

Society for American Baseball Research

BIBLIOGRAPHY COMMITTEE

NEWSLETTER

April 1999 (99-2)

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Comments from the Chair

Andy McCue

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First, I'd like to welcome Alain Usereau (6700 Beaulac #12, Brussard, Quebec, Canada J4Z 2K6; e-mail ausereau@rds.ca) to the Committee.

My congratulations to Ted Hathaway and all the other volunteers on our Research in Baseball Index (RBI) project. During the past quarter, the number of articles, books, and book sections cataloged by RBI went over 100,000! This is an increasingly significant asset for all baseball researchers, and Ted's efforts to market the database are producing income for SABR. I'd like to thank again those Committee members who have participated in RBI, as it is totally a volunteer effort and our Committee's core project. See below for Ted's much fuller report on RBI.

We have our first response for linking our Book Indexing Project (creating indexes for baseball books published without them) to the publishing world. Committee member Dan Ross, director of the Univ. of Nebraska Press, reports that Bison Books will reissue two Roger Kahn books—*A Season in the Sun* (1977) and *Good Enough to Dream* (1985)—in Spring 2000. Dan and I would like to find a Committee member interested in creating indexes for these two books by Sept. 30. The Committee member, and the Committee, will receive credit for the index; the Committee member will also receive two free copies of the reprint. The indexes would be fairly straightforward listings of proper names. In addition, Kahn will prepare afterwords (10 typed pages) for both books, and these will have to be indexed within a relatively short period of time. Interested Committee members should contact me as soon as possible so that final arrangements can be made with Dan.

Speaking of indexes, newsletter editor Skip McAfee has already produced three indexes this year: *Birth of a Fan* (1993), edited by Ron Fimrite; *My Life as a Fan* (1993), by Wilfrid Sheed; and *The Gashouse Gang and a Couple of Other Guys* (1945), by J. Roy Stockton. Dick Miller completed an index to "Commy": *The Life of Charles A. Comiskey* (1919), by Gustav W. Axelsson. These indexes have been placed with Len Levin's SABR Research Library.

Indexes in preparation include: Arthur Bartlett's *Baseball and Mr. Spalding* (1951), by Dick Miller; and Daniel M. Pearson's *Baseball in 1889: Players vs. Owners* (1993), by Tom Hetrick.

In addition to the first quarter edition of *Current Baseball Publications* included with this issue of the newsletter, Rich Arpi has completed the full year 1998 version of *CBP*, which combines all four quarterly editions, with corrections and additional information. To receive a full year edition, send me \$3 along with your address.

Paul Wendt sends along a note that there is an e-mail mailing list for the history of librarianship: H-HistBibl. More information is available at www.h-net.msu.edu.

Baseball book publishing appears to be reviving in the wake of the 1998 season and the McGwire-Sosa hullabaloo. RBI has already identified 189 baseball books that have been, or are to be, published this year. That's as of April 3. The Yankees championship and the McGwire-Sosa accomplishments have inspired several quick hits and the number of juveniles seems to be up quite a bit as well.

Research in Baseball Index (RBI)

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100,000+ records!! The century mark has been reached by the indexers of RBI! First proposed in this newsletter exactly nine years ago (when I was a wee lad) and then starting its growth in Fall 1992, RBI has grown to be the largest repository of information on baseball literature. While we still have "a long way to go" (as you are doubtless weary of hearing), I believe that we can rightfully claim now to be "The Readers Guide to Baseball Literature" (apologies to the H.W. Wilson Co.).

Before reviewing statistics, I'd like once again to express my deep gratitude to **Brad Sullivan** for his firm commitment to this project. We would not be where we are without him. Brad has cataloged more than 35,000 articles or *one-third* of the RBI database. **Bernie Esser** has given us invaluable access to his enormous collection of baseball books, while **Joe Murphy** has indexed hundreds of book sections and the huge body of SABR publications. **Tim Cashion**, one of our co-directors, first indexed thousands of records from *USA Today Baseball Weekly*, but has also indexed several other publications while providing invaluable advice on the structure and philosophy of the RBI database.

I've never mentioned either **Andy McCue** or myself much in the development of this database because it has always been our project and we've mainly been interested in recognizing the great work of our volunteers; but after **Frank Phelps** first endorsed the project early in 1990 (thank you, Frank), Andy was the first Bibliography Committee member to step forward to work on the project. Andy and I have worked together on creating and determining the scope and structure of the database, the cataloging procedures, and the bibliographic coding and subject headings schemes. We have worked together on selling the project to the SABR Board of Directors and the SABR membership, attracting the many volunteers who have worked on the project over the years, and determining the future course of the database as a publicly accessible product. This project has been as much Andy's as mine and I know it wouldn't have even gotten off the ground, much less progressed as far as it has, without him. Thank you, Andy.

