editor Gary Mitchem: changes to Base Ball



The 2018 Larry Ritter Award plaque

## THE OPENING OF MORDECAI IN CHICAGO

by Cindy Thomson

Deadball Era and Chicago Cubs great Mordecai "Three Finger" Brown is being remembered in a big way in Chicago these days. Inside the new hotel and dining complex directly across from Wrigley Field is *Mordecai*, a bi-level cocktail bar and restaurant. Named for the famous Chanceera pitcher, and with décor honoring his name and image, *Mordecai* does more than just offer food and drinks. The setting invites visitors who weren't previously familiar with the turn-of-thetwentieth-century Cubs pitcher to learn more about the man who pitched the Cubs to back-to-back World Championships with a deformed right hand.

In April Scott Brown and I, representing the Mordecai Brown Legacy Foundation, (www.mordecaibrown.com) were invited by Hickory Street Capital for a special launch of the entire complex. We were warmly greeted by Matthias Merges, chef and proprietor of Folkart Restaurant Management. Merges opened a Billy Sunday Cocktail bar in the West Loop in 2010 and told us that when he learned Mordecai

Brown's story he knew he wanted to name his new Wrigleyville venture after him.

The walls of the establishment are adorned with photos and memorabilia, donated for the most part by the Mordecai Brown Legacy Foundation, and we are pleased with how the restaurant contributes to the promotion of the pitcher's memory. Mordecai's enlarged autograph graces one wall. There are matchbooks and paper menus bearing his image. On the drink menu you'll find some of Brown's nicknames describing mixed cocktails: Royal Rescuer and the Peerless Leader, not to mention a bourbon concoction named Duped by Three Fingers. But even if you're not a drinker, you'll find that the menu offers some great food choices, including a Mordecai burger. The view from the outdoor balcony of the ballpark is stellar.

The neighborhood around the ballpark still retains its charm, and the bars and restaurants within walking distance are still great places to visit before and after games. But the Zachary Hotel, named for the architect of Wrigley, and the restaurant/bar named *Mordecai* offer fans and history buffs a wonderful look back at the Deadball Cubs.

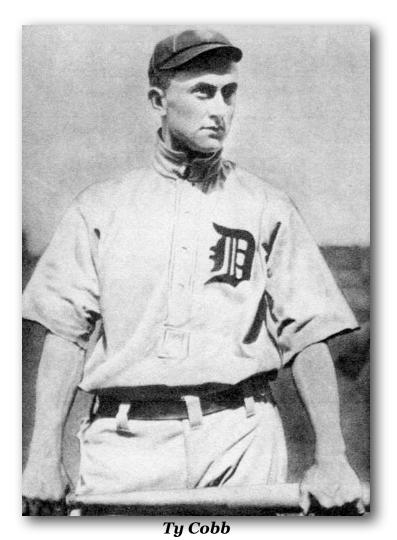


# ACCURATE RBI RECORDS FOR PLAYERS OF THE DEADBALL ERA: PART 15 — THE PLAYERS ON THE 1909 DETROIT TIGERS

# by **Herm Krabbenhoft**

Because RBIs were not recorded officially prior to 1920, there are no *official* RBI records before 1920. There are, however, two sources of *unofficial* (full-season) RBI stats for the players of the Deadball Era:

- (1) Ernie Lanigan, who contemporaneously compiled RBI statistics unofficially from 1907 through 1919. Lanigan's RBI statistics were presented in various publications, such as The Sporting News, Baseball Magazine, newspapers (e.g., New York Press, Chicago Tribune, Detroit Free Press), and books (e.g., The Official Encyclopedia of Baseball by Turkin and Thompson and Daguerreotypes of Great Stars of Baseball by Spink). 1,2
- (2) David S. Neft, who directed a research effort in the mid-1960s to compile RBI statistics - unofficially - from 1890 through 1919. Neft's RBI statistics were presented in The Baseball Encyclopedia (published by Macmillan in 1969), and Sports Encyclopedia: Baseball (by Neft and Cohen).<sup>3,4</sup> Neft's RBI statistics have also been incorporated "as-is" into the baseball database created by Pete Palmer and thereby perpetuated in two other baseball encyclopedias (Total Baseball by Thorn and Palmer and The ESPN Baseball Encyclopedia by Gillette and Palmer) as well as numerous websites (e.g., MLB.com, Baseball-Reference.com, and retrosheet.org).<sup>5,6</sup> Similarly, Neft's RBI statistics were also incorporated by STATS into its database and thereby disseminated in the STATS All-Time Baseball Sourcebook and All-Time Major League Handbook as



well as numerous "Team Media Guides" and other publications.<sup>7,8</sup>

For the 1909 season, Lanigan's research asserted that Ty Cobb topped the Junior Circuit in RBIs with 115. However, according to Neft's research, The Genius in Spikes won the American League RBI crown with 107. So, which number is correct? Or, is neither number correct? Having an accurate runs-batted-in number for Tyrus Raymond is especially important — because, since he also topped the loop in batting average (.376) and home runs (9), Cobb won the Triple Crown. So, how many runs did Cobb actually bat in? The correct answer to that question is provided in this report.

### RESEARCH PROCEDURE

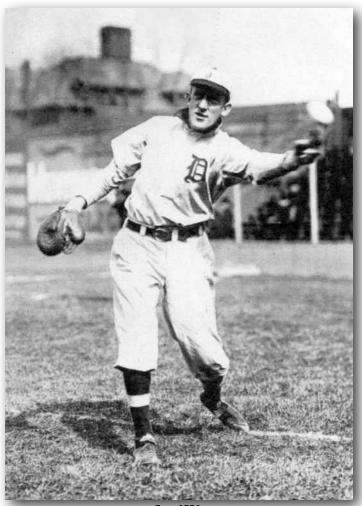
For the present investigation, I utilized the same rigorous modus operandi employed in my previous research efforts.<sup>9-22</sup> Thus, for each of

the 666 runs scored by the Tigers in 1909, I sought to obtain three critical components: (a) the identity of the player who scored the run; (b) the details of the run-scoring event [e.g., a 2-RBI double, a balk, a 1-RBI grounder (batter safe on a fielding error), a o-RBI grounder (batter safe on a fielding error), a 1-RBI bases-loaded walk, etc.]; and (c) the identity of the player who completed his plate appearance during the runscoring event (i.e., the player who could be credited with batting in the run). I followed the appropriate official scoring rules to credit or not credit for RBIs - i.e., the 1931 official scoring rules because that is when runs batted in were first officially defined.<sup>23</sup> I then provided the complete documentation that I assembled to Retrosheet's Tom Ruane and Dave Smith for their independent review, upon which we achieved 100% agreement and Retrosheet incorporated all of the runs-scored and runsbatted-in numbers in its Box Score file (and derived Player Daily files) in its Summer-2018 release of updated information.<sup>24</sup> Appendix A-1 (available on SABR.org) provides a tabulation of the critical "(a)-(b)-(c)" information for each of the 666 runs scored by the 1909 Tigers.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the RBI numbers, according to my research, for each of the 29 players who participated in at least one game for the Detroit Tigers in the 1909 campaign. Also shown for comparison are the RBI numbers claimed by Neft.<sup>3,4</sup> I was not successful in my search efforts (*The Sporting News* and *Sporting Life*) to locate a comprehensive list of RBI numbers according to Lanigan for the 1909 season.

