

Beating the Bushes



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Buffalo Bisons Collect 11 Consecutive Hits

By Brian Frank

The Bisons struggled through the beginning of the 1929 season and by early July were stuck in seventh place in the International League standings. However, the Herd caught fire and entered their July 13 doubleheader against the Baltimore Orioles on an eight game winning streak. Buffalo's record setting offensive outburst that day is worth remembering almost nine decades later.

Buffalo manager Bill Clymer sent Jesse Barnes to the Bison Stadium mound in the first game of the twin bill. Both Barnes and his mound opponent, Baltimore's Herm Holshouser, struggled early in the game. After Buffalo scored two runs in the first inning, Baltimore came back with five runs in the second and another three runs in the fifth. The Orioles offense was powered by sluggers Al Bool and George Loepp, who each had a pair of home runs to help chase Barnes from the game.

Things weren't looking good for the Bisons as they entered the bottom of the sixth inning trailing 8-2. Herm Holshouser, who had settled in after his shaky start, got Al Moore to fly out to left field to begin Buffalo's half of the sixth. But, it would be the last out Holshouser would record that afternoon, as the Bisons began what W.S. Coughlin of the *Courier-Express* called a "cyclonic scoring spree."¹ Starting with the next batter, the Herd reeled off a remarkable streak of 11 straight hits off four different Baltimore hurlers.

Buffalo first baseman Clayton Sheedy started the onslaught, by beating out an infield single. After catcher John "Honey" Barnes singled, shortstop Jimmy Cooney brought home Sheedy, with a third straight single. Buck Elliot came up to pinch-hit for relief pitcher Hugh Buchanan, and he belted a three-run home run over the left field fence, to cut Baltimore's lead to 8-6, and give Buffalo their fourth consecutive hit.

Bisons leadoff hitter Ollie Sax then singled to knock Holshouser out of the game and bring in reliever Bonnie Hollingsworth. Herb Thomas greeted the new pitcher by reaching on an infield single for Buffalo's sixth straight hit. Cleanup hitter George "Showboat" Fisher followed with a booming RBI double to cut the lead to 8-7. Hollingsworth was then pulled in favor of lefty Fritz Columbe.

Center fielder Heinie Mueller promptly hit a two-run single, which gave Buffalo the lead 9-8. Al Moore, the only Bison who had made an out at that point in the inning, got in on the hit parade with a looper just out of the reach of Orioles shortstop Joe Benes. Moore's single was Buffalo's ninth straight hit, and caused Baltimore manager Fritz Maisel to bring in his fourth pitcher of the inning, right-hander Bill Clarkson.

Clarkson's first hitter was Clayton Sheedy, who rapped his second single of the inning, which scored Mueller and gave Buffalo a 10-8 lead. Honey Barnes came to the plate looking for his second hit of the inning, and "swished a ferocious triple to the scoreboard in centerfield," scoring two more runs.² Shortstop Jimmy Cooney followed by making just the second out of the inning with an RBI groundout to short, ending the Bisons streak of 11 consecutive hits.

However, the Herd weren't done rallying in the inning. After Bob Elliot walked, Ollie Sax beat out a grounder to third for his second hit of the inning, followed by Herb Thomas's second single of the frame, which plated Elliot and gave Buffalo a 14-8 lead. Showboat Fisher ended what W.S. Coughlin of the *Courier-Express* called "probably the most amazing inning of modern baseball at Bison Stadium," by grounding to the pitcher for the final out of the inning.³ Buffalo had scored 12 runs in the frame, sending 17 batters to the plate, with everyone in the lineup scoring a run.

Buffalo continued to put runs on the board, and staged another rally in the eighth, when eight consecutive batters reached base. This barrage consisted of six straight hits,

followed by a walk, and then another hit, to plate six more runs. The Bisons finished the game with 21 hits and nine walks, and won the nine inning game 20-9, for their ninth straight victory. The Herd also won game two of the twin bill, a seven inning affair, by a score of 4-1, behind a well-pitched game by Dick Bonnelly. The ten game winning streak and doubleheader sweep moved the Bisons from seventh place in the standings up to a three way tie for fourth, and put the Herd within a game of the .500 mark at 44 wins and 45 losses on the season.⁴

In the 140 year history of Bisons baseball, 11 consecutive hits is still believed to be the franchise record. According to the *Buffalo Evening News* in their edition following the game, 11 consecutive hits was a professional baseball record at the time, breaking the previous mark held by the St. Louis Cardinals, who recorded 10 straight hits on two separate occasions.⁵ It took until July 30, 2010, for a major league team to get eleven hits in a row, when the Colorado Rockies achieved the feat against the Chicago Cubs. The fact that it took 134 years for a National League team to equal the Bisons streak, demonstrates how rare the accomplishment is.

The game was a microcosm of Buffalo's season, as the team continued to hit, but their pitching struggled. The Herd finished with 83 wins and 84 losses for a disappointing fifth place finish. Their season as a whole may not be that memorable in Buffalo baseball lore, but their amazing streak of consecutive hits on a July afternoon is one for the ages.

Notes

1 W.S. Coughlin, "Terrific Outbreak of Hitting Routs Orioles; Bisons Rise in Race," *Buffalo Courier-Express*, July 14, 1929.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Ibid.*

4 The Bisons split a doubleheader with the Orioles the next day, losing the first game, to end their winning streak at 10 games.

5 "Bisons' 11 Straight Hits Smash Record," *Buffalo Evening News*, July 15, 1929. According to the article, the Cardinals had 10 straight hits on September 17, 1920 and June 12, 1922.

How Good Were Scorekeepers and Statisticians in the Minor Leagues?

By Carlos Bauer

The above question, as I've been assured by one of SABR's heavy hitters, does not interest anyone in SABR. Nevertheless, in the off chance the one or two people in SABR have some interest in a league that played 75+ years ago, I'll relate some of my findings. In case there are still some baseball researchers still left in SABR. The current chief executive officer of SABR, of course, brought a great appreciation of research over from the WWE, so there is hope.

Those of us who have done minor league research have always asked ourselves one question: How good are minor league averages? There has always been a question about Pacific Coast League statistics, and I think I've proved over time that they were not very good.

The way statistics were compiled was first the official scorer would do just what we do at games: Fill out a scoresheet, usually in his scorebook. Then he would fill out an Official Score Sheet. That would be sent to the league statistician, who would enter those numbers into what are called daily sheets; i.e., a sheet or sheets for each player, and what they did (on a day-by-day basis) would be recorded on these sheets. When one sheet for a player

would be filled up, the player would automatically get another one, and so on. At the end of the season, the stats for each player would be totaled up, put into a list for batting, pitching and fielding. Some league statisticians would sum up at the bottom of each page, but I'm not sure how universal that practice had been.

And then be disseminated by the league to league clubs, newspapers and news agencies, the guides, and to interested individuals. That's how it worked for most of the 20th Century.

On a day-by-day basis, the official scorer would also make up a box score from the Official Scoresheet, and disseminate that to the press.

MLB donated their daily sheets to the Hall of Fame, and those sheets have led to many corrections over the years. The Official Scoresheets, however, never made it to the Hall. Some researchers have maintained that the daily sheets are the holy grail, but my study should put that to rest, because I do not believe that E.F. Stites was that much less rigorous than Howe or Elias for their major league statistical compilations. One researcher went so far as to state one needed something like seven sources to change anything listed on the Hall's daily sheets. I think a somewhat less demanding criteria is in order after seeing what I have come across. I have re-compiled minor league averages originally compiled by both Elias and Howe and have found them to be off by the same degree

as E.F. Stites' 1939 Pioneer League compilation.

In the minor leagues, generally, all we have are the final summaries published in guides, or in newspapers. Both the Daily sheets and the Official Score Sheets for the leagues have disappeared; i.e., buried in dumpster heaven. Occasionally, a scorebook of a league scorer has shown up, but most have been lost forever. Except for the Bill Weiss material, all the daily sheets have to be considered lost, too.

When Tom Larwin and I did an in-depth inventory of the Bill Weiss Collection papers, once they arrived in San Diego, we found among Weiss' papers, the Official Scoresheets and daily sheets for the 1939 Pioneer league, the inaugural season of that storied league.

Apparently, the league retained those papers, and passed them on to Bill when he became official statistician in 1952.

Bill did nothing with them, as far as we can tell, but I decided to recompile the averages from the primary sources, just the way league statistician E.F. Stites would have done back in 1939. The official scoresheets were riddle with errors, and on a number of occasions, Stites asked the scorers to redo their scoresheets. Both scoresheets (original and corrected) have been retained.

Stites, however, missed a number of errors, and they found their way into the official record as disseminated to the newspapers and to the publishers of the Spalding-Reach Baseball Guide.

(Some of you are going to wonder, if- in my compilation- I was merely exchanging one set of errors for another. When I was a freshman at Columbia, I got a part-time job in the comptroller's office, where I was assigned to bank reconciliation. We summed up everything twice. I have continued that practice when compiling averages for minor league seasons. Basically, I do a series-which were generally three-game sets- and then completely recompile the statistics a second time. Double entry bookkeeping was never employed in baseball, and I believe that is one of the major reasons we find so many errors in season compilations. I'm not saying I'm perfect, but my stats are far superior than the stats compiled by league statisticians and by the two major news bureaus.)