This quarter, nearly 5000 records were added to the Articles database. Once again, the wonderful Brad Sullivan contributed more than 3800 records. David Marasco continued his work on *International Baseball Rundown*, contributing more than 200 indexed articles, while Bob Boynton continued his work on current issues of *Sports Illustrated*, adding another 70 records. Thank you all for your fine work and commitment to the RBI project. Publications of note cataloged this quarter include:

American Legion (weekly & monthly; 1919, 1935-1941): 73 records [now completed: 1919-1941; 159 records]
Baseball Magazine (1911-1912): 187 records [now completed: 1908-1912; 1322 records]
Boston Baseball (1996): 25 records [now completed: 1995-1996, 298 records]
Ebony (1953-1996): 195 records (Brad Sullivan) [now completed: 1946-1997; 307 records]

Inside Sports (1994–1998): 263 records [now completed: 1991–1998; 462 records]
International Baseball Rundown (1997–1998): 207 records
 (David Marasco) [now completed: 1994–1998; 720 records]
Newsweek (1960): 31 records [now completed: 1934–1960; 997 records]
Nine (1999): 25 records (Andy McCue) [now completed: 1992–1999; 370 records]
Reds Report (1993): 55 records [now completed: 1993–1994; 319 records]
Sport (1992–1996): 331 records (Brad Sullivan) [now completed: 1962–1968, 1972–1996; 3363 records]
Sports Illustrated (1998–1999): 70 records (Bob Boynton) [now completed: 1954–1971, 1981–1983, 1991–1993, 1998–1999; 4560 records]
The Sporting News (1960–1961): (Brad Sullivan) [now completed: 1960–1961, 1977–1985; 24,158 records!!]
Stars & Stripes (1918–1919): 108 records
Time (1951–1953): 57 records (Brad Sullivan) [now completed: 1923–1953; 585 records]

Inside Sports apparently went belly-up late last year, having been combined with *Sport*. This means we have a completed run of *Inside Sports* cataloged from 1991 to 1998. *Inside Sports* started in 1982 and, as I have found, it is rather difficult to find, especially from the 1980s. Is anyone aware of any holdings of those early years that are readily available? Although this was basically a Joe Six Pack mag with a glitzy format and inevitable late-winter girly spread, it did attract many quality articles from writers such as John Feinstein, Thomas Boswell, Gerry Fraley, and Bill James.

Brad Sullivan has completed *Sport* magazine up through 1996, while Terry Sloope is nearing completion of the 1969–1971 issues, thereby giving a continuous run from 1962 through 1996. Again, however, the pre-1962 issues may be hard to come by. Is anyone aware of where we might be able to borrow issues to catalog?

RBI Statistics

| Level | Number | % change over last year |
|------------------------------------|---------|-------------------------|
| <i>Books</i> | | |
| 5 | 4,030 | 17.8% |
| 4 | 1,873 | 28.4% |
| Other | 10,125 | -6.0% |
| Total | 16,028 | 2.4% |
| <i>Book Sections</i> | | |
| 5 | 8,506 | 11.1% |
| 4 | 2,640 | 48.1% |
| Other | 183 | 221.1% |
| Total | 11,329 | 19.3% |
| <i>Magazine/newspaper articles</i> | | |
| 5 | 65,536 | 44.0% |
| 4 | 1,319 | 1.9% |
| Other | 7,389 | 5.6% |
| Total | 74,244 | 38.0% |
| <i>Total</i> | | |
| 5 | 78,072 | 38.0% |
| 4 | 5,832 | 28.6% |
| Other | 17,697 | -0.7% |
| Total | 101,601 | 28.7% |

Bibliography Committee's New Web Pages

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We have reworked all of our Committee's web pages and located them with a different service provider: MicroCom. The main Bibliography Committee web page is now at:

<http://www.baldeagle.com/bibcomm>

This includes the Committee's newsletter and descriptions of our current and ongoing projects and publications. It will also take you to all of our additional pages, but for convenience, they are listed below:

<http://www.baldeagle.com/bibcomm/rbi.htm>—RBI main page
<http://www.baldeagle.com/bibcomm/rbicdrom.htm>—purchase the RBI database
<http://www.baldeagle.com/bibcomm/dataserv.htm>—Search RBI
<http://www.baldeagle.com/bibcomm/cbp.htm>—*Current Baseball Publications*
<http://www.baldeagle.com/bibcomm/reviews.htm>—Bibliography Committee reviews

The page listed last—Bibliography Committee reviews—is a brand new one: a directory to the more than 60 book reviews that have appeared in the Committee newsletter during the past six years in **full text!** This includes many reviews by Terry Smith, Ron Kaplan, and other Committee members. Be sure to look it over: it is a fine way for us to make our efforts better known to the public at large, as well as provide a handy listing of book reviews.