Inspection of Table 1 reveals that, according to my research, Ty Cobb achieved 105 runs batted in — two RBIs fewer than the 107 RBIs claimed by Neft, and ten RBIs less than the 115 RBIs asserted by Lanigan. Indeed, my RBI numbers are different from Neft's RBI numbers for most of the players. Thus, for only one of the thirteen principal position players (shown in boldface in Table 1) are my RBI number and Neft's RBI number the same — Germany Schaefer (22 RBIs). While most of the differences between my



Ed Killian

numbers and Neft's numbers are small, i.e., deltas of only one or two RBIs, the players with the largest deltas are Sam Crawford [7 RBIs (104 vs. 97)], Jim Delahanty [6 (26 vs. 20)], Ed Killian [6 (6 vs. o)], and George Moriarty [5 (44 vs. 39)]. Since the game-by-game RBI records generated by Neft are no longer extant, it is not possible to ascertain the sources of the RBI deltas for most of the players. However, since a few players participated in only a few games and had only one or two RBIs, one can pinpoint the deltas for them. For instance, Del Gainer played in just two games (October 2 and 3). According to Neft, Gainer had no RBIs in those two games, while, based on my research, he had one RBI in the October 3 game, batting in Crawford with a seventh-inning single; the pertinent newspaper descriptions in support of my RBI number are provided in the Appendix.

With reliable game-by-game RBI statistics in hand, one can ascertain accurate Consecutive Games Run Batted In (CGRUNBI) streak information. According to my research, Ty Cobb fashioned the longest CGRUNBI streak for the 1909 Tigers — a nine-gamer. Based on the results of my previous Deadball Era studies, Cobb's 9-CGRUNBI streak is tied for the second longest CGRUNBI streak among Tigers players from the 1906 and 1909-1919 seasons. Sam Crawford assembled an 11-gamer in 1910 and Jim Delahanty also put together a 9-gamer in 1911. The all-time longest CGRUNBI streak for Tigers players is twelve games, achieved by Mickey Cochrane (in 1934) and by Rudy York (in 1940).<sup>25</sup> The American League record (since 1920) for the longest CGRUNBI streak is 14 games, set by Tris Speaker of the 1928 Philadelphia Athletics.<sup>26</sup>

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The research results reported in this article show that Ty Cobb actually amassed 105 runs batted in during the 1909 season, not 107 RBIs as shown in the various baseball encyclopedias and on several baseball websites. Indeed, as shown in Table 1, the RBI numbers presently provided in these sources for most of the players on the 1909 Detroit Tigers are erroneous.

Finally, it is pointed out that in carrying out the research described in this report four runs-scored errors in the official records were also discovered, including the finding that Ty Cobb was not the sole leader in runs scored for the AL in 1909 — Donie Bush and Cobb tied for the runs-scored throne, each with 115 tallies (not 114 and 116, respectively).<sup>27</sup>

#### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I gratefully thank Tom Ruane, and Dave Smith for reviewing the documentation I assembled in support of the RBI numbers that I ascertained.

F. R. Lamar, a trainer of sprinters, has been engaged by Washington and is now teaching the Senators the art of starting quickly and keeping it up.

The Tacoma Times, June 2, 1910



Sam Crawford

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- 22. Herm Krabbenhoft, "Accurate RBI Records for the Players of the Deadball Era: Part 14 The Players on the 1910 Detroit Tigers," *The Inside Game*, Volume XVIII, No. 1 (February 2018), 3.
- 23. Runs-Batted-In statistics were not officially recorded until the 1920; moreover, the Run-Batted-In was not even officially defined until 1931. (a) Official Scoring Rule for Runs Batted In (1920-1930) — The summary shall contain: The number of runs batted in by each batsman. [Rule 86, Section B] (b) Official Scoring Rule for Runs Batted In (1931) — Runs Batted In are runs scored on safe hits (including home runs), sacrifice hits, outfield put-outs, infield put-outs, and when the run is forced over by reason of the batsman becoming a base-runner. With less than two outs, if an error is made on a play on which a runner from third would ordinarily score, credit the batsman with a Run Batted In. [Rule 70, Section 13]
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# TABLE 1. RUNS-BATTED-IN NUMBERS FOR PLAYERS ON THE 1909 DETROIT TIGERS

Player (Games)	RBIs (Neft)	RBIs (Herm)	$_{\Delta}^{RBIs}$	Player (Games)	RBIs (Neft)	RBIs (Herm)	$_{\Delta}^{RBIs}$
H. Beckendorf (15)	1	1		B. Lelivelt (4)	0	0	
D. Bush (157)	33	*35*	2	M. McIntyre (125)	34	*33*	(1)
J. Casey (3)	0	*1*	1	G. Moriarty (133)	39	*44*	5
T. Cobb (156)	107	*105*	(2)	G. Mullin (53)	17	17	_
S. Crawford (156)	97	*104*	7	C. O'Leary (76)	13	*10*	(3)
J. Delahanty (46)	20	*26*	6	C. Rossman (82)	39	*42*	3
B. Donovan (22)	1	*0*	(1)	G. Schaefer (87)	22	22	_
D. Gainer (2)	0	*1*	1	B. Schmidt (84)	28	*26*	(2)
H. Jennings (2)	2	*3*	1	K. Speer (13)	2	*1*	(1)
D. Jones (69)	10	*11*	1	O. Stanage (77)	21	*19*	(2)
E. Jones (2)	0	0	_	E. Summers (35)	3	3	_
T. Jones (44)	18	*15*	(3)	G. Suggs (9)	0	*1*	1
R. Killefer (23)	4	4	_	E. Willett (42)	10	*13*	3
E. Killian (25)	0	*6*	6	R. Works (16)	0	0	_
E. Lafitte (3)	0	0	_				

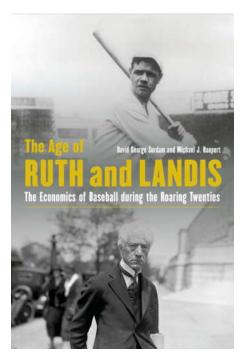
#### NOTES:

- (1) Players shown in boldface indicates that they are considered "principal position players."
- (2) For those players where my RBI number and Neft's RBI number are different, my RBI number is bracketed with asterisks.
- (3) A  $\Delta$  value enclosed in parentheses indicates that the "Herm" RBI number is less than Neft's RBI number.



by Thornton Fisher

Harrisburg Telegraph, May 22, 1917



# THE AGE OF RUTH AND LANDIS: THE ECONOMICS OF BASEBALL DURING THE ROARING TWENTIES

By David George Surdam and Michael J. Haupert

2018, University of Nebraska Press [ISBN 978-0803296824, 420 pp, \$45.00 USD, Hardcover]

Reviewed by **Joan M. Thomas** jth8751400@aol.com

A thoroughly researched account of a pivotal period in Organized Baseball, *The Age of Ruth and Landis* illuminates the driving forces behind changes that occurred then. Authors Surdam and Haupert, both professors of economics, delve into the fascinating, and sometimes surprising history of an era, combining human interest with hard data to explain the complexity of the

sport's evolution. The book stands alone in its time frame of 1919 – 1929. An added bonus is its 25 tables detailing financial and playing statistics for both Major Leagues. It includes a salary chart comparing an early Negro Leagues team with the Majors, and one contrasting its profits with that of the Yankees. These tables allow the reader a more enlightened viewpoint.

Surdam explains how in the aftermath of the failed Federal League, followed by the tribulations of the First World War, the Major Leagues underwent transformations bequeathed all the way down to the 21st century. Sparked by the 1919 Black Sox scandal and animosity between owners, especially AL President Ban Johnson and White Sox owner Charles Comiskey, the position of Commissioner of Baseball was created. The Deadball Era gave way to a focus on the home run and fewer stolen bases. Both leagues outlawed "freak pitches" like the spit ball. Newer, bigger ballparks were constructed. Branch Rickey revolutionized player development by devising the modern farm club system. Of course, key personalities in the story that unfolds are Babe Ruth and Kenesaw Mountain Landis.