Here is the list of errors I found for the 1939 season that found their way into the official record:

5/2/1939 Twin Falls at Pocatello: Lou Garland had two strikeouts but credited with only one AB

5/5/1939 Boise at Lewiston: One HR hit by Lewiston but Boise pitchers allowed none

5/7/1939 Salt Lake at Ogden: Two HR hit by Ogden but only one allowed by Salt Lake

5/9/1939 Ogden at Boise: Ogden losing pitcher credited with 9 IP when it should be 8 IP

5/9/1939 Ogden at Boise: Boise ABs do not match supposed AB against

5/12/1939 Ogden at Lewiston: Spiley of Ogden credited with one AB but double and struck out

5/13/1939 Salt Lake at Pocatello: Salt Lake pitchers allowed 8 runs but were charged with 13 ER

5/14/1939 Ogden at Lewiston: Rocky Peterson of Lewiston hit a HR but not credited with an RBI

5/16/1939 Boise at Ogden: Boise players had 2 errors but team only had one

5/26/1939 Twin Falls at Lewiston: Lewiston pitchers yielded 11 runs but credited with 12 ER

5/27/1939 Salt Lake at Lewiston: Bill Beard went 4 for 4 but listed as having struck out once

5/27/1939 Ogden at Pocatello: Ogden hit one HR but none allowed by Pocatello

5/28/1939 Salt Lake at Boise: Salt Lake pitcher credited with 9 IP instead of 8 IP he should have had

5/30/1939 Salt Lake at Ogden: Salt Lake pitchers credited with 9 IP instead of 8 IP

5/31/1939 Twin Falls at Pocatello: Pocatello pitchers listed as having 8 1/3 IP and 1/3 IP, but club was credited with 9 IP in game with winning run scoring with two out in ninth

7/4/1939 Boise at Pocatello: 4 HR hits, zero allowed

7/6/1939 Twin Falls at Ogden: Ogden hit one HR but Twin Falls allowed none

7/7/1939 Salt Lake at Ogden: Two players playing full game at same position and so enter on daily sheets

7/8/1939 Salt Lake at Ogden: Three players playing full game at same position and so enter on daily sheets

7/16/1939 Ogden at Lewiston: Two players playing full game at same position and so enter on daily sheets

7/17/1939 Boise at Lewiston: Boise pitchers allowed 6 runs but credited with 8 ER

7/19/1939 Twin Falls at Pocatello: 3 HR hit, only 2 allowed

8/2/1939 Twin Falls at Lewiston: Player credited with 1 AB and 3 K

8/3/1939 Salt Lake at Boise: Boise hit one HR but Salt Lake allowed none

8/3/1939 Salt Lake at Lewiston: Pinch hitter credited with 7 PO, first baseman with none, and so enter on daily sheets

8/6/1939 Boise at Pocatello: Pitchers allowed 3 HR but hitters only hit 2 HR

8/6/1939 Boise at Pocatello: Boise pitchers summed 8 2/3 IP rather than correct 9 IP

8/8/1939 Boise at Ogden: Two players playing full game at same position and so enter on daily sheets

8/8/1939 Boise at Ogden: Ogden pitchers yielded 7 runs but credited with 8 ER.

8/10/1939 Boise at Ogden: Player missing on official scoresheet and on daily sheet; player named in game account in newspaper and player totals subtracted from listed totals yielded player's stats

8/19/1939 Twin Falls at Boise: One too many AB for Twin Falls pitchers

8/29/1939 Ogden at Twin Falls: Left-hander Dick Adams listed at 2B, but it was actually his brother Bobby who played game at second base

9/1/1939 Twin Falls at Lewiston: Lou Garland had 1 AB and 2 K

9/1/1939 Ogden at Pocatello: 15 Runs scored by Pocatello but player runs summed 14, resolved by finding run in game story

9/4/1939 Salt Lake at Boise: Boise hit HR but none allowed by Salt Lake

9/7/1939 Twin Falls at Pocatello: 2 HR hit by Twin Falls but zero allowed by Pocatello pitchers

9/8/1939 Pocatello at Ogden: Pete Hughes Ogden listed as hitting into DP but Pocatello listed as have made no DPs

9/9/1939 Pocatello at Ogden: AB by Pocatello batters do not match Opponent AB by Ogden pitchers

9/9/1939 Pocatello at Ogden: Owens struck out twice in two plate appearances, not reaching first in either, but is credited with a run scored

(Note: I corrected a number of other errors before I decided to keep track of them, so this list should be viewed as only a partial list.)

In the season totals, the most grievous error was for Eldon Lorenzen, listed as hitting measly .192, but actually hit .277 in his 99 games. Somehow, statistician Stites missing some 30 hits in his compilation.

Also, this list does not take into consideration the summing errors in compiling statistics for the final league averages that were disseminated and published in the 1940 guide. That is a whole other story.

BASEBALL—TODAY
AT FANS FIELD
BLOOMINGTON vs. PEORIA
A Double Header on the Fourth
FIREWORKS BETWEEN GAMES
First Game Today at 2:15.
200 New Box Seats Available.
Tickets on Sale at Deschler's, Read's Annex,
Metropole and Gibson's.
Admission 45 cents. War tax 5 cents.

Bloomington Pantagraph, Jul 4, 1921

Q&A with Mike Capps

By Joe Wancho

1. What are your responsibilities as Director of Broadcasting for Round Rock?

Not only do I broadcast all the Express games home and road, I also sell advertising both for radio and print. I also make speeches to civic groups all over central Texas (which I love). In no uncertain terms, I have the greatest gig in minor league baseball for sure.

2. Last season you called your 2,500th game. A great accomplishment. What are some of the highlights in your career?

Gosh. Just really fortunate. The fact I've been here the whole existence of the Express represents a pretty solid highlight. In terms of number of games, mine pales in comparison to three or four counterparts in the PCL. As far as memorable games--the list is long. Morgan Ensberg's three homer, 8 RBI game in the pouring rain in Shreveport in June of 2000 ranks right up there. The first AA Roy Oswalt start was electric (and the Astros almost sent him back to Kissimmee). Winning the Texas League title that first season, and the way that all came about ...winning the division title in extra innings in El Paso, then winning the league title here at Dell Diamond, I think, represented a huge thrill. Moving into AAA, we had several three homer games from Chris Davis, Taylor Teagarden, and others. Then in '07 Nashville lefty Manny Parra paralyzed the Express with a perfect game, and still to this day says that's one of his all time career highlights. PCL playoff runs as an Astros affiliate in '06, and Rangers affiliate in '11 and '15 ranks right up there. And the bottom line to the whole 18 seasons amounts to relationships with players, coaches and managers. Jackie Moore, Dave Clark, Mark Bombard, Bobby Jones and now Jason Wood rank as great friends to this day, as do each and every one of the coaches who passed through here like Spike Owen, Burt Hooten, Mike Maddux, Geno Petralli --he and I have been friends for better than thirty years, Brad Holman, Greg Hibbard...and now I am excited about Howard Johnson (HoJo), and Brian Shouse the newest additions to the Express coaching staff.

3. Please tell us about the advice/mentoring you received from legendary broadcasters Bill Mercer and Ernie Harwell?

Mercer and I have been friends since I was 8 years old. He and my dad were great friends and when my dad passed away when I was a junior in high school, Bill basically became my surrogate dad. I spent time as a kid in his minor league baseball broadcasting booth in Dallas,

and in his booth when he broadcast Cowboys games as well. He and a colleague also invited my dad and me into the CBS affiliate news room in Dallas the weekend President Kennedy was assassinated. So, all that said, I guess the best way to put it is, Bill taught me most everything I know about broadcasting--news or baseball. He's a cornerstone for me. Ernie, God rest his beautiful soul, was a treasure. When I first got into baseball, I called his agent, identified myself and asked if I could speak to Mr. Harwell. About six hours later, I received a phone call, and on the other end was the smoothest, easiest, most self assured southern drawl I ever heard. "Mike," he said, "this is ERNIE...not Mr. Harwell, what can I do for you?" Then he proceeded to take me under his wing and just as Bill had done through the years, listened to and critique tapes, shared stories of his time in World War II, but only if I'd tell him mine from days in the Middle East during the run up to the original Gulf War, and Haiti, and the Branch Davidian Siege. When I found out he had cancer, I emailed him immediately, and within an hour he emailed me back saying, "Michael, I'm in God's hands and don't worry about a thing." That brought a smile two miles wide to my face. Suffice it to say both Bill and Ernie have been huge to me in my broadcasting career.

4. Before you ventured into broadcasting, you were a correspondent at CNN. How was that experience for you?

I think covering the Gulf War and the bloody overthrow of the Haitian President, the Branch Davidian Siege, and covering Al Gore, running for Vice President in '92, did a couple things for me. It certainly broadened my broadcasting horizons to a bigger more inclusive world view. Those years also began to mature me as a person (although I must say I REFUSE to grow up entirely). But the reason I said that...simply has to do with the fact that seeing soldiers and citizens of countries outside the U.S. in peril and in danger for their lives...watching their trauma changes a human being, because in a very up close and personal sense, you're sharing their trauma. Again the bottom line: If you think I do not appreciate the baseball lifestyle after spending months in war zones...think again, please.

5. Who do you look forward to seeing play more: A big league star that is on a rehab assignment or a phenom who is coming up through the organization?

I love to watch fans reactions more than anything else. Seeing how baseball fans react with verve and passion to a superstar rehabbing or an up and comer, just amazes me, and really makes me smile. That, to me, proves this game may have its flaws, but it is THE best

(Continued from page 5)

sport played professionally on a world stage....and the fan base remains rabid....that's kinda cool.