Tim Cashion has generously provided web space and web services for our pages in the past through the Univ. of Chicago. David Pietrusza has also assisted us in using the old www.sabr.org site for our pages. My thanks to both for their time and hard work.

Baseball Articles in Mainstream Publications: 1890–1906 Dark Years for Baseball?

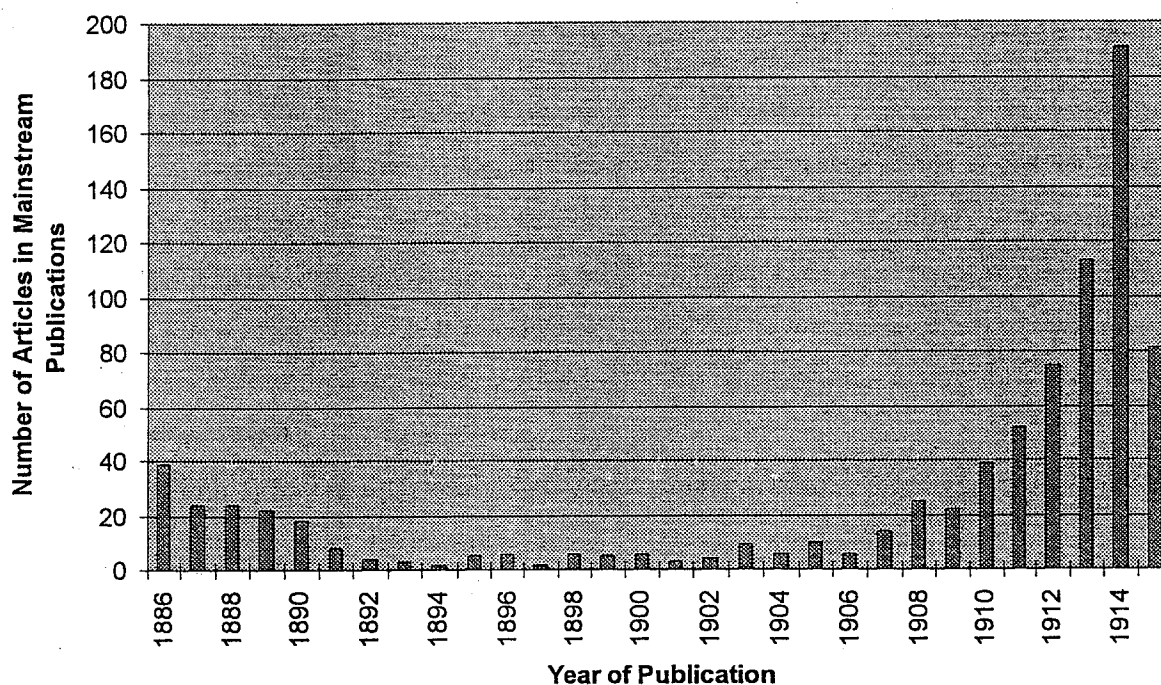
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Cataloging for RBI over the years has not only given me the opportunity to peruse interesting baseball literature, but also to see the coming and going of different issues in the game, the different journalistic styles over the years, and, indeed, the ebb and flow of overall interest in the game. I have cataloged hundreds of different magazines, journals, and newspapers from today's issue of the local paper to *The Spirit of the Times*, but I have long been struck by the dearth of coverage afforded baseball in mainstream publications during the 1890s and early 1900s. By "mainstream", I mean non-baseball, non-local publications usually written for a national audience (examples would be *Harper's Weekly*, *Collier's*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Outing*, and *Everybody's Magazine*).

While the rise of professionalism soured some publications on baseball (e.g., *The Spirit of the Times* pretty much dropped baseball coverage by the mid-1870s), many national weeklies and monthlies continued to carry articles on "the national game" right through the 1880s. General sports magazines (such as *Outing*) and even children's magazines (such as *St. Nicholas*) also offered coverage of the contemporary game as well as instructionals on playing the game.

1890-1906: Dark Years for Baseball?