Following an interesting study on Boston's historical sale of Ruth for \$100,000, Surdam contends "Babe Ruth transformed the Yankees..." Modern fans might be surprised to learn that the

legendary Yanks were a struggling team in earlier years. Other clubs soon followed suit with large expenditures of their own. After the 1924 season, Philadelphia Athletics partowner Connie Mack upped the ante with \$100,600 for Lefty Grove from the International League Baltimore Orioles. But while owners spent more to acquire players and increased salaries, the reserve clause remained in effect. That gave players little control over their own movement. Plus, thenexisting regulations hampered their ability to cash in on baseball's prosperity. While teams increased their revenue by hosting exhibition games, players were not recompensed for those events. World Series participants were banned from participating in lucrative barnstorming during the offseason. Babe Ruth defied that order after the 1921 series, so Commissioner Landis suspended him for five weeks.

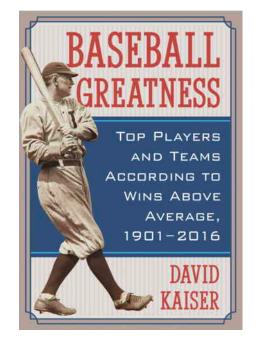
The book gives an interesting background of Landis. A United States District Court Judge, he presided over the Federal League owners' antitrust lawsuit in 1915. As Lanids "opted to delay issuing a verdict in the hopes the owners would reach a settlement," he ingratiated himself to Major League owners. Serving as Commissioner from 1920 until his death in 1944, he sometimes issued questionable rulings. Surdam relates the case of outfielder Benny Kauff who was indicted for auto theft, and later acquitted. Nonetheless, Landis declared him ineligible to play in Organized Baseball, effectively ending his career. Not known for his consistency, Landis was far more lenient with owners.

In addition to fascinating stories such as gambling allegations against future Hallof-Famers Ty Cobb and Tris Speaker, Surdam outlines financial aspects of the Major Leagues during the roaring twenties. Some cities continued to ban Sunday baseball, creating scheduling issues. The prime source of income at the time was gate sales, followed by concessions and player sales. Significantly, fans relied primarily on newspapers for sports coverage. Owners were reluctant to use the new medium of radio, as they feared fans would stay home to listen to the game. A shorter work week coupled with competing forms of recreation, such as motion pictures, posed concern. Yet the majors still resisted expanding its talent pool by hiring African Americans. Co-author Haupert devotes an entire chapter discussing a consequence to this practice, the evolution of the Negro Leagues. Focusing on the Darby, Pennsylvaniabased Hilldale Daisies, he astutely compares the organization of the Negro Leagues to that of the early Major Leagues.

A bit verbose, Surdam sometimes drops hints of stories to be told later, such as the saga of the Carl Mays case, which ascended to the New York Supreme Court. After several early references, the full story is finally revealed midway through the book. Ouibbles aside, this book is worthy of a permanent place on any baseball buff's bookshelf. The bibliography is impressive, citing archives of prominent institutions such as the National Baseball Hall of Fame. Published sources include writings of numerous distinguished authors. Compared to other books of the same genre, it explains contributing factors in the progression of all aspects of the Major Leagues.

Joan M. Thomas is a longtime SABR member and freelance writer living in Le Mars, Iowa. Formerly from St. Louis, she retired from a customer service career at AT&T to focus on her passion for writing.





BASEBALL GREATNESS: TOP PLAYERS AND TEAMS ACCORDING TO WINS ABOVE AVERAGE, 1901-2016

By David Kaiser

2018, McFarland [ISBN 978-1-4766-6383-8.240 PP. \$35.00 USD, Softcover]

Reviewed by **T.S. Flynn** tsflynn@mac.com

Back in the day, I tended bar at a tavern called Splinters from the Pine, where folks gathered to watch, talk, and argue baseball. The latest edition of *The Baseball Encyclopedia* rested reverentially on an oak bookstand in the middle of the backbar, and when talk turned to argument, we flipped its onion-skin thin pages back and forth to compare player statistics, or we thumbed through the historical sections to verify postseason results or

season standings. Of course, arguments involving players from different eras were never settled, they just morphed into new arguments or dissipated when someone ordered another round or told another joke. But settling those arguments was never the point. Talking baseball was the point; the arguments were just a way of getting to it.

The data revolution of the twenty-first century has changed a lot of things, including the ways we talk and argue baseball. Now each of us carries a far more advanced baseball encyclopedia in our pocket; its sortable data are updated daily, and it contains advanced metrics that aren't old enough to buy a drink. One such metric provides the basis for Baseball Greatness: Top Players and Teams According to Wins Above Average, 1901-2016, by David Kaiser. In his introduction, Kaiser credits a Bill James sentence for planting the seed that became his book. In The Politics of Glory: How Baseball's Hall of Fame Really Works, one of twelve questions James poses to determine whether a ballplayer belongs in the Hall is, "If this man were the best player on your team, would it be likely that the team could win a pennant?" In Baseball Greatness, Kaiser endeavors to answer James's question using his version of Wins Above Average (WAA). Kaiser asserts that his book "will be very easily accessible to any serious baseball fan, including those

who have never read a book by Bill James, have never gone to baseballprospectus.com, and have never paid much attention to most of the new statistical measurements."

Baseball Greatness is easily digested once the methodology is understood. For me, that took a few re-readings of the paragraphs explaining Kaiser's algebra. From there, he lays out his approach, applies it, shows his work, and walks the reader through baseball history, identifying "superstars" (4.0+ WAA), "stars" (2.0-3.9 WAA), and "assets" (1.0-1.9 WAA). The central aim of the book is "to identify the greatest player of each *generation* and to discuss how baseball has changed from era to era." To achieve this, Kaiser groups seven generations of ballplayers into six chapters exploring baseball eras, varying in length from 20 to 44 pages. Members of the Deadball Committee should be aware that the years 1901-1919 are covered in the first eleven pages of the first chapter. There is plenty of interesting and worthwhile material in that limited space, but researchers and fans interested in a wider scope of baseball history will find more to explore in Baseball Greatness than those devoted to this single era.

One interesting passage in the first chapter concerns the dominance of Ty Cobb from 1905 through 1919, when he "led the league in slugging percentage eight times and on-

base percentage seven times. ... He had at least 6 WAA every year but two from 1905 through 1917, and topped 9 WAA - a truly astonishing figure — in 1909, 1910, 1911, and 1917 (when he set his personal record with 11.3)." Cobb's case is also interesting in that he reached such astonishing WAA heights without being credited with the runs his base stealing added for his team. The lack of caught stealing data during much of his pre-1914 career stymies that calculation.

Beyond the Deadball Era, there is much to learn and enjoy in Baseball Greatness. In addition to identifying the greatest player of each generation, Kaiser explains how WAA accounts for the changes in the game from era to era. Take for example the differences between pitching in 1968 and 1997: "In 1968, the vear of the pitcher, when Bob Gibson posted an ERA of 1.12, the National League averaged 558 runs per team, and the league ERA was 2.99. In 1997, when Roger Clemens posted a 2.05 ERA for Toronto, an average team scored 797 runs and the league ERA was 4.56. That is why Clemens earned 8.3 WAA to Gibson's 6.7. And that is why the greatest pitchers of Generation X -Clemens, Randy Johnson, Greg Maddux, Pedro Martinez, and Roy Halliday – were more dominant relative to earlier generations than the five greatest hitters, Barry Bonds, Albert Pujols, Jeff Bagwell,

Frank Thomas, and Edgar Martinez."

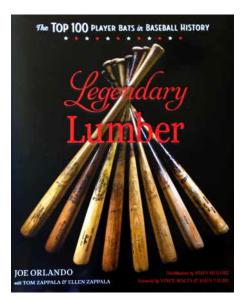
Kaiser tells the stories of teams and specific seasons in a conversational tone, peppering the narrative with his WAA calculations. For the most part, he avoids long lists of names and numbers. Baseball's Greatness is a pleasant ramble through baseball's long history, written in a way that puts the achievements of the game's greatest players in the context of their times. It won't settle every baseball argument, but it will keep the conversation going.

T.S. Flynn is a White Sox fan living in Twins territory. He's an educator, president of the Halsey Hall (Minneapolis) SABR chapter, and a member of the Deadball Era Committee.