6. What are some of the more interesting promotions that you have seen at minor league parks?

Well, let's see. We've had a couple here that were pretty wild and outside....80's night...Harry Potter Night (I must confess I do not possess a complete understanding of Harry, but the fans seemed to enjoy it, so what the hell.). Bark in the Park always makes me want to adopt more rescued pups. Karen manages to put the kibosh on that because we already have several rescued dogs and kitties. Princess night out here is always a classic. But if I think back to my independent ball days in Sioux Falls, SD, I worked for one of the promotional geniuses Mike Veeck, the son of the legendary White Sox, Indians and St.Louis Browns owner Bill Veeck. Mike also owned, and still does, the St.Paul Saints...and when we'd go into Minnesota to play those guys, heck, they had nuns giving haircuts and neck massages, a pig with a little leather pouch, delivering baseballs to the umpires(I thought they

could have really given more grief to the umps with that pig, but.....). The FUNNIEST I ever saw, however, happened when I was working for the Nashville Sounds in 1997. Sounds had a beautiful, trained golden retriever, Jake the Diamond Dog. One cold, wet and rainy night, playing against Buffalo in Nashville, a Buffalo hitter, swung and hit a slow roller up toward first. Jake's doghouse was located right beside the on deck area, first base side. (Jake normally retrieved bats and the crowd cheered, whoopie, whoopie), but this time, Jake, who had been taught to race out of his house on sight of first movement, took off after the ball, as did Nashville catcher Rick Wrona. Now, the ball's in fair ground, and Jake has grabbed it while Wrona dives and grabs Jake and begins wrestling the ball away from the pooch. Jake said the hell with this and gave up as the runner rounded second, and Wrona threw what would have been a strike to the second baseman. Problematic. With so much doggie slobber on the ball, Wrona could only manage a weak sinker which bounced past the second baseman and was picked up by the shortstop who by this time probably couldn't breathe. Umpires brought the runner back to first with an infield single. Wrona cursed loudly enough for us to hear him in the booth, fans -- drunk by now --couldn't stop laughing but the real winner was Jake and he got a doggie biscuit treat from his owner Jeff. The End.

Baseball's Tragic Clown

By Sam Zygnier

“The clown may be the source of mirth, but-who shall make the clown laugh”-Angela Carter-

John Thomas Reid Price, or as he would become more popularly known, Jackie Price, was born on November 13, 1912 in the rural town of Winborn, Mississippi. Whatever color this hard-bitten southern hamlet lacked, its native son Jackie made up for “in spades”.

Growing up in the 1920's, there were no Little Leagues or tailored fields like today; Price learned to play baseball on dusty sandlots. Like many young men of his era, young Jackie dreamed of playing professional baseball. His wish came to reality in 1935, when he signed on with the Union City Greyhounds of the Kentucky-Illinois- Tennessee, or “Kitty” League, as many liked to call it.

For the eleven years, Price languished in the minor leagues, or competed with various teams in semi-pro leagues, ekeing out a living at such stops as Asheville, North Carolina and Daytona Beach, Florida. Thanks to

the manpower shortage during World War II, he made a comeback after being out of professional baseball since 1937, and was inked by Columbus of the International League as a reserve shortstop and third baseman in 1944.

As each year passed, it became increasingly evident to Price that his goal of making it to the big leagues was fading. Yet, over the course of his career, the attention-seeking Price continued to develop routines that entertained the fans before games as a strategy to hold his place on a roster for as long as possible. He developed skills like hanging upside down while taking batting practice, catching balls behind his back or while standing on his head, pitching two balls at one time, and hitting two or three balls at once with a fungo bat sending each sphere in different directions. Crowds of curious patrons would come out early to the ballpark just to see his him perform his feats. As word spread, more and more people made their way through the turnstiles, much to the delight of the club owner.

Price's statistics show that he was no more than a marginal minor league player, and never a regular on any team. In 1945 though, his act caught the eye of baseball's ultimate promoter, Bill Veeck who signed him to play for his American Association's Milwaukee Brewers. It was here he really refined his act.

After enjoying great success in Milwaukee, Veeck took over the Cleveland Indians in 1946 and quickly put his promotional genius to work. He supplanted the team from tiny *League Park* and moved them to cavernous *Municipal Stadium*, enticing 1.5 million fans to the ballpark the first season, this despite the Tribe finishing in sixth place. Under his guidance, the Indians transformed from a second division club to a pennant contender, and by 1948 into World Series champions.

Veeck, always looking for ways to increase attendance, remembered Price and surmised that he was a perfect fit for his Indians to serve in a dual role as a pre-game entertainer and a reserve infielder. In his only season in the big leagues, Price appeared in seven games, batted 13 times, and stroking three singles. Although less than spectacular in the field, or at the plate, Clevelanders loved him.

Unfortunately, the zany Price wore out his welcome during spring training in 1947 when the snakes he carried as part of his act were unleashed on some unsuspecting female bowling team members on a train. It made quite a scene in the passenger car drawing the ire of his manager, Lou Boudreau. The serious-minded skipper failed to see the humor in the situation and quickly saw to it that Price received his release. It proved to be the end of his professional playing career.

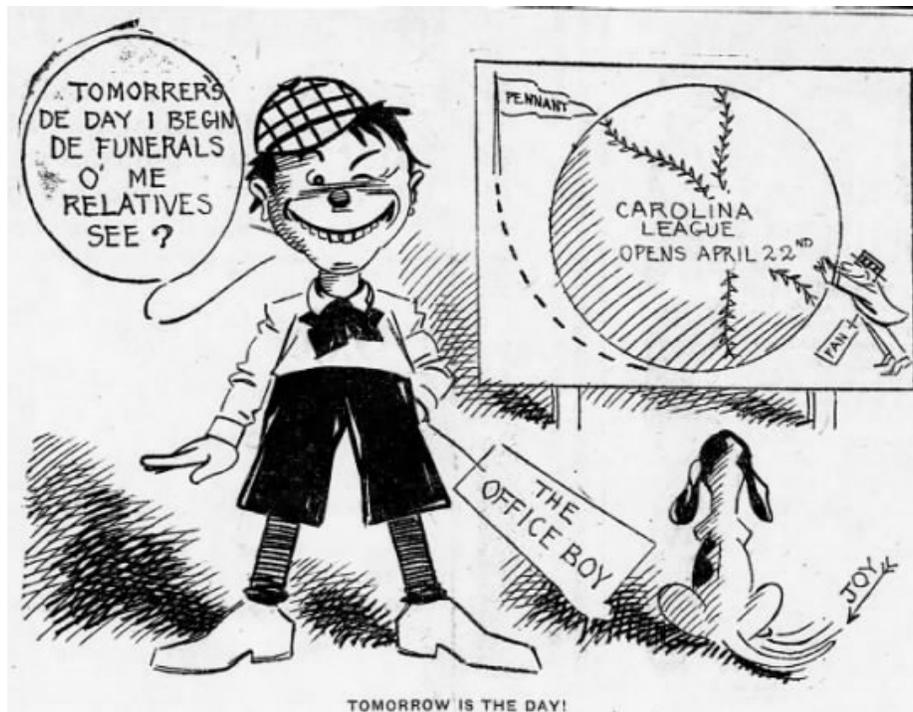
Nevertheless, when one door closes, another one opens, and Price took his act on the road performing in minor and major league parks through the United States and the Caribbean. Sometimes, Max Patkin, and Al Schacht joined

him and together they staged their own brand of physical comedy. In any given year Price would travel 40,000 miles entertaining thousands in big league ballparks and sometimes as few as hundreds in the lower minor leagues. He even starred in his own short film, *Diamond Demon*, viewable even today on youtube.com.

His most famous routines involved shooting a baseball out of an air gun, jumping into a jeep or convertible, and hurriedly tracking the fly ball down and catching it before it would hit the ground. He could also put down a bunt with the end of his bat using it like a pool cue. By the time he retired from the diamond in 1959, his skills had diminished, and at the age of 47 hung up his cleats and fungo bat for good.

What many people who saw Price perform did not know was that baseball's self-appointed clown suffered from deep depression and a fondness for alcohol. Hidden under the surface was a demon that belied his omnipresent smile and joyful disposition. After baseball, he settled in San Francisco and worked as a bartender at the J & J Bar. Always a snappy dresser, customers came from all over the country seeking him out and sometimes reminiscing about the old days and talking hardball.

On October 2, 1967, Price was drinking heavily. Nobody will ever know what was in his thoughts that day, but he pulled out a belt, tied it to a light fixture, and hanged himself by the neck. He was just short of his fifty-fifth birthday. Although he died at too young an age, he left his indelible mark by delighting tens of thousands who would always remember him as the clown price of baseball.



Charlotte News April 21, 1909

THE EXPULSION OF THE ANDREW FREEDMAN-OWNED NEW YORK METROPOLITANS FROM THE 1896 ATLANTIC LEAGUE

by Bill Lamb

During just his second year as a baseball magnate in 1896, New York Giants owner Andrew Freedman was beset with problems. Among other things, Freedman found himself involved in high profile legal wrangles with various Giants players; convicted of assault upon a reporter assigned to the Giants beat; engaged in running battles with the league office and fellow National League club owners; routinely excoriated, frequently in personal terms, on newspaper sport pages; and assigned the blame for the disappointing performance of his ninth-place ball club, only recently the winners of the Temple Cup. As if the above were not enough, Freedman also suffered a less-publicized embarrassment: the mid-season expulsion of his New York Metropolitans from the minor Atlantic League. What follows is the story of that now dimly-remembered episode in the stormy life of Andrew Freedman.