By 1890, however, the professional game mysteriously disappears from the pages of most of these publications. Even the Players League conflict is given little notice. Most of what appears in mainstream publications during the 1890s and early 1900s is confined to college and amateur ball, with only occasional references to the professional game. Even after the turn of the century, it is not until about 1907 that coverage begins to pick up again, increasing dramatically thereafter.

Despite this dramatic reduction in coverage, I found little explanation for the reason. Laments over professionalism, gambling, Sunday baseball, college summer baseball, and the like have appeared from time to time before, during, and after this period. I had been unable to find any wholesale condemnation to confirm my suspicion that the professional game had fallen out of favor with the mainstream press—until now. While cataloging a 4 April 1899 issue of *Collier's* (which typically contained articles *only* on the college game at that time), I found the following article by Walter Camp:

Our National Game—Save the Mark!

Several years ago, before it became the common lot of the baseball umpire to be assaulted and taken from the grounds under the escort of the police, it is said that a man by the name of Hawes, who had been at one time change catcher for the Bostons, was assigned by the secretary of the League, Mr. Young, to umpire a game between the Providence and Boston nines on the Boston ball grounds. In the course of the game he made some decisions so adverse to the Bostons that it was only with difficulty and by the aid of a cab that he was finally rescued from the infuriated mob. This treatment was at that time so unusual, and made such an impression upon Mr. Hawes, that when Secretary Young advised him, a short time later, of his assignment to another Providence-Boston game in Boston he replied by the following telegraphic dispatch: "I am no hog; I know when I have had enough."

But now every umpire expects more or less such experiences. It has come to be evidently a part of the work for which he is paid. But what does it signify in relation to the sport of baseball? And what means all this rottenness with which our papers are crammed whenever the conduct of this once popular pastime is named? Here is the sport that has been known as America's National Game being dragged through the mire until one feels that there can hardly be a clean bit left of it. And all to what purpose? Even those who prostitute it to their inordinate desires for power and gain have found but unsatisfactory return and eventual failure close at hand. Here was a sport which at one time attracted thousands of the better class as spectators and as many more in an amateur way as players, and which seemed for a time free from the black-leg and rowdy, and with something in it of the pure, clean outdoor life.

In the last two or three seasons it has gone from bad to worse. Rowdy ball playing, abuse of umpires, profanity, and finally pandemonium among spectators, threats, offers of violence, and even actual assaults have become an acknowledged accompaniment of this former national game.

Whatever side one may take in the various controversies matters little when affairs reach such a pass that a man, in resigning from the Board of Discipline, can be quoted as saying: "If the League wants riot and disorder why don't the club owners come out openly and say so?" Men in the ownership class are accused of all sorts of crimes, and the general smoke stirred shows that there is no need to look for the fire.

And yet the game has been one, even up to the present day, where the charge that has attended professional sport of other kinds—namely, that of dishonesty—has seldom found lodgement. There have been some cases on record of selling the results, but those cases have been so few as to make it all the more evident that in this respect the

sport has no doubtful record.

The bad odor which attends the professional game has had its material effect upon the game in amateur hands, and there is a distinct loss of interest noticeable in the amateur pursuit of the sport. It has become less the fashion even at our universities, and while the Commencement Day games still draw the usual crowd, the smaller games lack that patronage which they used to secure, and the number of men taking an active part in the second nines is growing less every year.

All this means that without reform, and serious reform, not reform on paper, the National Game of America is going to disappear, or rather, become lost in the limbo of rowdyism. If the Englishman can preserve his cricket and football through the trials of and by the side of professionalism, it would seem possible that the American game might yet be saved from its impending doom by the force of administrative ability when that ability has been set to work with clean hands. But the cleansing must come first, and the cleansing must be thorough!

This blistering condemnation cannot be taken lightly. Camp was no reactionary nor dreamer about the amateur game (as late as the 1920s, Camp was still writing enthusiastically about the professional game and defending the home-run hitting style and outlandish behavior of the controversial Babe Ruth). While one must be cautious to draw conclusions from a single article, I believe this does help to explain the "article dearth" of this period and demonstrate that the "rough and tumble" 1890s was an ugly and shameful period of violence among players and fans alike, institutionalized umpire baiting, and owner corruption.

Book Review

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BATTING: ONE THOUSAND EXPERT OPINIONS ON EVERY CONCEIVABLE ANGLE OF BATTING SCIENCE
Frank C. Lane. New York: The Baseball Magazine, 1925. 218p.

You can't buy this book for a \$1 anymore. When I called around to book dealers a year or so ago, inquiring about the availability of *Batting*, I found that a copy sold for between \$50 and \$60, when one was available. It's a shame it isn't more readily available, because it's an unusual, fascinating, and useful book.

