

Society for American Baseball Research



MINOR LEAGUE RESEARCH NEWSLETTER

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The Empire State Baseball

League opened its inaugural season as an unofficial four-team rookie league. The principal owners of the league are Jay Acton, Eric Margenau, Ann Margenau, and Steve Cooper. There are four more owners. Apparently all four teams are owned jointly much like the "syndicate league" of the 1890's. The players must have exhausted their college eligibility.

The season will be played at one location, the Hofstra University field. All players will receive \$350 a month. The 80 players are residing in the Hofstra campus dorms.

The Diggers are coached by George Scott, the former major leaguer. The Reapers manager is Bernardo Leonard, brother of the Giant's Jeffrey Leonard. Brian Flood, Curtis' brother, coaches the Whalers. Former major leaguer, Paul Blair coaches the Sounds. Yes all of the managers are black.

Acton, who along with Eric Margenau own two other organized minor league franchises, believes that the level of play is equal to that of the NY-Penn rookie league. Let us hope the league is keeping complete stats.

Are these stats to be considered as those of the independent leagues of old?

The Salt Lake City Trappers of the Pioneer League recently won 29 games in a row. This string set a new consecutive win record in organized ball. The old record of 28 was held jointly by the 1902 Corsicana, a Texas League team, and the 1921 Baltimore Orioles of the International League.

Does anyone have documentation of any other streaks?

In our first newsletter we asked our fellow researchers to address the issue of the all time batting average in organized ball. *John Spalding* responded with "20th Century Minor League Batting Champions" which will appear, with a few additions from *Bob Hoie*, in the 1987 SABR Journal. The Research Journal is due out in August.

Vern Luse expressed this view point on the subject:

"I firmly believe that such elements as playing rules and conditions, (balls, gloves, fence distances, etc.) should be ignored. After all, all the other players in a particular league had an equal opportunity to do as well as a Kreig, or an Aikens or whoever proves to be the champion. However, I caution that accepting of any league prior to 1883 might just give us a non-legitimate champion because of the few number of games played. The only other season I would exclude would be 1887, the year of the "Phantom base-hit"."

Bob Lemke responded to Bob Hoie's suggestion of minor leaguers who later chose another sport. "Minor Leaguers Who Chose the Gridiron" appeared in a recent "Bleacher Bum" column in Sports Collectors Digest.

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Bob Davids, Bob McConnell and *Bob Hoie* have compiled a list of over 250 prospective players who could be included in Minor League Stars III. We will be printing the list in an upcoming newsletter. We look forward to your observations and suggestions.

Bob McConnell, a major contributor to the Minor League Stars, is also concentrating on minor league classifications. He has compiled a year-by-year list of every minor league and its classifications. Bob's research will be presented in upcoming newsletters.

John Pardon reports that the informal minor league committee meeting drew eight members at the National Convention. We now have over 100 members receiving the minor league newsletter.

Jim Brown's "Waltzing Across Texas: Five Texas League Parks is Five Nights" appeared in the recent ball-parks newsletter.

Bill O'Neal's "History of the Texas League, 1888-1987" is available through the SABR office in Kansas City. The book is priced at \$15 ppd.

Please note the weekly presentation of Class AA and AAA leaders in the *USA Today*, courtesy of the Elias Sports people. This will be a great help in our work.

Minor League committee member, *Rex Stucker*, who is 91 years of age, has been in poor health of late. Rex's involvement with organized baseball began with Sioux Falls in the 1921 Dakota League. His independent teams in Sioux City and Sioux Falls in the late 1920's and 30's were frequent opponents of the Kansas City Monarchs. He served as an owner in and vice-president of the Nebraska State League in the mid 1930's. He was one of the last independent owners in the Northern League when he retired from minor league ownership after the 1946 season. Rex's address is:

2020 Neptune Way
Sacramento CA. 95864

Phil Weintraub, who appeared in MLS I, died June 21, 1987 in Palm Springs, Ca.. He was 79.

Articles on the minor leagues that have appeared in SABR publications since the beginning of the organization have been added to our research database. We have had several submissions to date. We will print and have available the listing when the information becomes more complete.

Be sure yours is in soon so it can be included in the listing.

This issue features the first of many of Vern Luse's summaries of minor leagues.

The 1897 Red River Valley League

Opened May 26, Disbanded July 31.

The Red River Valley had first had organized league competition in the early 1890's, although the league should then have been defined as semi-professional because of the amateur, local players who filled out the core of true professional players. In late 1896, "Cap" Anson, manager of Chicago's Colts, and Walter Wilmot, manager of Minneapolis' champion Western League Millers, came up with the idea of supporting an entire league which would serve as a feeder for their two teams. In the free-wheeling 1890's, there were no rules against an owner being financially involved with more than one team in a league, so the idea of a wholly-owned league was just a logical extension of "syndicate" baseball then prevalent in the National League.

Thus, a league was organized in the spring of 1897, with Chauncey Wheeler (Fargo) President, Senator W.A. Gordon (Grand Forks) Treasurer, and City Recorder James A. Flynn (Moorhead) Secretary. In addition to Fargo, Grand Forks and Moorhead, Wahpeton ND and Breckenridge Minnesota supported a "Twin City" team, with a nickname of - what else - the Twins.

Newspaper support for the league

was not lacking; daily newspapers provided extended coverage of league meetings, daily notes columns and, frequently, acerbic characterizations of the players and teams of the league.