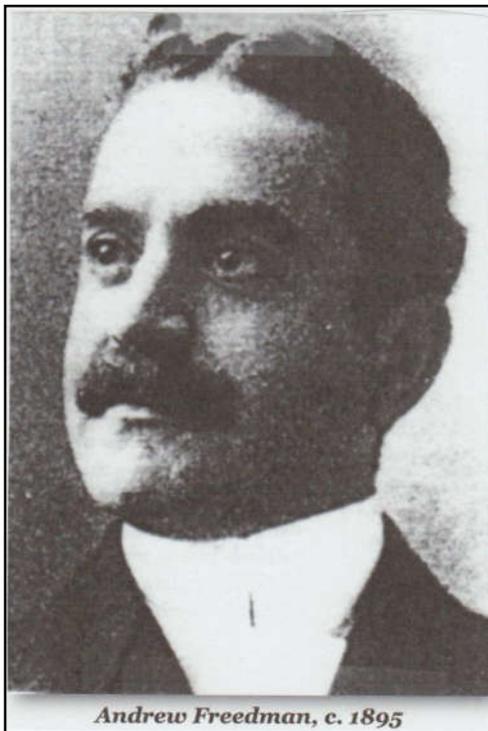
Only 18 months earlier, the arrival of Freedman on the baseball scene had been greeted warmly. Young (34), wealthy, politically-connected, and a Manhattan native, he seemed the ideal rescuer of the financially-troubled New York Giants franchise. When he acquired majority control of the club in late-January 1895, even future adversaries like A.G. Spalding and John Montgomery Ward approved of Freedman's acquisition of the Giants and wished him success. Sadly, things would not turn out well for either the new club boss or his team. The Freedman years were the darkest in club history, with the Giants only once in pennant contention (1897) and often at or near the bottom of league standings during his eight-year tenure at the helm.

In many respects, Freedman was an able man: intelligent, fiercely energetic, and possessed of a genius for making money. But events would demonstrate that he lacked the understanding and practical experience required for success in professional baseball. Worse yet was

the Freedman disposition when it came to dealing with his new-found associates in the game. He was brusque, often condescending, and intolerant of criticism – with a hair-trigger temper, to boot. Polished and personable in the company of Wall Street bankers and Tammany Hall pals, Freedman found it difficult to relate to his players, managers, front office personnel, umpires, other team owners, and, most acutely, the sports press, and he quickly became embroiled in disputes on virtually all sides. Combined with the dismal placement of New York in NL final standings, the 1895 season had not been a happy one for Freedman or the Giants faithful.

While Freedman was having his troubles as a novice big league club owner, a new minor league was taking shape: the Atlantic League. Organizers Denny Long, George Ellis, and Rasty Wright envisioned a Class A circuit consisting of six-to-eight clubs located in East Coast cities from Connecticut to Delaware, with Long to

operate the franchise intended for Jersey City. In February 1896, the Atlantic League assumed formal existence via a meeting held at Manhattan's Fifth Avenue Hotel where franchises were allotted to three venues in New Jersey (Newark, Jersey City, and Paterson), two in Connecticut (Hartford and New Haven), and Wilmington, Delaware. Applications had also been received from Troy, Waterbury, and Meridan, Connecticut, but rejected, the league brain trust acting on the view that a six-club circuit held the best prospect for profitability. An ambitious 120-game schedule was also adopted. Appointed Atlantic League president was respected sports writer Sam Crane, then with the *New York Commercial Advertiser*. The previous August, Crane, a former major league infielder, had gained the



distinction of being the first reporter barred from entry into the Polo Grounds by Andrew Freedman, the new Giants owner being displeased by critical Crane commentary on his stewardship of the club. And the two would soon tangle again.

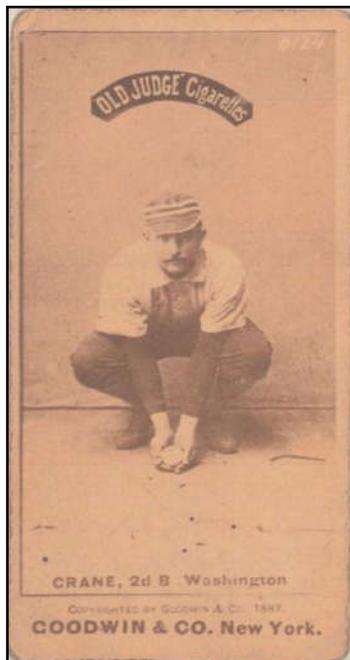
Because the Atlantic League's Jersey City entry resided inside the exclusive five-mile extra-territorial borders accorded the New York Giants, the club could not be operated without the consent of Freedman. This gave Freedman all the leverage he needed to muscle into the new circuit. He would refuse to provide the needed consent unless the Jersey City franchise was ceded to him. With Atlantic

League fathers anxious to preserve an anticipated Newark-Jersey City rivalry, and with no hope of prevailing over the wealthy and powerful Freedman anyway, the league acquiesced, with league founder Denny Long assuming control of the Wilmington club instead of taking Jersey City. Capture of the Jersey City franchise was not merely a demonstration of Freedman might. It also enabled him to deploy a scheme for improvement of the Giants. Stealing a page from the playbook of Cincinnati Reds boss John T. Brush (who used the Brush-owned Indianapolis Hoosiers of the Western League as a Reds farm team), Freedman planned to stock the Jersey City roster with Giants prospects and use the club's games for player development purposes.

The first of many snags in the new operation was encountered when contractor W.G. Vreeland failed to construct the local ballpark that he was contracted to deliver, leaving only derelict Oakdale Park available to the Jersey City club. This development, however, was fine with Freedman. Over futile league objection, he unilaterally transferred Jersey City home games to the Polo Grounds and renamed his team the New York Metropolitan. But before the Mets could begin regular season play, trouble for Freedman erupted on another front. At the Polo Grounds on April 22, an angry Freedman confronted *New York Evening World* sports writer Edward Hurst about his recent coverage of Giants affairs, and punched Hurst in the face (Hurst said) or shoved Hurst up against a guard railing (Freedman said). Whichever the case, Freedman soon found himself facing criminal assault charges preferred by Hurst and obliged to post \$300 bail pending disposition of the matter in court. Meanwhile, the Atlantic League had begun play, with the Mets defeating the Newark Colts, 6-2, before about 1,500 patrons gathered at the Polo Grounds for Opening Day.

On paper, the Mets appeared the class of the Atlantic League. The nine would be guided by capable playing manager John Irwin, the younger brother of Giants skipper Arthur Irwin and like his brother, a veteran of major league play. Besides skipper Irwin himself, the roster at his disposal included future big league standout Cy Seymour, as well as various lesser lights (Ed Doheny, Lester German, Jack Cronin, Dave Zearfoos, et al.) who would later play for the Giants. Despite superior talent, the Mets got out of the gate slowly, playing listless .500 ball before home crowds that soon rarely exceeded 150-200 customers. Busy club boss Freedman, however, paid little atten-

tion to the Mets situation, devoting his baseball-related time to contract squabbles with present and past Giants players John Montgomery Ward, Fred Pfeffer, and, most ominously, holdout pitching ace Amos Rusie (who threatened a court challenge to baseball's precious reserve clause); constant squabbling with fellow NL owners and the league office; contemplating the next Giants managerial change (Freedman's fifth in less than two seasons was in the offing); and his ongoing battle of words with baseball's Fourth Estate. And this was just in his spare time, as Freedman considered the ownership of baseball teams largely a pastime and focused most of his energies on the business and political interests that were his lifeblood.



Although Freedman devoted only periodic attention to the Mets, when he did, his conduct tended to draw the ire of his Atlantic League counterparts. Hartford club president-manager Billy Barnie, for example, was put off when Freedman took advantage of a typo in the printed league schedule to compel Barnie's club to play a game intended for Hartford's ballpark at the Polo Grounds. Weeks thereafter, New Haven club boss Ted Sullivan was similarly displeased by the Mets playing of non-league exhibition games in Rhode Island on dates scheduled for Atlantic League games in Connecticut. Meanwhile, Atlantic League President Crane was growing ever-angered by rowdy on-field Mets player behavior and Freedman's refusal to remit fines imposed on the club.

But it was the conduct of Freedman himself, rather than that of his playing charges, that precipitated the expulsion of the New York Metropolitan from the Atlantic League. On occasion, Freedman would seek relief from the pressures of the business and political world by taking in some late-afternoon action at the Polo Grounds. On arrival, the fastidious and impeccably tailored millionaire would sometimes take a seat on the team bench, rather than sit in his private box. And that was where Freedman stationed himself for a June 18 contest between his Mets and the Wilmington Peaches. In the fifth inning, a call by umpire Burns was hotly disputed, with Freedman promptly striding onto the field to insert himself into the debate. Taking one look at the top-hatted club owner, Wilmington player-captain Bob Berryhill told Freedman, probably kidding, that if he wanted to get into the argument, he should go put on a uniform. Joke or not, the haughty Freedman was not amused, as he found any hint of effrontery from a mere ballplayer intolerable. He therefore ordered a halt to the game until Berryhill left the grounds. After further argument and much delay,

Here's tidbit that I may have sent in years ago (perhaps decades?) but it is still mind-boggling. The 1925 Fort Worth Panthers played 155 games (wound up 103-48-4) and this was their line-up:

1B Ed Konethy	155 CG
2B Eddie Palmer	154 G, at least 150 CG
3B Billy Mullen	151 G, at least 150 CG
SS Wayne Windle	155 CG
LF Ziggy Sears	155 G, at least 150 CG
CF Cecil Davis	155 CG
RF Stump Eddington	155 G, 153 CG
C Doc Smith, BR	89 G

Henry Moore, BL 78 G These were the only two catchers used the entire season.

