

# The Inside Game

*"Let's get this lumpy, licorice-stained ball rolling!"*

Vol. 1, No. 1

The Official Newsletter of SABR's Deadball Committee

April '00

From the Chairman

## I was Born 75 Years Late

by tom simon

On my seventh birthday, July 30, 1972, I attended my first major league baseball game, a doubleheader between the Cubs and Phillies at brand-new Veterans Stadium. Here are the things I remember most: 1) receiving a white cardboard "birthday box" containing a rubber baseball with the Phillies logo, a window decal of "Phil" and "Phillis" (two goofy-looking kids dressed in colonial garb), a pack of Tastykake butterscotch krimpets, and a cap with the old script "P" instead of the new "P" the players were wearing; 2) my name being flashed briefly on the electronic scoreboard (exciting!); 3) swirling winds wreaking havoc with hot dog wrappers on the Astroturf field; 4) Willie Montanez (really exciting!); and 5) my father introducing me to his twin traditions of "beating the traffic" and buying a sheet of cold, doughy pretzels for the ride home.

So now you know the baseball era I hail from. And despite its shortcomings, it's still my second-favorite era.

But one of the presents I received on that birthday was a copy of *The Baseball Encyclopedia*. Leafing through its pages, I discovered another world. Suddenly, the Phillies of Tommy Hutton, Don Money and Wayne Twitchell seemed mundane; my imagination had been captured by the Athletics of Stuffy McInnis, Home Run Baker and Chief Bender. Because my version of "All-Star Baseball" (the classic spinner game) featured the likes of Nate Colbert, Horace Clarke and Wilbur Wood, I used a protractor to fashion my own discs of Amos Strunk, Jack Barry and Rube Oldring. I traded Topps Hank Aaron and Carl Yastrzemski cards for a creased, pinholed T-206 of Jimmy Dygert.

cont. on page 2



Jimmy Dygert

Rule Changes were Responsible

## The End of An Era

by jamesfloto

Although some characteristics of the Deadball Era continued into the '20s, a series of events occurred in 1920 that give us a clear point of demarcation for the Long Ball Era. Babe Ruth hit a record 29 homers his last season in Boston, 1919. The following year, the new Yankee smashed an unheard of 54 long flies.

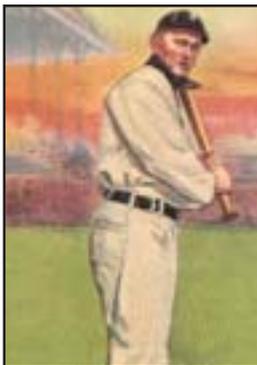
He had no company; the number two man in the A.L. was George Sisler with 19, while the Phillies' Cy Williams led the N.L. with 15. Ruth had more home runs than any entire team except the Phils, who cracked 64 circuit clouts. Nonetheless, total National League home run production rose from 207 in 1919 to 261 in 1920, while the American League jumped from 240 to 369. That trend continued throughout the decade. By 1929, National Leaguers whacked 754 home runs, American Leaguers 595.

The debate about the nature of the so-called lively ball continues to this day. In 1921, N.L. President John Heydler ordered an investigation and announced that there had been no change to the ball since 1911, when a new, cork-centered ball was introduced. Though the intention was to help the ball hold its shape better, a side effect was that the ball was indeed livelier. Offense skyrocketed that year, with Joe Jackson and Ty Cobb both hitting over .400 and the number of .300 hitters rising from 16 to 43. Players swore the ball was juiced.

A more reasonable place to look for the offensive onslaught of the '20s would be in the abolition of "trick" pitches and the introduction of more balls per game. Trying to regain their edge in the face of the 1911 hitters' binge, pitchers employed a cornucopia of ingenious ways to make a baseball harder to hit. There were various forms of viscosity, including the spit ball, vaseline and paraffin. Pitchers used emery boards and even files to disfigure the sad sphere. Certain nefarious moundsmen were even known to cut

open the seams and stuff the ball with coffee or dirt! If this wasn't enough to make life rough on the hitters, penurious owners insisted on using as few balls as possible, sometimes using a single ball for an entire game. Imagine a ball, lopsided from being repeatedly hit, covered with spit, dirt or file marks, in the afternoon shadows at the end of a game. No wonder managers used station-to-station tactics.

In the winter of 1919-20, the magnates decreed that trick pitches would henceforth be banned. Soon thereafter, the new



Ty Cobb, deadball prototype

law grandfathered 17 veteran spitball pitchers, allowing them to use their goey friend for the rest of their careers. The other pitchers now had to rely on their own abilities and the spitball group could not use the other banned pitches.