# GIANTS AND SOX TO SOUTH AMERICA?

C H I C A G O — O w n e r Comiskey, of the White Sox, will propose to John McGraw, of the New York Giants, a South American tour for exhibition games after the 1919 season is closed, he made known on Thursday following his return from Florida. Comiskey said he had not yet told McGraw of his plans, but expected no hitches.

Toledo News-Bee, January 30, 1919



# LEGENDARY LUMBER: THE TOP 100 PLAYER BATS IN BASEBALL HISTORY

By Joe Orlando

2017, Peter E. Randall [ISBN: 978-1937721411, 240 pp. \$30.00 USD, Hardcover]

Reviewed by **Paul Langendorfer** plangendorfer@gmail.com

In the new book by Joe Orlando, Legendary Lumber: The Top 100 Player Bats in Baseball History, the reader is treated to a beautiful coffee table book that looks at some of the most famous pieces of lumber to grace the game. The book has appeal for baseball enthusiasts, students of the game, and collectors alike while offering a readable account for those looking to get into collecting baseball bats and fans seeking details on the tools used by their favorite players. As the author states in his introduction, "A bat was to Babe Ruth what a paint brush or chisel was to Michelangelo.

They are the tools these icons used to become legends. A bat is the sword wielded by an ancient gladiator, the weapon used to do battle with the pitcher and make history in the batter's box." It is this appeal that draws the reader into this book.

Orlando starts with a chapter on how one begins building a "Professional Model Bat Collection" and the five crucial tips on how to make your collection truly your own, including the dos and don'ts of purchasing for your collection. He then gives a brief history of the bat and its evolution along with the game. The weapon of the baseball player, the bat has evolved from a length of wood to the finely crafted Louisville Sluggers of today. This transformation is evident in each painstakingly laid out page of his work. Of the 100 players' bats pictured in the book, only 17 are not "Sluggers."

Starting with the Top 25, which is the Who's Who of ultimate sluggers in the game, and then moving into players by position, each subject is presented in a smart and readable format. For example, featured on page 31 is the number eight player on Joe Orlando's list, arguably one of the greatest players of the Deadball Era, "Shoeless" Joe Jackson and his weapon of choice, the famous "Black Betsy." The two-page spread begins with a photo of Jackson and a color photograph of Betsy. Page one contains a

detailed biography; page two is where Orlando really shines under the header "Tales from Joe's Bat Rack." It includes tips on dating the bat. "Bats manufactured after 1920 only feature his last name 'Jackson' near the barrel end in script or block letters." He also explores Jackson's influence on the game and players. "Joe Jackson, who was known for using very heavy thick-handled bats was a player who often hit with the center brand facing down. This approach was copied by Babe Ruth, an avid fan of Jackson's, and some of the best hitters in the modern era have used the same approach."

In this "Tales" section, Orlando describes for each hitter how each bat can be authenticated based on the individual idiosyncrasies of the player. Taping, scoring, pine tar, and numbering are all methods to identify not only the bat to the player, but when the bat may have been used during his career. Additionally, he compiles The Ultimate Season for the player as well as career statistics. Finally, there is a quote from or about each player to reinforce their already legendary status. Examples of some little-known facts: Honus Wagner had the first endorsement contract; Sandy Koufax only had 14 bats ever made and is the rarest collectible: Roberto Clemente would carve grooves across the hitting surface of the barrel to create spin on the ball.

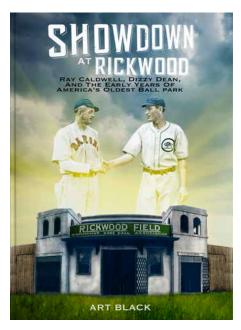
Overall, the narrative style of Joe Orlando makes for engaging reading. The only quibble I have with the work is the omission of certain players. As the author mentions in his introduction "Our top 100 is a diverse group and one bound to spark arguments." There is no possible way to include every great player. It seems though that the work at times is driven by the best collectible bat available to be photographed. Among these omissions are Negro League ballplayers and some of the early pre-twentieth century hitters. Orlando speaks of the Negro Leagues as being "inherently difficult to authenticate" and mentions Cap Anson's bat due to its extreme rarity, but it still would have been interesting to see some of these bats that almost made the cut. For instance, an internet search reveals a Mike "King" Kelly bat for auction. "King" was a career .308 hitter whose career spanned from 1878-1893. Or one of the greatest hitting pitchers of all time, Red Ruffing, who batted over .300 nine times and had a career average of .269. While these omissions may be splitting hairs, I believe the book may have benefited from a final chapter talking about the players that "almost" made the top 100 and an argument of why they were left off the list.

As a whole the book is extremely well done and deserves a place on every baseball fan's bookshelf to be read and reread. Page after page the author provides a bounty of information that baseball fans will devour. Each player and bat is featured similarly. Each and every bat is described in great detail. From its rarity to its cost at auctions, it is this detail that makes this gorgeous pictorial immensely enjoyable.

Paul Langendorfer is an avid sports fan with a deep passion for the National Pastime, especially when it comes to the New York Yankees. Born and raised in Buffalo, N.Y., Paul holds a B.A. in English from Canisius College, and a M.A in History from the University of Colorado at Denver, and is the author of the book Baseball In Buffalo. He lives in Aurora, Colorado with his wife and two children.



Robert Edgren 1913



# SHOWDOWN AT RICKWOOD: RAY CALDWELL, DIZZY DEAN, AND THE EARLY YEARS OF AMERICA'S OLDEST BALL PARK

By Art Black

2017, Birmingham, Alabama: Blue Rooster Press [ISBN: 978-0988980730, 394 pp. \$25.00 USD, Hardcover]

Reviewed by **Stephanie Liscio** stephanieliscio@yahoo.com

In Showdown at Rickwood: Ray Caldwell, Dizzy Dean, and the Early Years of America's Oldest Ball Park, author Art Black highlights momentous events at Rickwood Field in Birmingham, Alabama, from the park's opening in 1910, through the championship Dixie Series between the Southern Association's Birmingham Barons and the Houston Buffaloes of the Texas League in 1931. Meticulously researched and written with

colorful, engaging prose, the book brings the players and the scene at Rickwood Field to life in a way that makes the reader feel as if he or she were watching the events first hand. However, at times it is unclear as to why Black chose to focus on the particular people and events featured in the book. An overarching thesis to Showdown at Rickwood is not clearly discernable; it is implied that these are stories told as if recounted by a fan years after the events took place. The reader was left uncertain as to why these particular stories were selected as the more memorable of the park's first twenty years of existence.

In a section entitled "About the Book," Black said that he initially planned to write about Game One of the 1931 Dixie Series for a collection of short stories about Rickwood Field. As he delved further into his research, he instead decided to make the Barons-Buffalos series the feature of a fulllength book. However, the 1931 series comes across more as a section of the book, rather than the feature of it. Showdown at Rickwood is split into four sections, "The Early Years, 1910-1914," "The War Years, 1915-1918," "The Roaring Twenties," and "The 1931 Dixie Series." In many ways, the book reads like a series of short stories, rather than four parts of a whole. There are some threads that connect all of the sections, but they could almost stand on their own as

independent stories. Even though the emphasis in the prologue was on the 1931 Dixie Series, the most compelling section was the one that focused on the early years of Rickwood Field. Black focused on the story of Clarence "Pop Boy" Smith, a young man who rose from selling concessions in West End Park (the predecessor to Rickwood Field), to pitching for the Barons. Smith was not the best player to ever don a Barons uniform, nor necessarily one of the most important figures in team history. It was a fascinating tale though, told expertly by Black.