No team in history ever had seven players who each played at least 150 compete games at their respective positions.

(By the way, their starting four (remember when starting pitchers pitched every four days?) went 82-34(.713) with 81 CG. Oddly, the 1925 TL stats did not include GS numbers.) - **Jamie Selko**

Freedman's mandate prevailed and the Wilmington captain departed the field under police escort. But the matter did not end there. When Wilmington returned to the Polo Grounds two days later, Berryhill found himself barred from entering the ballpark by uniformed NYPD officers acting on Freedman's instruction. After protests on Berryhill's behalf fell on deaf ears, the Peaches meekly submitted, playing (and losing) a doubleheader to the Mets without the services of their team captain.

When news of these events reached league president Crane, he was furious and readied an action plan for the next Wilmington engagement in New York. That would take place shortly, and this time the umpire would carry out Crane's instructions should the situation recur. Predictably, it did, with Berryhill once again denied admittance to the Polo Grounds for a June 27 game between the Mets and Peaches. The Wilmington nine subsequently suited up and took the field without their captain. As soon as they did, the game was declared forfeited to the visitors, 9-0, by the umpire. The league president, moreover, did not stop there. Ten days later, Atlantic League owners summoned to conference by Crane voted to return all league fees and assessments paid by Freedman. The New York club was then formally expelled from the circuit by unanimous vote. In explaining the league's action, Crane minced no words: "The Metropolitan were thrown out because they had not lived up to their contractual obligations. ... We decided that we would be better off without them, and have taken this means of ridding ourselves of an undesirable customer." To replace

the Mets, the Atlantic magnates immediately granted league membership to the Philadelphia Athletics of the unrecognized Pennsylvania State League (while the Lancaster Maroons of the same circuit were simultaneously given the spot surrendered by the destitute New Haven club).

It was anticipated that the litigious Freedman would file suit against the Atlantic League, but he never did. The Mets had failed to develop useful playing talent for the parent-club Giants, and in relatively short order Freedman decided that he was just as well off without his New York farm team. To the extent that he devoted attention to baseball thereafter that year, Freedman confined himself to the affairs of the Giants, skirmishes with the league office and fellow major league magnets, and his ceaseless quarrels with the sports press. He never gave the Mets another thought. The Atlantic League, meanwhile, finished out the 1896 campaign with its replacement clubs, and continued in operation through the 1900 season. By that time, Andrew Freedman, still owner of the New York Giants, was knee-deep in events attending the contraction of the National League to an eight-club circuit. Thereafter, he took an active part in the notorious Baseball Trust scheme; litigation against A.G. Spalding over the presidency of the National League; the attempted gutting of the Baltimore franchise in the new rival American League; and other controversies that would comprise a far greater part of his baseball legacy than Freedman's brief, unfruitful, and largely-forgotten experience as a minor league team owner.

The Danbury, Connecticut Hatters and the 1914 Atlantic League

By George Pawlush

It was the summer of 1914. The politics of the world were beginning to boil and the start of a major war involving most of Europe appeared imminent.

Here in the United States, thousands of miles away, people were less anxious about politics and more concerned about their jobs, silent movies, which were now the rage; and the automobile that was becoming increasingly popular across the land.

Baseball enjoyed a very special hour. Organized baseball was at an all-time high with 43 minor leagues operating in 1914.

Minor league baseball was governed by the National Association (Organized Baseball), founded in 1901, that established roster and salary limits, and a draft system league classifications.

The 16 major-league teams relied upon the minors to provide them a reliable source of talent while the minor-league teams needed to sell their best players for their franchises to remain solvent.

Interest for minor league baseball was sky high in Connecticut. There were Class B Eastern Association franchises in New London, Waterbury, Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven and New Britain. Also operating were the Danbury Hatters, members of the fledging Class D Atlantic League.

Known as the New York/New Jersey League in 1913, the circuit changed its name for the 1914 season to the Atlantic League to reflect its reach into Connecticut.

In addition to Danbury, other league members included the Poughkeepsie Honey Bugs, Newburgh Dutchmen and the Middletown Middies, in New York; and the Newark/Long Branch Cuban Giants, Perth Amboy Pacers, Pater-son Coganites and Asbury Park Sea Urchins, in New Jersey.

The nicknames were the brainstorm of league president Roslyn Cox, who wanted fans in each of the league cities to suggest team names. The contest winners, in each city, received passes to attend all their team's home games.

The Atlantic adopted a 100-game schedule that began on May 20 and finished on Labor Day. The salary cap for each team was \$1200 per month and rosters were limited to 12 players. Teams were coached by a captain (player/manager) who also played an active position.

Under Organized Baseball rules, prior to the season all league members had to file \$1000 bonds with the league office. This covered half of the team's monthly salary payroll and would be given to players in the event the team went out of business. The remaining \$400 was a guarantee of good faith. This bond encouraged teams to finish their schedules.

The teams traveled by buses. All games were played in daylight, usually in late afternoons, during the week, with doubleheaders scheduled on holidays and Sunday afternoons. Visiting teams were guaranteed \$50 per game while game receipts for the Memorial, July 4th and Labor Day holiday games, usually the largest fan draws of the year, were split between the two contesting teams, instead of pooled.

The teams were independently owned and stocked with up-and-coming youngsters, as well as long-time veterans, looking for one last opportunity to reach the big leagues. Sometimes, even players in lowest level Class D leagues, graduated to the major leagues after concluding their minor-league seasons in early September.

Organized Baseball stipulated that teams in Class D Leagues, like the Atlantic, will be paid \$500 for players drafted by the major-league or higher classified minor-league teams.

After experiencing professional baseball in 1887-88 and 1898, Danbury was making its third revival in a city that was known as "hat-making capital of the world." Danbury fans had the reputation of supporting a winner but would stay away if it was losing.

The team, known as the Hatters, played in a park that was built and owned by the Danbury and Bethel Railway prior to the start of the 1913 season, when the team was a last-minute addition to the new New York-New Jersey League. In the early 1900s it was not uncommon throughout the country for trolley companies to develop relationships with baseball and amusement parks. Trolley owners saw it as a perfect way to increased ridership on their tracks.

The Danbury ballpark field was located on the corner of South Street and Shelter Rock Road, next to the trolley barn. The park seated 1800 fans and was encircled by a nine-foot fence throughout the outfield. Not surprisingly, entrance to the grounds were convenient to the trolley tracks.

It was usual to see fans converging on the stadium following completion of their work shifts at hat factories scattered throughout town. The games started at 3:30 pm. General admission was 25 cents. For five cents more, fans could get a seat in the grandstand that could accommo-

date 1000 people.

Ernest "Duke" Landgraf owned and managed the Danbury team. He was a colorful individual who broke into baseball as a player in 1898 and remained in professional baseball until 1950 as a player, owner, general manager, major-league scout and president of the Class D North Atlantic League, 1946-1950, before retiring from the game.

Danbury also had a hometown favorite in the person of John "Boney" Blake, who was a former baseball captain at Danbury High School. He played collegiate baseball during the spring at Niagara University and in the summer, under an alias, with the Hatters. Blake, who later coached basketball at Niagara and St. John's Universities, was a fleet-footed outfielder who hit .305 and .286 respectively for the 1913 and 1914 Danbury clubs.

The opening-day games were special in all league cities as mayors declared half-day holidays in each of their municipalities. The afternoon off from job allowed workers to attend the games, or to watch the parade of teams, bands and city officials who marched to the ballpark on streets lined with banners and flags.

Long Branch, the New York-New Jersey titlists in 1913, relocated to Newark for the 1914 season. They were again tabbed as heavy favorites to win the league title. The team was owned by Dr. Carlos Henriquez who moved the team to Newark as a favor to Brooklyn Dodger owner Charles Ebbets Jr., who also owned the Newark Class AA International League team.

Ebbets wanted an every-day presence of Organized Baseball in New Jersey's largest city to stave off incursion by a Federal League franchise. The Federal League was organized as a third major league in 1914 and hoped to place a team in Newark, New Jersey's largest city in 1915 to dent the lucrative New York metropolitan market. The Feds already had a competing team in Brooklyn

Henriquez stocked his Atlantic team with players recruited from Cuba. This angered fellow League owners who felt that Newark had an unfair advantage by signing players from the Caribbean. Many baseball leaders at that time had a bias to keep baseball strictly as an American game for only players born in the United States.

As expected, Newark got off to a fast start and by mid-season the Atlantic became a two-team race between the Cuban Giants and Poughkeepsie. Danbury started slowly but fought back to reach .500 on June 25.

The Hatters continued to rise and on August 16 were ten games over .500 at 44-34, just six games behind Poughkeepsie (47-25) and Long Branch (48-26), which had returned to Long Branch on July 3 because of poor fan support in Newark.