Offensive production rose significantly in 1920, but owners continued using as few balls per game as possible. Then, on August 16, a drizzly afternoon with low visibility, Yankees submariner

Carl Mays let loose a muddy ball that conked Cleveland's Ray Chapman on the head, resulting in the star shortstop's death. Owners were shamed into allowing umpires to break out clean balls throughout the game. Now, with shiny white baseballs, free of foreign substances (except for the legal spitballers), hitters' numbers climbed and would continue to climb throughout the 1920s.

The game would never be the same. Scouts scoured the bushes for the next Babe Ruth, looking for big, strapping lads rather than the lanky Cobb model. The Yankees were winning, and their attendance soared. Other clubs naturally followed suit. Strategy changed. Batting averages and home runs increased, stolen bases declined. The long distance hit was favored over the hit and run. Batting stances changed as sluggers adopted Ruth's swing-from-the-heels style. Even John McGraw, baptized in the old "inside" game, had to adopt the new strategies to compete.

Whether you prefer the old, more strategic style or the long-ball game, one thing is clear: the nature of Major League baseball changed forever in 1920.

From the Chairman, from page 1

In short, by the time I was eight I realized that I'd been born seventy-five years too late. And I've been trying to go back in time ever since.

Occasionally, thanks to the efforts of SABR members, I feel like I've almost succeeded. The first time was in sixth grade, when I discovered Larry Ritter's *The Glory of Their Times* on the library shelf. Since then it's happened while reading incredibly researched books like Burt Solomon's *Where They Ain't* or Mike Sowell's *The Pitch That Killed*, or studying the Charles Conlon photos in Neal McCabe's *Baseball's Golden Age* or the detailed ballpark diagrams in Marc Okkonen's *Baseball Memories 1900-1909*. Most recently, I received a huge thrill listening to the audio version of *Glory*.

I knew there had to be others like me, so on January 8 I sent out the call on SABR-L. My first response came from Brian Marshall on January 9. "I was reading your post on forming a Deadball Committee and thought it was one of the best ideas I've heard since I joined SABR." Then came an e-mail from David Jones ("1901-19 is my favorite era in baseball as well"), and one from Scott Flatow (whose e-mail address is DEADBALL). Within a week we had two-dozen prospective members; within a month we were past the half-century mark. The lumpy, licorice-stained deadball was picking up speed.

When we weren't making references to Dode Paskert or discussing the bizarre substances pitchers used to doctor the baseball (slippery elm, paraffin, talcum powder, even coffee beans!), we decided early on to put out a newsletter called *The Inside Game* and compile a collection of deadball-era biographies (under the leadership of Fred Ivor-Campbell, David Jones and Lyle Spatz). On January 23 I surveyed prospective members on their favorite players, teams and books of the era, and to solicit other ideas for the Committee. Martin Kohout volunteered to put together a Committee Directory and Steve Constantelos agreed to take charge of a booklet compiling deadball-era "awards," contemporary and retroactive. The latter project includes a survey to determine the Deadball Top 100. On April 17 the Deadball Committee received official recognition from SABR's Board of Directors.

I think Dode Paskert would be proud.

"Why I Now Have a Picture of Dode Paskert on the Wall Above My Desk"

## Dode Paskert is Baseball

by David Jones

Before I finally decided to ante up the membership fee and join SABR, I used to get my baseball fix by wandering into AOL baseball chat rooms and berating the locals with my theories on historical topics ranging from the Players League collapse of 1890 to the travesty of Tommy McCarthy in the Hall of Fame. Of course, most of the people in the room were preoccupied with ancient questions of their own, chief among them being "Sammy or Big Mac?" and "What shortstop do you like the most...Nomar, Jeter or ARod?"

One day, I ventured into the chat room and interrupted the lively banter with a question that went mostly unnoticed, but that underscored vast differences between my own interests and the typical baseball crowd. To give you an idea of the separation involved, I will recreate the basic progression of the chat room discussion that day:

NYFAN1999: Any Yankee Fans here  
Press 11  
ATL307752: 22  
NYMETS456: METS METS METS  
ATL307752: 22  
NYMETS456: M  
NYMETS456: E  
NYMETS456: T  
DCJ063077 (ME): Are there any die hard Dode Paskert fans here?  
NYMETS456: S  
NYFAN1999: Dcj....huh?

At the time, Dode Paskert was nothing more than a way to name drop, to set myself apart from the "common rabble" of baseball fans online. Only

problem was, I knew nothing more of Paskert than that he was a baseball player and he had what one committee member called a "stupid nickname." Paskert was just one more example of the delicious underbelly of baseball history, a history stuffed with now-forgotten players who were well-known in their time, where for every Ty Cobb and Honus Wagner there are twenty Wildfire Schultes and Dave Brains.