One of the strengths of the book includes Black's ability to connect United States and global history to the story of the Barons and Rickwood Field. Another was the thoroughness of his research by utilizing a wide variety of sources. World War I was adroitly woven through the narrative of the book's first and second sections, as well as Birmingham's position as a booming southern manufacturing center. When Black told the story of Depression-era Birmingham, the reader got a vivid view of the city's struggles, in part due to the juxtaposition with the Birmingham portrayed earlier in the book. As for sources, Black consulted dozens of secondary works that connected to Birmingham and the players that passed through the city. He performed extraordinarily thorough

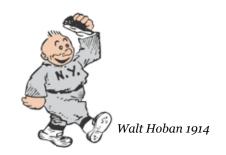
research of newspapers from Birmingham and across the country. Black even spoke to the descendants of a number of people featured in this book. The result was a detailed recounting of the events, and the feeling that you truly got to k n o w the individuals connected to Rickwood Field.

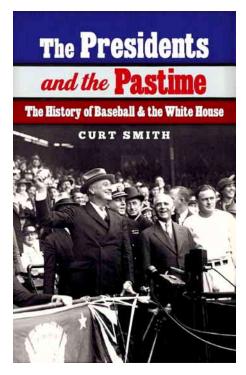
The final section of the book that focused on the 1931 Dixie Series was framed as a battle between the veteran Ray Caldwell, and the up-andcoming Dizzy Dean. A great deal of focus was placed on Game One, which makes sense since Black noted that his original intent was to write an article that focused on that particular matchup. This chapter contained one of the most problematic aspects of the book - the discussion of Theophilus Eugene "Bull" Connor, who served as a commentator for the Barons during the 1920s and 1930s, a span which included the 1931 Dixie Series. Black frames the sections that contain Connor as if the man were really calling the on-field events for the Barons. In the book's endnotes, Black wrote that the Connor sections "present Game Seven as Bull Connor might have broadcast it," so the author made a choice to frame Connor's words as he did. The praise for Connor from listeners in the section, one imagines, used artistic license as well. Barely mentioned are the actions that Connor would take years later as Commissioner for Public Safety in Birmingham, where he directed that fire hoses and dogs be turned on innocent Civil Rights protestors. In an "Author's Note" after this section. Black writes about how one of his editors expressed concern that Black's portrayal attempted to "ameliorate" the image of Connor. Black also mentioned that another reader said they were unaware that Connor had connections to baseball before his notorious role in the Civil Rights Movement. Black ended the note by writing, "This book portrays the Bull Connor of the 1920s and 1930s, when he was an icon of the Birmingham sporting community. Readers can make their own judgments, their own connections between the latter day Bull and the "heeeee's ouuuut!" Bull.

While one can certainly appreciate this perspective and approach, the fact remains that Bull Connor started his political career in 1935 as a member of the Alabama House of Representatives, and became Birmingham's Commissioner of Public Safety in 1937, just a few years removed from his calling of the 1931 Dixie Series. In the book's Epilogue, Black chose to feature a number of individuals from the stories, updating readers on what happened in their lives and careers after their story at Rickwood Field ended. He addressed Connor's post-Barons career in this section, but it was still very brief and did not place nearly enough emphasis on the true terror perpetuated by Connor in support of white supremacy. Even if Black did not want to distract from the Dixie Series narrative by discussing events that took place later in Connor's life, the Epilogue was the perfect place to address his political career. As written, Connor's portrayal distracts from what was an engaging and entertaining story up to that point.

Showdown at Rickwood was a truly enjoyable read, and the storytelling style made the scenes and players described almost jump to life. While it appeared that the goal was to portray these stories as if one generation was passing tales to the next, the lack of a strong, central argument left these tales a bit disconnected and disjointed. Even though the book's title focuses on the Dixie Series of 1931 there is so much more to this book than just one series.

Stephanie Liscio is a member of the leadership team of Cleveland's SABR chapter, as well as a member of the Deadball Era Committee. She just completed her doctorate in history at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland and is a long-suffering Indians fan.





# THE PRESIDENTS AND THE PASTIME: THE HISTORY OF BASEBALL & THE WHITE HOUSE

By Curt Smith

2017, University of Nebraska Press [ISBN 978-0803288096, 504 pp, \$29.95 USD, Hardcover]

Reviewed by **Andrew Milner** ajmilner@comcast.net

2018 Frick Award recipient Bob Costas has recalled that his interest in baseball started as a boy, around the same time he took an interest in United States presidents. There have been many children who, while flipping through the *World Almanac*, have noticed how U.S. Presidents and World Series winners are presented in chronological lists and have immediately committed both lists to memory. And as

popular as football and basketball have become, we still associate presidents with starting only one season baseball — with the ritual throwing out of the first pitch.

Curt Smith is perhaps uniquely qualified to combine these two subjects into one book. The former speechwriter for George H.W. Bush is a SABR member with over a dozen baseball titles over the past 40 years. His Voices of the Game (1987) remains the definitive onevolume history of baseball broadcasting, and his other baseball books include biographies of Dizzy Dean, Mel Allen, and Vin Scully. In The *Presidents and the Pastime*, he studies how our chief executives have (or, in some cases, haven't) followed baseball during their lives both in and out of the White House.

Smith starts with George Washington's soldiers playing a form of baseball at Valley Forge, quoting one soldier that Washington "sometimes throws and catches a ball for hours with his aide-de-camp," through Abraham Lincoln finishing a townball at-bat before accepting the GOP nomination in 1860. "It seemed to etch Lincoln's core," Smith writes, "(of) humility, irony and equality." Regarding the current resident at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Smith notes that Donald Trump did not throw out a first pitch in his first year in office but reassures us, "(T)he Donald truly likes baseball."

Deadball Era Presidents provide a study in contrasts. Theodore Roosevelt, an advocate of "the strenuous life," famously hated baseball ("since childhood, he had treated baseball like castor oil"). William Howard Taft, on the other hand, inaugurated the presidential first pitch of the season at the Washington Senators' 1910 home opener. Smith tells us that Taft attended 14 games that season, and while in St. Louis that May 4th went to a Browns and a Cardinals game. Woodrow Wilson, if not as passionate a fan, went public with his engagement to second wife Edith by attending Game 2 of the 1915 Red Sox/Phillies World Series together.

The book could have done with a little judicious editing. Smith occasionally lapses into impressionistic passages: The Stick hosted the 1961 All-Star Game: NL, 5-4, on tenthinning hits by Hank Aaron, Mays and Roberto Clemente. Starkest was reliever Stu Miller, balking. The papers blared: MILLER BLOWN OFF MOUND! The Giants blew off the Dodgers in a 1962 pennant playoff. Ahead: the Yankees in a Transcontinental (née Subway) World Series. At moments like these with excessive capitalizations, parenthetical asides, and so many colons, Smith doesn't pause to take a breath. More importantly, he doesn't permit the reader to catch theirs. And a book as chock full of information as this one inevitably has a few factual lapses. Smith declares that "radio let (Warren Harding) reach twenty million Americans for a twenty-minute

speech." Later in the same chapter, Smith asserts with equal confidence that Harding's successor Calvin Coolidge addressed Congress in "(t)he first presidential speech broadcast on radio."

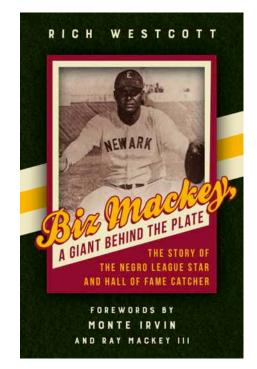
But Smith has also done some exceptionally impressive research. Almost all SABR members are aware of Franklin D. Roosevelt's "green light" letter to Commissioner Landis allowing professional baseball to continue during World War II. Yet few are aware how, in 1945, Sporting News publisher J.G. Taylor Spink started an unsuccessful crusade to elect FDR to the Baseball Hall of Fame in tribute. Smith quotes Spink's correspondence to Hall of Fame executives ("It is difficult to figure out how such men [voting] as Connie Mack, Ed Barrow and Bob Quinn can ignore the great effect the late President had upon the history of baseball") and champions Roosevelt's election by the Veterans' Committee.