The final three weeks of the Atlantic season were memorable. Danbury fell out of the race by losing 13 of its final games. Poughkeepsie went 18-6 after August 16, and nosed out Long Branch, 11-6 during that span, to capture the Atlantic crown. Despite its mid-season surge, Danbury suffered at the gate as fans stayed away. The long trips and transportation costs to the New Jersey and New York cities completely wiped out their guaranteed road money.

Following the completion of the season, four Atlantic League players were drafted onto major league rosters. This included Cuban born Long Branch infielder Angel Aragon, who led the league with a .443 batting average. Arragon was picked up by the New York Yankees and played the 1914, 1916, and 1917 seasons as a reserve for the Bombers. Also advancing to the majors were Newburgh third-baseman Bill Tamm, with the Yankees; and infielder Des Beatty and pitcher Ray Scull, both of Poughkeepsie, who both signed with the New York Giants.

Thirty-two-year-old Andy Coakley of Asbury Park was among the top pitchers in the Atlantic League. The 6-1, 165-pound right-hander led the league with 138 strikeouts. Coakley, with an 11-12 record, pitched in 200 innings and was one bright spot in Asbury Park's last place finish.

In the autumn of his professional career, Coakley once had been a prominent major leaguer. He pitched in 150 games, between 1902 and 1911, with the Philadelphia Athletics and the Cincinnati Reds. Coakley had a brilliant 20-7 season for the Athletics in 1905.

Both major and minor leagues were susceptible to fluctuating economic climates, changing consumer demand, and other external forces. However, the lower leagues were more sensitive to them. The emergence of the Federal League in 1914 also helped thin out minor-league ranks. Approximately 50 teams shut down in 1914. Only 31 of the 43 leagues that started the 1914 season operated in 1915.

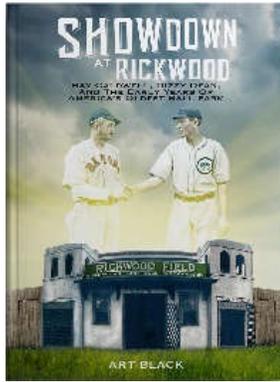
This concluded the brief one year history of the Atlantic League and ended professional baseball in Danbury, Connecticut.



Duke Landgraf



Boney Blake



SHOWDOWN AT RICKWOOD

BY ART BLACK

2017, Blue Rooster Press

[ISBN: 978-0988980730. 394 pp. \$25.00 USD. Hardcover]

Reviewed by Gerard Kwilecki

Baseball has a long and storied history. It has its roots as far back as the Civil War and has been a part of the American fabric and way of life for several generations. Players names and nicknames are part of the American vocabulary. Players like Ty “Georgia Peach” Cobb, Babe Ruth, Shoeless Joe Jackson, Hammerin’ Hank Aaron, Willie “The say-hey kid” Mays, Dizzy Dean, among many others.

Baseball fans also remember great games in baseball history and where they were when those games happened. Fans can tell you where they were when Ted Williams hit .406 in 1941. Or when Bobby Thompson hit his pennant winning homerun for the NY Giants in 1951 off Brooklyn pitcher Ralph Branca, known as the “shot heard round the world”. Fans can recall dates of historic games and milestones, such as April 8, 1974 when Hank Aaron hit his 715th homerun of LA Dodgers pitcher Al Downing. Or when Pete Rose hit his 4,192nd base hit breaking Ty Cobb’s record on September 11, 1985.

Birmingham fans are no different. Baseball has a rich history in Birmingham. The Birmingham Barons were a charter member of the 1885 Southern League. They began playing in the historic Rickwood Field in 1910. Birmingham has consistently the largest per game attendance in the Southern League.

Fans of Birmingham, Southern League, and minor league baseball will thoroughly enjoy Art Black’s new book, *Showdown at Rickwood*. This book is not just for baseball fans, but history buffs as well. It is a creative non-fiction book telling the story of the 1931 Dixie Series be-

tween the Birmingham Barons and Houston Buffaloes. Black had originally planned to do a series of stories on game one of the series, but as he continued his research, he decided to tell the story of the series and the players who participated in the historic championship series.

The author takes the reader back to Birmingham in early 1900s to meet some of the colorful characters to suit up for the Barons and their opponents. These players come alive with vivid detail. The reader feels like he is on the field playing catch or in the stands on a warm Alabama afternoon watching batting practice. This is the heart of the book and what makes it such a great story.

The book begins with a young fan, Walter, who has snuck into Rickwood Field to watch his hero, Ray Caldwell. It is 1931, two years into what will history will call the Great Depression. Times are tough for all Americans. Walter is standing down near the field to catch a glimpse of his hero, he strikes up a conversation with Charles Stewart. Stewart is an older man who has been around the Barons for many years. He has watched many games and come to know players as they come through Birmingham on their way to the big leagues. Stewart had been around before Rickwood Field was built in 1910, when the Barons played their games at the “Slag Pile”. Walter listens to Stewart as he takes him back to 1910 when Rickwood Field held it first game when the Barons were in the middle of a pennant race.

Stewart takes Walter back to when Birmingham was just beginning to transform from a horse and buggy town to one flourishing with cars, industry, and a new baseball park. Birmingham grew so fast they called it the “Magic City”. People began to move to Birmingham in search of jobs and to settle down to start families. Baseball captured the hearts of the nation and became the National Pastime. Fans came to the ballpark in the Sunday best to watch baseball. Birmingham was no different.

Walter hears the stories of the manager of the Barons in 1910, Carlton Molesworth. He finds players either discarded by other teams or from people giving him tips, such as Pop Boy Smith who sold peanuts at Barons games. Fans may not recognize these names, but when players such as Shoeless Joe Jackson, Rogers Hornsby, and a young Ty Cobb are mentioned as having played for or against the Barons, fans will no doubt know the league had talented players. It isn’t the household names that gives this book such life, it is the guys who went from throwing peanuts one week to throwing baseballs the next.

Fans of this era did not have the internet or ESPN to keep track of scores. Baron fans wanted to know the game action even if the team was playing out of town. Boys

helped pass the word of news around various businesses in town. Announcers re-created the game action for eager fans. Baron fans had reason to be excited about their club in 1910. Adding to this frenzy, was the eagerly awaited opening of Rickwood Field. The field was named after its owner, Rick Woodward. Rickwood Field was a welcome change from the "Old Slag Pile", so-named for the piles of slag lying beyond the outfield walls from a local furnace company. Many young Hall of Famers paid a visit to "Old Slag" in the early stages of their careers. Players such as Ty Cobb, Christy Mathewson, Napoleon Lajoie, and Rube Waddell. Manager Connie Mack and his suit also brought his Philadelphia Athletics to Rickwood Field.

Fans attending games back in the early 1900s were much different than ones today. Most fans wore their Sunday best, even though all games were in the afternoon. No games were played on Sundays. Fans were vocal for their team and they voiced their opinions on the umpires, even

going on the field to let him know. Birmingham was not any different. Black tells stories of Baron fans going on to the field to voice their displeasure of a call that did not go their way.

The main theme of the book is the players. One player is not a household name to most causal baseball fans. His name is Clarence "Pop Boy" Smith. The author tells the fascinating story of how a young man goes from selling peanuts at the games to playing. Pop Boy Smith was 20 years old when he pitched his first game with the Barons in 1912.

This book is not just about the 1931 Dixie Series championship. The story takes you deep inside all the different characters, their stories, and their journeys. This book is for anyone who enjoys baseball and history. Art Black does a fantastic job of marrying the two together to tell a story of baseball and the boys who dream of making it to the "show".

Recreation Park San Francisco 1907-30

By Ron Selter

Recreation Park was the home park of the SF Seals in the PCL from 1907 to 1930; before Seals Stadium opened for the 1931 season. The park was located in an area south of downtown SF at Valencia St and 14th St. The park was built after the 1906 SF earthquake destroyed the Seal's prior home field-old Recreation Park. The park was also known as Recreation Grounds and opened to a capacity crowd on Opening Day 1907.

A Sanborn map of Recreation Park was found amongst the 1913-15 collection of Sanborn maps (San Francisco CA, Volume 7, Sheet 666). The park was located within the city block bounded by 14th St on the north, 15th St on the south, Valencia St on the east and Guerrero St on the west. The park site reached nearly to Valencia St as its eastern boundary. Other properties within the city block were adjacent to the ballpark on all four sides. The northern, southern, and eastern boundaries of the park site were parallel with the surrounding streets. Not so on the west, where the park's perimeter (the fence at the back of the third base bleachers) angled towards the east from the LF corner towards the CF corner. The dimensions of the park's land plot were not large: a little more than 400 feet east-to-west (413 on the northern boundary and 428 at the southern boundary) and only 336 ft north to south. As home plate was located in the south-east corner, this made the RF dimension very limited.

The total area of the park site amounted to only 3.2 acres -the smallest park site in terms of overall area I have ever encountered.