The same might be said of its author, F.C. Lane, who edited *The Baseball Magazine* for more than 25 years and, as a writer, specialized in interviews, biographical sketches, and statistical analysis. As an example of the last, he disbelieved Hugh Fullerton's claim that the 1919 World Series had been fixed, not on the grounds of the game's purity, but because the statistical evidence suggested that the two leagues were pretty evenly balanced. Lane felt Fullerton's claim was a result of the myth of American League superiority. In fact, the Black Sox scandal, as well as consequent ones, is a definite presence in *Batting*. Shoeless Joe Jackson, often cited and discussed in the book, appears as "the unfortunate Joe Jackson" (p.16). Ed Cicotte is referred to as "that great pitcher with a blackened reputation" (p.18). And Joe Gedeon is described as "one of the best hit and run men in baseball before he was banished from the game as a melancholy aftermath of the Black Sox scandal" (p.87). Finally, Lane refers to Shufflin' Phil Douglas as "the unfortunate Phil Douglas" (p.127).

Lane described *Batting* as "the essence of thousands of interviews". He wanted readers to know that in this case the so-called author was simply an objective scientific observer, assembling data from as many sources as possible. "The Editor" of this book, as

Lane called himself, "has expressed no opinion. He has merely painstakingly collected and contrasted a vast array of opinions from all the acknowledged experts of batting that baseball has produced in fifteen years." (p.3). Fifteen years was exactly the amount of time Lane had spent editing *The Baseball Magazine*, interviewing ballplayers both on the job and in their homes.

Of course, Lane wasn't an objective, scientific observer. He had opinions of his own about batting, and now and then they showed through the many quotations from players who comprise the bulk of this book. Lane subscribes to a progressive view of baseball in which the game is constantly improving (p.5):

"Keen observers of batting ... will admit that certain features have improved. The bunt, for example, was an offshoot of legitimate batting, that has now fixed its place in the club offensive. The hit and run play has also developed greatly, and place hitting, the crowning achievement of the batter's skill, has been more evident in later seasons than it was before the dawn of the present century."

Lane later defined "place hitting" as "the ability to direct the course of the batted ball at will to some point on the playing field where it will fall out of reach of the waiting fielder" and characterized it as "this most difficult of batting arts" (p.72). And earlier he had cited Willie Keeler's "pointed epigram" (p.8): "Hit 'em where they ain't." Lane also includes the art of bunting as one of the essential dimensions of batting: "there would be more great hitters in baseball if the bunt were better developed" (p.80). And he underlines his progressive sense of the development of batting by adding "the bunt marks a distinct advantage in batting science over the old days of pure slugging" (p.81).

Alas, Lane was writing in the new days of pure slugging; since 1919, Babe Ruth had been setting new home run records and many lesser hitters had been emulating his batting style. Lane quotes Ruth only ten times in the book, while he cites Ty Cobb (the master of place hitting) 50 times. On the other hand, players cited by Lane speak of the two players equally often. Otherwise, Lane is silent on the resurgence of slugging, mentioning only that "slugging has not received the credit it deserves in the playing records" (p.63). The chapter on slugging ("The Secret of Heavy Hitting") is the longest in the book (p.62-71), so the players themselves have a great deal to say about it.

Slugging, though, for Lane, was not scientific; and he regarded baseball as "an exact science" (p.86). Comments on scientific hitting, on the team as a machine, and on players as specialists in technical areas can be found throughout the book. Lane at one point imagines himself as an experimental scientist, measuring the speed of the bat as it meets the ball (p.43). But what Lane achieves in *Batting* is by no means a scientific tract; instead, it is a kind of medley of players' voices, orchestrated by Lane himself. The reader is treated to the opinions not just of batters but of pitchers, umpires, managers, owners, and miscellaneous others, all culled from 15 years of Lane's interviewing. And some of the voices are quite distinctive.

Jack Bentley, for instance, describes his career by saying "I began too early at the top" (p.201). Bentley's batting stance proved fascinating to Lane, who characterized it as "one of the oddest and most faulty apparent stances on record" (p.24-25). Lane describes Bentley's stance as follows (p.36): "As the pitcher released the ball, Bentley would step back, raise himself on one foot, much the same as a shot putter would do, and lunge forward. When he met the ball he was literally standing on one leg." Lane also comments extensively on Heinie Groh, whom he calls "one of the most scientific hitters who ever lived" (p.102). Both Groh's bat and his batting stance receive attention (p.30, 33). But other readers will find their own points of fascination. Whether you pay a buck for it or \$60, *Batting* remains priceless.

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