Smith has chosen a baseball subject that has not been written about to death (like the Black Sox or the steroid crisis) and placed presidential history in the context of baseball history and vice versa, with an enthusiasm rare in much of today's writing about the sport. The Presidents and the Pastime is Smith's best baseball book since Voices of the Game, and if there's little specifically about the Deadball Era, it is highly recommended to committee members and baseball fans in general.

Andrew Milner was a lead researcher for The World Series in the Deadball Era, and has also written for The National Pastime, Base Ball: A Journal of the Early Game, and The Cooperstown Review. He also regularly contributed to the Philadelphia City Paper for 20 years. A SABR member since 1984, he lives in suburban Philadelphia and longs for another Phillies World Series parade.

## **PUBLISHERS ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

As newsletter readers know, copies of the books reviewed herein were generously supplied to us by their publishers. The Age of Ruth and Landis and The Presidents and the Pastime were published by the University of Nebraska Press and can be ordered via 800-848-6224 (telephone) or orders@longleafservices.org (email). Baseball Greatness comes from McFarland and can be obtained by calling 800-253-2187 or emailing info@mcfarland.pub.com. Legendary Lumber was published by Peter E. Randall and can be ordered by telephone (603-431-5667) or email (media@perpublisher.com). Showdown at Rickwood comes from Blue Rooster Press and can be ordered by calling 205-706-3230 or emailing Showdownatrickwood@gmail.com. The Biz Mackey bio is published by the Temple University Press and can be ordered via telephone (1-800-621-2736) or by visiting retail book outlets. As always, your patronage of these publishers is appreciated.



# BIZ MACKEY, A GIANT BEHIND THE PLATE: THE STORY OF THE NEGRO LEAGUE STAR AND HALL OF FAME CATCHER

By Rich Westcott

2018, Temple University Press [ISBN 978-1439915516, 160 pp, \$27.50 USD, Hardcover]

Reviewed by **Steve Leppert** leppert.steven@gmail.com

In Biz Mackey, A Giant Behind The Plate: The Story Of The Negro League Star And Hall Of Fame Catcher, Rich Westcott superbly portrays the professional baseball career of James Raleigh "Biz" Mackey. Mackey was a National Baseball Hall of Fame catcher whose career spanned over 25 years in the Negro Leagues, from 1920 through 1947. The book makes a strong case for Mackey being one of the

greatest all around catchers in the Negro Leagues, as well as all of professional baseball.

Beginning with excellent forwards by Hall of Famer Monte Irvin, who played with and for Mackey, and greatnephew Ray C. Mackey, the book progresses from Mackey's ball playing days as a youth in rural Texas to his beginnings in the Negro Leagues, where he was ultimately mentored by Hall of Fame catcher Louis Santop. Mackey played across the United States, as well as in the Caribbean and across the Pacific. A chapter is devoted to his ball playing time in Japan, which emphasizes the influence that Mackey had on the popularization of the sport in that country. Later, the book covers his move to the managerial ranks as he began to age as a player including his role in mentoring and developing Roy Campanella. Lastly, the book concludes with Mackey's induction into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 2006. Sadly, this was over 40 years after Mackey's passing in 1965. Mackey was quoted as saying, "I was born thirty years too soon." This summarizes his regret of never having a chance to play Major League Baseball due to the color barrier which was not broken until the end of his playing career.

It should be noted that Biz Mackey spent a large percentage of his career playing in Philadelphia, with the Hilldale Daisies and Philadelphia Stars. As a result,

Westcott devotes an entire chapter to black baseball and sports in Philadelphia. Although an excursion away from Mackey, it provided great background information and history of Negro League Baseball.

Writing about Negro League Baseball surely cannot be an easy subject to cover. This is due to the minimal mainstream coverage that it received and various contradictions inaccuracies that have been reported over the years. However, Westcott's use of numerous sources, including personal interviews, was superb in developing this story. Through these interviews and testimonials, he was able to present a convincing argument that Mackey was indeed one of the greatest catchers of all time. This is supplemented by the use of various books, magazine and newspaper articles, and other sources. Finally, the book concludes with an appendix detailing Mackey's year-by-year Negro League statistics. An analysis of these statistics support the claims made throughout the book of Mackey's legacy. Overall, it was a very well researched and documented profile.

In summary, this is a fascinating story. The story could be enhanced with more coverage of Mackey's personal life, although once again this would be difficult with the limited coverage that most black ballplayers from that era

received. Mackey seemed like such a genuine, good human being that it would be interesting to learn more of his life. However, Rich Westcott does provide us with a good read covering the baseball playing story of a lesser known great of American baseball. This is a deserving biography, which is long overdue. For those with an interest in Negro League baseball and the great forgotten ballplayers of that era who comprised the Negro Leagues, this is a must read and possession for any enthusiast's bookshelf.

Steve Leppert is a SABR member and active participant in the Columbus, Ohio Hank Gowdy chapter. A lifelong resident of the Columbus area, he is a fan of the Indians, Pirates, Columbus Clippers, and Ohio State University. He is a member in good standing of several SABR committees including the DEC. Steve retired from Ashland Incorporated, after spending more than 30 years in logistics supply chaina n d management. He is married with two adult children and two grandchildren.



Norwich Bulletin, June 15, 1909

# APRIL 1915: THE NEWARK PEPPERS RETURN MAJOR LEAGUES BASEBALL TO NEW JERSEY

by **Bill Lamb** 

On April 16, 1915, an overflow crowd crammed its way into newly-constructed Harrison Park to witness an historic event: the first home game played by a major leagues baseball team from New Jersey in more than 40 years. The host nine was the Newark Peppers, just relocated from Indianapolis and the defending champions of the renegade Federal League. Preceding its game against the Baltimore Terrapins was a large parade from downtown Newark to the grounds, the shooting of a short movie reel on the field, speeches by local dignitaries, and a ceremonial first pitch thrown by Newark Mayor Thomas L. Raymond. Unhappily, the gala atmosphere was soon punctured by the Terrapins, a 6-2 victor in the Peppers home opener. Still, the contest had officially put New Jersey back on the big leagues map, a distinction unachieved since the dissolution of the long-forgotten Elizabeth Resolutes midway through the 1873 season of the pioneer-era National Association. The paragraphs below recount just how the game returned to the Garden State.

The history of baseball in New Jersey stretches back almost as far as the game itself. In June 1846, the first widely-recognized game of baseball was played by two New York City nines in Hoboken, New Jersey.2 Thereafter and through the 1860s, New Jersey developed its own clubs, with notable nines playing in Newark, Jersey City, Orange, Camden, New Brunswick, Irvington, and elsewhere. Two years after the National Association was founded in 1871, the Resolutes, a club from Elizabeth, paid the \$10 admission fee and entered NA ranks. The nine was led by catcher-captain Doug Allison, a member of the famous undefeated Cincinnati Reds of 1869, and had had some local success. But the Elizabeth club proved hopelessly overmatched by NA competition, and in mid-



Club Owner Harry Sinclair

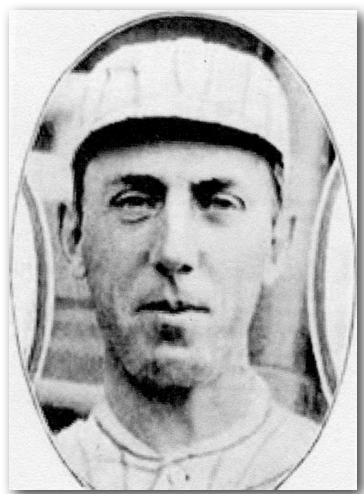
July, with its record standing at a woeful 2-21 (.087), the Resolutes abandoned play.