Based on park descriptions and a photo of the infield and grandstand found in: *Runs Hits and an Era: The Pacific Coast League, 1903-58*, home plate was placed 40 feet from the backstop. The backstop was a short diagonal section of the sort-of double-deck grandstand. The ground level lower portion of the wooden grandstand consisted of eight rows of benches where the hard-drinking rowdy fans congregated. The main level of the grandstand was roofed and extended from beyond first base to beyond third base. The first base and third base portions of the grandstand were parallel with the foul lines and no more than 30 feet from the infield. Both of the foul line bleachers converged with the foul lines as they neared the LF and RF corners. The LF fence was at less than 90 degrees to the LF foul line, while the RF fence was at 90 degrees to the RF foul line. There was no seating in the RF portion of the outfield. In LF, there were shallow bleachers that extended from the junction of the third base bleachers to the clubhouse in CF. Based on the square footage of the grandstand and bleachers, the seating capacity in 1914 was estimated to be about 10,000. In the first years of the ballpark the dressing rooms were located beneath the third base portion of the grandstand. By 1914, there was a two story clubhouse in the CF corner, next to the flag pole, that was located behind the LF fence. Another photo from *Runs Hits and an Era*, is of the 1918 Opening Day ceremonies held at the CF flag pole in front of this two story clubhouse. This

photo does show the height of the wooden CF fence to the right of the two story building to be about 20-24 ft.

With the home plate location at 40 ft from the backstop, the other dimensions of the park were derived from the Sanborn map. They were:

LF 316

LC 343

CF Corner 360 (Deepest point in the park-out of play in the 1920's)

CF 326 (Dead CF)

RC 275

RF 235

Backstop 40

In the 1920's, a short CF diagonal fence was added in front of the clubhouse. This fence put the CF corner out of play. In addition, the grandstand was extended down

the RF line. In the 1920's to keep from running out of baseballs due to home runs over the very close RF fence, a high screen was mounted on top of the fence. The total height of the fence and screen was 60 feet. The screen apparently ran from the RF foul line to nearly the CF corner. The fence is denoted only as "High Fence" on the 1914 Sanborn. The LF-CF fence was about 10 feet in height. In earlier years of the ballpark's use (estimated to be before 1920), photos show the RF fence consisted of a single row of billboards and a screen atop the billboards for a total height of about 20 feet.

Average Outfield Distances

LF 323

CF 326 (With CF diagonal: 318)

RF 254

Not surprisingly, the park had a reputation as a real hitter's park in the 1920s.

Clinton (IA) Overcomes 16-run deficit to sting the Burlington Bees

By Joe Wancho

The game deserved to be seen by a bigger crowd. A paltry sum of 558 folks gathered for a Wednesday evening ballgame at Community Field on May 7, 2014. The Burlington (IA) Bees were hosting the Clinton (IA) LumberKings, who were playing the final game of a ten game road trip.

Both clubs were members of the Western Division of the low Class A Midwest League. The schedule was split in halves, and both the LumberKings (parent club Seattle) and the Bees (parent club Los Angeles Dodgers) were looking to rebound from sub-.500 seasons in 2013. Clinton finished the campaign with an overall record of 67-72 (33-36, 34-36). The Bees finished in the cellar in the first half of the season with a record of 26-39 and improved slightly to 30-39 in the second.

Burlington was just ahead of their visitors in the standings. The Bees were 16-14 to this point in the season, and the LumberKings were an even 15-15. Perhaps the fortunes for both were about to change for the better.

Although the crowd may have been miniscule, the Bees' faithful had a lot to cheer about early on. The Bees battered Clinton's pitching staff to the tune of seven runs in the second inning and nine runs in the fifth. Their lead was 17-1 and it seemed that even the word "rout" would not be appropriate to describe the lopsided affair. LumberKings' starter Jose was charged with eight earned runs, as 11 of the 24 batters he faced

got safely on base. The next pitcher to arrive in the center of the diamond was Tommy Burns. He surrendered six runs in 1/3 of an inning. It wasn't until Paul Fry emerged from the bullpen that order was restored. But not before he gave up three runs in the fifth, and then a scoreless inning in the bottom of the sixth.

The LumberKings began to climb out of the hole in the sixth inning. They crossed the dish six times, courtesy of five hits. Three were of the extra-base variety: a double by Marcus Littlewood, a triple by Corey Seager and the first home run of the year for Zach Shank. Seager, who was drafted in the 12th round in 2013 by Seattle, is the brother of Kyle and Corey, both major leaguers.

Clinton tacked on five more runs in the top of the eighth. Burlington hurler Eswarlin Jimenez was charged with all five, as Burt Reynolds (no, not that Burt Reynolds) led off the inning with his fourth round-tripper of the year. The big blows however were back-to-back doubles by Lonnie Kauppila and Joe DeCarlo. Burlington's lead was now cut to 17-12.

"It was just amazing that these guys never quit," said Clinton manager Scott Steinmann. "All of a sudden we score, and I look over at the dugout, and they're thinking they have a chance to win this."

Bee's skipper Bill Richardson went to his bullpen in the ninth inning, bringing in Ben Carlson. Clinton laced four consecutive one-out singles off the bats of Seager, Kauppila, Ian Miller and Shank. Carlson retired only one of the five hitters he faced in the ninth inning, and left with a 17-13 lead.

The Bees then went to closer Alan Busenitz to get the final two

(Continued from page 15)

outs, but he surrendered a game-tying grand slam to Littlewood. It was his third home run on the season.

“To tie the game on a grand slam was just amazing,” said Steinmann. “That’s the farthest ball I’ve seen him hit yet.”

The score was knotted at 17 runs apiece. And to extra innings they went. Lumberkings reliever Emilio Pagan held the tie, pitching three scoreless innings, striking out four.

The game progressed to the top of the 12th inning. Jeff Zimmerman got the rally started with a one-out single off of Burlington’s sixth pitcher, Trevor Foss. A base knock by DeCarlo and a walk to Reynolds loaded the bags. Seager grounded out to third, and Zimmerman scored the go-ahead run on the fielder’s choice. Clinton added two more runs off Foss, as Kaupilla singled home DeCarlo and Reynolds for the 20-17 advantage.

That was how the game ended up. Incredibly, the LumberKings 16-run comeback was complete. They outscored the Bees 19-0

after the fifth inning.

“It was just fun and really interesting to be a part of something like that,” said Steinmann. “They don’t get it that they were down, and that’s a testament to their character and how much they care about winning games. To say the least, I was a little disappointed in the pitching early on. I thought we were hitting the ball OK, but then they kept grinding at-bats. You keep thinking down 16 to just cash it in, and a 6-4 road trip isn’t bad ... we just chipped away; it was a cool thing.”

The hitting stars for the Bees were Kody Eaves, who was 1 for 3 with a double and two runs scored and two RBI. Angle Rosa was 3 for 5 with three runs scored and an RBI. Chad Hinshaw was 1 for 3 with two runs and three RBI. Ryan Dalton was 1 for 2 with one run and two RBI.

In spite of the loss, Burlington (38-31) finished the first half of the 2014 season in second place, 6 ½ games behind the Kane County Cougars. Clinton finished in seventh with a 30-38 mark. Burlington (30-40) fell to a seventh place finish in the second half. Clinton (31-39) finished in sixth place.

Member Announcements

Jimmy Keenan has published a book titled *The Lyston Brothers: A Journey Through 19th Century Baseball*. It chronicles the baseball careers of three of his Lyston relatives from Baltimore, Maryland. In addition to an occasional game with major league teams, they played in numerous independent and minor leagues in the late 19th century. Along with the baseball biographies of the Lystons, the book provides biographical sketches of the famous and not so famous ballplayers they encountered during their careers on the diamond. There are also contemporary baseball stories and events included in the book. Both a paperback and e-book are available from Amazon.

Norm Coleman has published an e-book on Ty Cobb titled, *The Life and Times of Ty Cobb*, and includes info on his 1905 season he played with Augusta in the South Atlantic League. The book is available from his web site <http://www.ncoleman.info/>



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Online Discussion Group

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Como Mexico No Hay Dos

(Mexico Like No Other)

By Eduardo Almada

For over 50 years the principal Mexican professional baseball leagues, the Mexican League and the Mexican Pacific League, have co-existed despite many differences. Currently, their future is up in the air. The Mexican Pacific League operates as a winter league.

The Mexican League is a member of Minor League Baseball (MiLB), and since the 1950's has had official relations with Major League Baseball. A famous handshake agreement gave the Mexican League exclusive rights to sell native talent to Major League clubs. The Mexican Pacific League has no such agreement, and for decades there has been a lot of jealousy going both ways.

The Winter league has harbored jealousy because it has believed that it could not develop players and profit from it. Also, every Mexican member on their rosters is owned by a Mexican League team. Because not all Winter League owners would abide by the rules, especially regarding injuries, there was a loud secret that the Mexican League would occasionally, and in recent years, frequently, block players from participating in the Winter league.

The Winter league is often considered to be the better circuit, as there are only 8 teams as opposed to 16 in the Mexican League. Also, major and minor leaguers will

participate in the league. The Mexican Pacific League also participates in the Caribbean Series, the World Series of Latin America.

The issue that has divided the two leagues more than any other has been a recent development: The season and playoffs for the Mexican League overlaps with the start of the Mexican Pacific League by over two months. The Mexican League used to end by mid September, but it can now stretch into the 1st week of December. Meanwhile, the Mexican Pacific League starts preseason camps in mid September, with the season running from the first week of October to the end of December. The postseason starts in January and ends before the Caribbean Series begins.

Mr. Javier Salinas, an executive that has held several positions and revolutionized the Mexican soccer league was hired over a year ago by the Mexican League. His main plan was the implementation of the double calendar system. However, Major League Baseball intervened and clarified to the two Mexican leagues that the summer league had to be limited to March 15th to September 30th, and the winter league to October 1st to February 9th. When will the players rest, as it's customary to play in both leagues? Will their health and arms be able to take such work?