Unfortunately, Wahpeton had only a weekly newspaper which accounts for the major voids of information regarding specific games.

Foreshadowing the Northern League of the next decade, one scheduled game between Moorhead and Grand Forks was played at Winnipeg on July 23. As the attendance at Wahpeton waned in July, League games were played in Crookston. Finally, the league decided to split the season, effective July 31, and start a new season with the Twins at a new location, presumably Crookston. However, the manager of the team was unable to drum up backing, and disbanded the team. Although Fargo and Moorhead had started the second season, the records for these games are not included in these compilations.

Following this article there is a listing of the four teams players, their positions and the span of time spent with their respective teams.

The Red River Valley League continued as an independent league. In 1901 a star pitcher was George Ball, a black. Happy Chandler mentioned his involvement in a 20th century continuation of the league in a recent Sports Illustrated.

Fargo - 1 missing box vs Wahpeton

	<u>Position</u>	<u>Span</u>
Banning, John	OF	5/26,27
Bergstrom,	OF	7/1,2
Breur,	OF	7/24,26
Brown, Charles J.	1B/C	5/26-7/31
French, James	OF	6/12
Green,	OF	6/30-7/22
Hanson,	OF	7/26
Hartman,	C/1,2B/SS/OF	5/26-7/31
Haverty,	C	6/11
Hayes,	C/OF	7/22-7/31
Hessler,	OF/SS	5/28,29
Hickey,	SS/OF/P	6/4-6/25
Hill, Arthur	C/OF	5/26-6/12
Hopkins, J	OF	6/15-7/31
Hornsby,	OF	5/26-5/29
Howe, Harry	OF	6/4-6/12
Jahnke, Charles	OF	5/26-6/28
Keas, George B.	3B	6/24-7/31
Lyons, Arthur	3B	5/26-5/29
McDonald, John	3B/SS/OF	5/26-6/28
Muenche, August	P/OF	6/4-7/30
Murphy John	OF/SS/P	6/15-7/23
Peterson, Oscar	P/OF	5/26-7/29
Phillippi, C	P/OF	6/23-7/16
Reilly, "Josh"	2B	6/30-7/31
Richardson,	C	6/11
Roberts, Lee	P/1B/3B	5/26-6/12
Russell	3B	6/4,5
Ryan,	C	7/28-30
Schumansky,	P/OF	5/26-6/11
Steele, F	P/OF	6/21-7/31
Webb,	OF	6/7
Zink, W	SS/2B/OF/P	6/15-7/31

Notes: Keas of Debuque, also spelled Keyes; Phillippi probably "Deacon" Phillippe; "Hornsby" may well be "Red" Ormsby, in 1897 a student at St. Vincent's College in Atchison Ks.

Grand Forks - 4 missing boxes vs Wahpeton, 2 missing boxes vs Moorhead

	<u>Position</u>	<u>Span</u>
Adams, Sidney	OF/3B/P	5/26-7/31
Anderson, William	1B	7/10
Bouchert, Jacob	C	5/26-7/25
Bublitz, F	1,2B/OF/P	5/26-7/31
Henrahan, W	OF/3B	7/26-7/31
Harris, F	P	6/4,12
Hoar,	P/OF	7/4-7/25
Hutton, Charles J	P/OF/3B	5/26-7/31

Marshall, J	2,3B/C	5/26-7/31
McNeil,	C	7/27
Myers,	P	5/28
Porter,	2B	6/19-7/31
Quinn, Peter	C	6/28
Riddell, John	SS/P	5/26-7/31
Rudge, W	OF	5/26-6/24
Turner, John M	OF/1B	6/4-7/31
Walker, William H	P/OF/2B	5/26-7/31

Moorhead - 8 missing boxes vs Wahpeton
2 missing boxes vs Grand Forks

	<u>Position</u>	<u>Span</u>
Anderson, Andrew	2B	5/26-7/31
Brush, Robert	OF/P/2B	6/4-7/31
Burke, Thomas	OF	5/26-5/29
Claytor, Harry L	1B	5/26-7/31
Dea, Arthur	3B	5/26-7/31
Flannery, William	OF/2B	5/26-7/17
Jahnke, Charles	OF	7/2-7/31
Jess, Edward	P/OF	7/24-7/31
Keefe, Timothy	C	5/26-7/31
Kulp, Frank	P/OF	6/4-7/31
Lamont, Charles	P	7/5,11
Mullaney, L	P/OF	5/26-7/29
O'Reagan, Frank J	OF	5/26-7/10
Page, John	SS	5/26-7/31
Phyle, Joseph	P	5/28

Wahpeton/Breckenridge -

1 missing box vs Fargo

4 missing boxes vs Grand Forks

8 missing boxes vs Moorhead

	<u>Position</u>	<u>Span</u>
Berg, Oliver	P	5/26-7/31
Conrad, Jules	1,2B/OF	5/26-6/16
Conrad, R	P/OF	5/29-7/30
Corbett, Edward	1,2B/OF	5/26-7/31
Exstrom,	2B/OF	6/11-7/31
Fitch, F	SS	5/26-7/31
Goodman,	2B	6/18-6/26
Hart, James	1,3B/OF	5/26-7/31
Hill, Fred	P	6/30
Martin,	OF	5/24
Murphy, John	OF/2B	7/24-7/31
O'Donnell, H John	OF/P	5/26-7/31
Ploof, William	OF	5/26-7/31
Quinn, Peter	3B/OF	5/26-7/31
Schwartz, C	C	5/26-7/31