With most of its dense population situated somewhere along the 90-mile corridor between New York City and Philadelphia, then the nation's two largest cities, New Jersey was not a viable site for a team in the new National League of 1876. But its more relaxed blue laws held their attractions. Unlike neighboring New York and Pennsylvania, New Jersey did not prohibit the playing of professional baseball on Sunday, the only full day of leisure accorded the middle and working classes that the NL was seeking to cultivate.<sup>3</sup> By as early as 1877, National League

clubs from St. Louis and Hartford had played lucrative Sunday exhibition games in New Jersey against local semipro nines. A decade later, the Philadelphia Athletics of the major league American Association played random Sunday games in the NJ suburb of Gloucester City. Finally, on September 18, 1898, New Jersey provided the grounds for an official regular season game between two National League clubs, the New York Giants defeating the Brooklyn Bridegrooms, 7-3, on the Weehawken Cricket Grounds. Thereafter, the Giants, Grooms, and later the American League New York Highlanders played the odd Sunday game in the Garden State.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, New Jersey fans could get their regular fill of pro baseball by following the top-tier minor league clubs that called Newark, Jersey City, Trenton, and Paterson home.

In early 1913, the events that brought major league baseball back to New Jersey commenced, improbably, with the formation of a new, independent minor league of mostly Midwestern clubs: the Federal League.<sup>5</sup> A year later, the fledgling circuit expanded eastward to place teams in Brooklyn and Baltimore and audaciously declared itself a major league. Not a signatory to the National Agreement, the FL disregarded the reserve clause of major league player contracts and set about signing National and American Leaguers. But with few exceptions (most notably Joe Tinker, Hal Chase, and a fading Three Finger Brown), Federal League rosters consisted mostly of untested youngsters, journeymen, and past-their-prime veterans. The outlaw circuit managed to complete the 1914 season intact, but several of its clubs, including the pennant-winning Indianapolis Hoosiers, were in serious financial difficulty by season's end.

Federal League instability did not discourage Harry Sinclair, a young oil tycoon looking to dabble in baseball club ownership.<sup>6</sup> Under the tutelage of Patrick T. Powers, an experienced and knowledgeable front office executive and the recently-deposed president of the Class A minor Eastern League, Sinclair first set his sights upon



Opening Day Starter Cy Falkenberg

the FL Kansas City Packers. But his efforts to acquire and relocate the franchise were thwarted by a federal court injunction obtained by the Packers resident owners. Sinclair had better luck with the Indianapolis Hoosiers. With behind-the-scenes assistance from Federal League president James Gilmore and other FL bigwigs, Sinclair managed to acquire the bankrupt Hoosiers for about \$81,000.7 He then relocated the franchise to Newark, a venue championed by New Jersey born-and-resident Pat Powers, the new club president.8

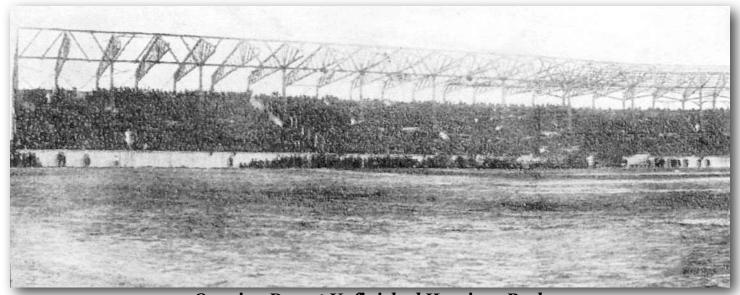
By this time, construction was already underway for a brand new ballpark in Harrison, a bustling little community just across the Passaic River from downtown Newark. The move to Harrison had been necessitated by occupation of Newark's existing baseball grounds (Wiedenmayer's Park) by the Newark Indians of the International League, a minor league affiliate of the NL

Brooklyn Robins, and by the absence of ballparksuitable property elsewhere in the downtown area. With work on Harrison (or Peppers) Park still ongoing, the Newark Peppers began the 1915 season on the road in Baltimore.

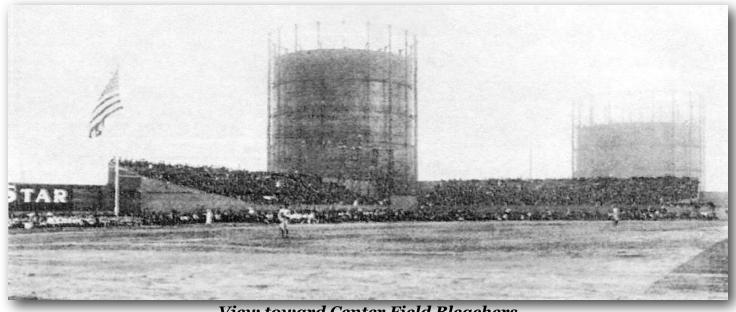
The Newark lineup for its maiden game featured mostly holdovers from its 1914 pennant-winning squad – save flashy outfielder Benny Kauff, the reigning FL batting champion. Kauff had been sold to a league rival, the Brooklyn Tip-Tops, prior to Sinclair's acquisition of the Indianapolis franchise, and the new owner's demand for Kauff's return had been rebuffed by FL brass.9

Still, Peps manager Bill  $Phillips^{10}$  had talent at his disposal, including two regulars who would later be inducted into the Hall of Fame: young center fielder Edd Roush (as a player) and third baseman Bill McKechnie (as a manager). But the real strength of the Newark club reposed in its pitching staff, led by Cy Falkenberg, a 25-game winner in 1914, and augmented for the new season by former Chicago Cubs standout Ed Reulbach.

Falkenberg got Newark off smartly, pitching the Peppers to a 7-5 victory over Baltimore in the season-opener. Two more wins over the



Opening Day at Unfinished Harrison Park



View toward Center Field Bleachers

Terrapins followed. A two-game excursion to Brooklyn, however, was not a success, Newark dropping both contests to the Tip-Tops. With its record thus standing at 3-2, the Peppers boarded the train for Newark and the making of some baseball history: the first game on home soil played by a major leagues team from New Jersey in more than 40 years.

The city pulled out all the stops for its new heroes. Newark mayor Raymond declared the April 16 date of the Peppers home opener an official half-holiday, freeing city employees to leave work at noon in order to attend the midafternoon ball game. Festivities began downtown where boy scouts, local amateur baseball teams in uniform, and hordes of Newark citizens dressed in their Sunday finest assembled. Led by a Scottish bagpipe and drum corps, a thousand walkers followed by automobiles, jitneys, and other vehicles festooned in celebratory bunting then paraded across the Passaic River bridge to not-quite-finished Harrison Park. An overflow crowd, estimated as high as 32,000,11 consumed all available viewing space, even ringing the grounds' generous (375-425-375) playing field dimensions. Pre-game ceremonies included the presentation of floral tributes to the team, flag raising, and speeches by local dignitaries. Mayor Raymond then took the mound to throw the ceremonial first pitch, a strike according to a New York Times dispatch, high and outside to other observers. Thereafter, His Honor joined Harrison mayor John Daly, FL president James Gilmore, retired major leagues manager Ned Hanlon, and other notables for the start of Newark's contest against the Baltimore Terrapins.

The game, alas, proved a disappointment for the hometown rooters. Bolstered by a late-game rally, Baltimore lefty Bill Bailey bested Falkenberg, 6-2. Control problems had the Peppers ace in frequent trouble, but the game's outcome turned on three costly errors committed by Newark shortstop Jimmy Esmond.<sup>12</sup> The defeat evened the Newark record at 3-3, and served as a harbinger of things to come. The club played .500 baseball for much of the season, and



remained mid-pack in the FL pennant chase until an early September surge under replacement manager Bill McKechnie<sup>13</sup> briefly lifted the Peppers into first place. Just as quickly, the club then fell back, finishing the season at 80-72 (.526), good for no better than fifth place – but only six games behind the league champion (86-66) Chicago Whales.