So besides the turmoil, and MLB confirming that either league could develop and sell Mexican talent to MLB clubs, as long as those players are on the 40 man roster of the Mexican team at the time, nothing else is clear.

Getting Cut

By Merritt Clifton

I never actually played in a regular season professional baseball game, but did have the experience of getting cut by pro teams a couple of times after tryouts, in what proved, long afterward, to have been a useful, helpful, & inspirational manner.

The first time, in 1969, with the Lodi Crushers of the Oakland Athletics farm system, I didn't really expect to be offered a contract on the spot, because I was 15, passing for 18, & all I really wanted was to make enough of an impression to be put on the scouting list.

I did -- but the next spring, 1970, the Athletics scouts & other scouts at the tryout camp I attended passed me over & eventually signed three other guys who were at the tryout. I was rated seventh out of about 120 prospects.

That was a big disappointment, but all three of the guys

who were signed--Rupert Jones, Claudell Washington, and Glenn Burke--made the big leagues. A fourth guy, Steve Odom, became a pro football star, & no one else ahead of me got a contract offer.

One of the scouts who passed me over was Reno DeBenedetti, a longtime minor leaguer then working for the Reds, who is remembered now mainly as a lifelong friend of Joe DiMaggio. In 1973 I tried out with the Lodi Lions, as the team had been re-named, & DeBenedetti was the head scout. The team was by then a cooperatively managed farm club for the Reds, Orioles, and Nishitsu Lions of the Japanese major leagues.

DeBenedetti lined us all up on the bench before making his cuts, & said, "I want every one of you men to remember that except for a few really obvious standouts like Joe DiMaggio, who are great at every level, the real test of how far a ballplayer goes is how often he is willing to be cut. Almost every professional baseball player gets cut or demoted at least once a year. I got cut or demoted about

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twice a year, but I played professional baseball for a very long time.

"I have a list here of what type of ballplayers the Reds, Orioles, & Lions are looking for today," DeBenedetti continued, "and I'm only allowed to sign one of the 30 of you. The guy I'm going to sign is the guy who best fits the description of who they need to complete the Lodi Lions team this spring. That doesn't mean he's the best ballplayer."

Then he looked right at me & said, "I've cut some of you before. I may cut some of you again. That doesn't mean a goddamned thing today, except that I can only sign one guy. I don't want any man I cut to think it means he can't play ball at the professional level. I want you all, if you want to play ball, to keep on playing and going to tryouts and getting cut, because as long as you're good enough to get to tryouts, you're good enough to play for somebody."

The guy he signed, catcher Dave Skaggs, made the big leagues.

In 1974 I tried out again, with a much better team, the Portland Mavericks, perennial champions of the Northwest League. They had invited 225 men to camp, to fill just 15 open spots on their roster. About half of them had already played professional ball.

The manager, Frank Peters, gathered us all together much as DeBenedetti had. "I know what it's like," he began, "to go to spring training and try to make a nearly full roster when I don't even have a realistic chance. I know what it's like to get cut, because I got cut over and over again. I never got to play in the major leagues, but I learned what it's like to get cut by major league teams and at every level of baseball.

"I'm going to have to cut 215 of you. Every one of you was invited here because we think you can play professional baseball. Every one of you can do something as well or better than any player we're going to keep. We're probably going to make mistakes. In the next few days, we're going to cut at least a couple of dozen players who could help some team in this league. We'll give you a list of teams who need help, and maybe you can arrange your own tryouts.

"All that getting cut means," Peters said, "is we don't think you fill the roles we have open for 15 players on this team."

At the end of the week-long tryout camp, Peters was down to 26 players, & I was one of the two guys who were in contention for the last open job. We both played well, but I was the guy who got cut.

What Peters said then was, "You're an intelligent guy. Whether you succeed in baseball or not, you're going to succeed in life. I'm keeping a guy who's going to make it in baseball or be out chopping cotton."

They invited me back to camp in 1975, but I had decided to pursue other interests in graduate school & didn't go. Probably I should have, but who knows?

What I do know is that DeBenedetti and Peters were both right that getting cut doesn't mean shit. What matters is taking the risk of setbacks & disappointments to ultimately succeed.

One more note about DeBenedetti. Turns out he really loved dogs & cats. Late in life he learned what I was doing, as a career journalist working mostly on the animal beat, & according to a mutual acquaintance boasted that by repeatedly cutting my stupid ass, he'd made sure I went on to do something really useful, instead of just farting around playing baseball.

Up and Coming MiLB Executive – Craig Warzecha

By Greg Prescott

I'm heading into my fourth season blogging about Minor League Baseball, visting stadiums and ocaasionally giving a little history about the stadiums. My general rule is not to visit the same team or stadium more than once, but rules (like diets) are made to be broken. There's one place in Florida that I keep going back to for both spring training and minor league action, and in my humble opinoin, it's THE best place to catch a game. And now that I know someone in senior management, I have one more excuse to go back!

When I resurrected this blog in early 2015 (two websites ago!), one of the first places I blogged about was McKechnie Field (now LECOM Park). Hey, old habits never die. Growing up in Florida, I always knew it as McKechnie Field, but I guess I should start calling it LECOM Park. When I did my end of season wrap up, McKechnie Field was mentioned as my best celebrity sighting, and the very knowledgable fans and the game that was going on in the bleachers. I've been back a couple of times as just a fan, as it's a fantastic place to see a game! Also mentioned in that "best of" post was "the best on field experience" with the Clearwater Threshers. That's where I first met Craig Warzecha, and where our story begins.

In 2015, Craig was working for the Clearwater Threshers, the high A affiliate of the Philadelphia Phillies. Craig was the Sales and Marking/Promotions& Community Relations Assistant. I ran into him before the game, and after telling him I did a blog about going to various MiLB stadiums, I recruited myself for an on field game. While the results of that game are forgettable, meeting Craig was definitely unforgettable!

Craig has been working in minor league baseball since 2012, starting as ticket sales assistant for the Lakewood

Blue Claws, then joined the Threshers in 2011. Along the way, he also interned at MiLB's headquarters in St. Petersburg, and then moved to the Bradenton Marauders in late 2015 as an Account Manager for ticket sales. In early 2017, he was promoted to Assistant GM for the Marauders. I had been keeping tabs on Craig over the years (ok, stalking via LinkedIn), and this spring, I met up with him in Bradenton to talk a little baseball and find out what it's like to be an Assistant GM for one of my favorite minor league teams!

Craig, you are heading into your second season as Assistant GM, how was your first year? Had to be a big step up from your previous roles?

It's been a great experience. My role is really ticket sales focused, and there's a lot of off season planning. When the Marauders are on the road, it's pretty much an 8 to 5 kind of job, but we participate in a lot of community events. We are constantly trying to keep our database of fans up to date, and focus a lot on group events.

How early did this season actually start for you?

We really only had a few days off after the end of the 2017 season.

Especially with the hurricane (Irma), we had to prepare for that. Fortunately, we had no real damage from that. Just a little more rushed to get ready. Then we went right into group planning, and brainstorming later in September.

You went from a ticket sales person for Lakewood, to now being the Asst. GM for the Marauders, that's quite a move up!

Yeah, this is my 8th spring training overall, I am actually starting to feel old! Haha. I started in Lakewood over the summer break, then moved to the Threshers while I was at the University of Tampa. I was constantly asking questions, like how can I learn from this, how can I help the club?

What was your internship like with Minor League Baseball? One of my favorite follows from MiLB is Ben Hill!



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It was in their headquarters up in St. Petersburg, and was awesome. I was focused on promo seminars, and the winter meetings and other big events. There was a lot of planning involved in those. Ben Hill is really cool, I really like him!

Speaking of promotions, what's big on your promotions list for this year? Any big bobblehead nights?

We aren't a big bobblehead team, not much of a big impact for us. We did offer a bobblehead for season ticket buyers a couple of years ago, but that's about it. We like to focus more on community events. We've got quite a few events that bring people out, like our fireworks, faith nights, pride night, Star Wars night, and first responder nights.

OK, one of the perks of working for a minor league team has to be free popcorn, right?

Haha, yeah, we have some great vendors here at the park!

The stadiums in Florida, for the most part, are MLB caliber, you have to feel lucky about working in great environments like that.

It's great working here in such close proximity to all the parks. We get to go to a lot of different parks for our road games, it's great team building, and to see what other teams do.

Being so close to other teams in the Florida State League, is it a pretty close knit group with other management teams?

Oh for sure, there's a lot of continuity among the teams, but always seems to be an influx of new people. We all work well together to help each other out. We also do team building among other teams. We previously held an FSL intern bootcamp, now it's called an assistant's camp, where we bring in all the assistants in where we share ideas and collaborate on ideas, etc.

I couldn't thank Craig enough for sitting down with me to chat for a while. He's truly a class act! And a great salesman! While not originally on my schedule of spring training games on my trip, I then purchased a ticket for the Pirates for later in the week, and then bought a Marauders cap which I proudly wore that Saturday!

Thanks so much to Craig and the Marauders organization for allowing me to sit down with him for a few minutes. Craig is a class act, and certainly paid his dues working his way up in the organization. I can't wait to make it to another Marauders game this summer, and looking forward to see Craig again. And longer term, I am excited to see how far he makes it up the organization. I hope to say one day, "I knew him when he let me make a fool of myself on the field trying to throw the ball at a minor league game!"