After its auspicious home opener, the Newark Peppers, like other Federal League clubs, struggled at the gate. Still, the competition for local fans proved too much for the International League Newark Indians. The club abandoned the city, relocating to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania on July 2. But neither the departure of Indians nor the ten cents bleacher admission charge, the onfield bicycle races, or the other promotions devised by Sinclair and Powers attracted the desired crowds to Harrison Park.

The close of the 1915 season brought the twoyear existence of the Federal League to its end. Over, too, was New Jersey's time as a big league venue. The International League Indians would return to Newark for the 1916 season, and the Garden State continues to host minor league teams to this day. But more than a century has now elapsed since a major leagues team called New Jersey home.

#### **ENDNOTES**

- For a complete general history, see James M.
  DiClerico and Barry J. Pavelec, The Jersey Game:
  The History of Modern Baseball from Its Birth to
  the Big Leagues in the Garden State (New
  Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991).
  For meticulously researched detail on specific
  New Jersey baseball clubs and events, consult A
  Manly Pastime, the blog of newsletter contributor
  John Zinn, the preeminent authority on early
  baseball in the Garden State.
- 2. The four-inning contest saw a hastily-assembled team styled the New York Base Ball Club trounce the celebrated Knickerbockers, 23-1. The venue was Elysian Fields, a popular Hudson County (NJ) resort located a short ferry ride across the Hudson River from lower Manhattan.
- During the late-19th century, the only National League venues that permitted Sunday baseball were Chicago, Cincinnati, and St. Louis, heavily German immigrant cities without the Puritan lineage and traditions of the East Coast.
- 4. As per DiClerico and Pavelec, 49-53.
- 5. For complete histories of the Federal League, see Daniel R. Levitt, *The Battle That Forged Modern Baseball: The Federal League Challenge and Its Legacy* (Lanham, Md.: Ivan R. Dee, 2012), and Robert Peyton Wiggins, *The Federal League of Base Ball Clubs: The History of an Outlaw Major League* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010), both Larry Ritter Award winners. See also, Marc Okkonen, *The Federal League of 1914-1915: Baseball's Third Major League* (Garrett Park, Md.: SABR, 1989).
- 6. For a fuller portrait of Sinclair, see "Famous Magnates of the Federal League," F.C. Lane, *Baseball Magazine*, Vol. 15, No. 4, August 1915.
- 7. Per Levitt, 201-202.
- 8. When he thought he had control of the Kansas City Packers, Sinclair set about looking for potential ballpark sites in Manhattan, only to discover that properties that he had had his eye on had been acquired by surrogates of Harry Hempstead, the genial but tough-minded club president of the NY Giants. Meanwhile, Powers, still resentful of his ouster as Eastern League president, was spoiling for a fight on his native turf with the EL's successor, the International League, and its Brooklyn-affiliated Newark club. For a comprehensive profile of Pat Powers, see his BioProject bio by Charlie Bevis.
- 9. Anxious to placate the wealthy new Newark club boss, league officials did agree to the return of pitcher Cy Falkenberg, the staff ace who had also been sold to Brooklyn during the off-season by

- the cash-strapped proprietors of the Indianapolis Hoosiers.
- 10. Prior to the 1915 season, NY Giants manager John McGraw reportedly turned down a \$100,000 offer from Harry Sinclair to take over the Peppers. Thus, Phillips, who had guided Indianapolis to pennants in both 1913 and 1914, remanded in command.
- 11. When completed, Harrison Park would seat about 21,000 spectators. For the Peppers home opener, a crowd of 32,000 was estimated in a headline published in the *Newark Evening News*, April 17, 1915. The *New York Times*, meanwhile, guesstimated Harrison Park attendance at 25,000. Modern authority such as Baseball-Reference and Retrosheet provide a specific attendance figure of unknown origin: 26,032.
- 12. The box scores recreated by Baseball-Reference and Retrosheet charge Esmond with only two errors, but contemporary game accounts make clear that the Newark shortstop botched three different fielding chances, each of which was pivotal to a Baltimore score. See e.g., the *Baltimore Sun* and *Newark Evening News*, April 17, 1915.
- 13. With the Newark record standing at 26-27 on June 18, McKechnie had supplanted Bill Phillips as manager.
- 14. During the 1956 and 1957 seasons, the Brooklyn Dodgers played a handful of "home" games at Roosevelt Stadium in Jersey City.

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#### JOHN McGraw Arrested

CINCINNATI—John J. McGraw, manager of the New York National League team, was arrested here yesterday on a warrant sworn out by John T. Reed, a local fan, charging him with disorderly conduct. McGraw gave bond for his appearance and left with the team for St. Louis. Trouble started after the game when remarks by several spectators were addressed to the New York team while they were in their dressing rooms. McGraw resented the remarks. There were no blows struck, but some ugly language was used, according to the police. After McGraw's arrest, Arthur Fletcher, shortstop for the New Yorks, swore to a warrant causing Reed's arrest.

The Pittsburg Press, July 15, 1916

# **GAMES/BIOPROJECT**

Since the last newsletter was published, the Games and BioProject have added to their inventories of Deadball-related entries. Newly published game accounts include Stephen V. Rice's depiction of a May 1903 contest by the first-place Chicago Cubs and Phil Williams' account of June 1904 Giants-Reds game played before a record crowd. Recent BioProject entries of interest to Deadballers include profiles of Tod Sloan, Roy Walker, Bud Weiser, Rupert Mills, Pants Rowland, Win Clark, Lou Schettler, Pickles Dillhoefer, Ed Murray, Danny Moeller, and Boston Red Sox groundskeeper Jerome Kelly. As per usual, we urge you to check these out if vou have not already done so.

# DEADBALL RESEARCH AID: THE BASEBALL INDEX

Recently reactivated by curator Andy McCue, The Baseball Index (TBI) is an invaluable aid to those doing research on Deadball Era events or, indeed, any baseball subject. TBI does not provide the actual text of material contained within its engine. Rather, TBI is an index to baseball literature, providing the title and whereabouts for more than 250,000 books, magazine articles, newspaper items, cartoons, poems, media guides, yearbooks, and other repositories of information on the subject being researched. TBI can be accessed at www.baseballindex.org. Once at the TBI site, simply type in the subject name/matter and hit search. Within seconds, the title and where/when published for any relevant book, article, news item, etc., within the TBI engine will be displayed. The Baseball Index is an ideal first stop on any research project, and we urge you to give it a try.

Pitcher Nick Altrock and catcher "Hub" Hart of the Chicago Americans have signed to play with one of the Mexico City baseball teams during the next winter.

(Newport News) Daily Press, April 13, 1907

# NEW DEADBALL ERA COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Inside Game is pleased to welcome to the committee the following SABR members who have expressed interest in the Deadball Era:

David Matchett Mark McDonel Peter G. Morales Jamin Ross Rob Seifried

We look forward to their active participation in committee endeavors. These new committee members, as well as our newsletter contributors, can be contacted via the SABR directory.

## ATHLETICS TOLD TO MOVE SCOREBOARD

PHILADELPHIA—David L. Fultz, president of the Baseball Players' Fraternity, notified the Athletics management today that the scoreboard at Shibe Park, which is located in deep centerfield and on a direct line with the pitcher's and the batters' box, will have to be removed. Fultz's order is simply following up on the edict passed last year that a green patch should be painted on the centerfield fence directly on a line with the pitcher and batter, the green background necessary to aid the batters in seeing the ball pitched to them.

With the conglomeration of colors present in many ball parks in advertising notices the batsmen have complained bitterly and without effect that the glare of the sun on the rainbow of colors has interfered with their batting. It was this complaint which caused the fraternity to pass the rule.

The Athletics have no sign on their wall and the entire fence is painted green but the scoreboard, a huge affair of red and white figuring and lettering.

Manager Mack refused to discuss the matter today, but many of the Athletic players voiced approval of Fultz's order.

The Pittsburg Press, May 4, 1914



by Harry Grant Dart

MAY WE ALL LIVE TO SEE IT

Life Magazine, October 24, 1912