After the formation of this Deadball Committee, and some prodding from Tom Simon, I went to the Hall of Fame Library to find out the origins of Paskert's odd nickname. Unfortunately neither his player file nor James Skipper's reference book *Baseball Nicknames* can identify why or when this moniker was first used. On my own, the only thing I can come up with is the possibility that "Dode" somehow refers to "Dodo," perhaps signifying that

cont. on page 8

### The Inside Game The Official Newsletter of SABR's Deadball Committee

#### Committee Chair

Tom Simon [tpsimon@aol.com](mailto:tpsimon@aol.com)

#### Vice-Chair

Bill Lamberty [blamberty@in-tch.com](mailto:blamberty@in-tch.com)

#### Volume 1, Issue 1

To be published three times annually

Designed and produced by Bill Lamberty

Printed at Montana State University  
Printing Services -- Bozeman, Montana

Photos courtesy of the Sallee Family  
Collection and Tom Simon

## Deadball Committee Dope

### THEINSIDEGAME

This is the first issue of *The Inside Game*, the official newsletter of SABR's Deadball Committee. Please feel free to make suggestions regarding content and style. To submit articles -- it can't succeed without your help -- contact Bill Lamberty ([blamberty@in-tch.com](mailto:blamberty@in-tch.com)). This column will update you on committee goings-on and member research projects.

### COMMITTEE DIRECTORY

Martin Kohout has kindly volunteered to compile a directory, available on-line and in hard copy in June. Please submit information to Martin at [mako@hotmail.com](mailto:mako@hotmail.com) by the end of May.

### UMPRESEARCHPROJECT

John Schwartz (166 Danforth St., Rochester, NY 14611) has compiled rosters of major league umpires for 1901-18 but needs help with 1919. He has umpire names for all AL and NL home games in Boston but needs help in other cities.

### WHITEELEPHANTSANDWAHOO

The "likes" of Deadball Committee members are as wide as the deadball strike zone, but here are a few favorites as determined by a committee survey: Players -- Walter Johnson, Honus Wagner; Nicknames -- Three-Finger, Wahoo, Big Train, Wildfire; Book -- *Glory of Their Times*.

## Between the Seams

# Slim Sallee Day

by eric and paul sallee

The Inside Game is honored to inaugurate *Between the Seams*, a focus on a deadball-era player, personality or event, with Eric and Paul Sallee's look at a special day in honor of their cousin Slim, who pitched for the Cards, Giants and Reds.

After nearly 12 years in the National League, three different teams, 161 victories, and his first 20-win season, Harry "Slim" Sallee was paid a tribute by the Cincinnati Reds and Manager Pat Moran. September 21, 1919, was designated as "Sallee Day" at Redland Field, and the Reds slated the veteran lefthander to try for his 21st win against visiting Brooklyn. A local farm boy from tiny Higginsport, Ohio, this smalltown hero was being recognized for his stellar 1919 season and contributions to Cincinnati's first pennant since 1882.

To help with the celebration, the Reds reserved two sections of the grandstand for friends and fans from Slim's native Brown County. The Cincinnati, Georgetown and Portsmouth Railroad advertised the event throughout southern Ohio with a special "Baseball Excursion" rate, ranging from 80 cents to \$1.70 for a roundtrip ticket to Cincinnati's Carrel Street Station. To accommodate the large crowds expected from Brown and neighboring Clermont counties, each town along the train route was allotted tickets for the game, which could be reserved in advance for \$1.10, including war tax.

As thousands gathered at Redland Field, Sallee, whose "excellent work in the box has given much of the honor and glory to the Reds winning the pennant," was met at home plate before the game by a committee from the Brown County contingent. He was presented with an elaborate vase of flowers and a certificate for a handsome gift from a jewelry firm for Mrs. Sallee.

The Reds had clinched the National League pennant five days earlier when they sealed the second place fate of Slim's former team, the New York Giants, by defeating them, 4-3. Consequently, Reds manager Pat Moran was in a restful mood, giving all but three of his regulars the day off on Sallee Day. Outfielder Sherwood Magee was the second baseman, and Dolph Luque, a pitcher, played third. Seldom used players Hank Schreiber, Charlie See and Nick Allen were employed at shortstop, center field and catcher, respectively. Even Moran himself, though in uniform, took time off

from his usual third-base coaching duties. This arrangement proved fatal.

The game had hardly begun before several botched infield plays by the irregulars netted Brooklyn three runs in the first inning. Things weren't looking good for the tall southpaw on Sallee Day, and the embarrassment of an early exit was a real possibility. He managed to pitch out of the mess, however, and allowed only three scattered singles over the final eight innings, not a batter reaching second base. Unfortunately, the Reds managed only one ninth inning tally off of Brooklyn's Sherry Smith, and the game was lost 3-1. Slim batted for himself in the ninth inning to give Brown County the complete show, but grounded out to the third baseman for the final out.

Sallee Day, while ending in defeat, was not a complete bust for Harry. Laboring through 15 pitches in the first inning, Sallee needed only seven pitches in both the second and third, eight in the fourth, four in the fifth, seven in the sixth, six in the seventh, eight in the eighth, and concluded the game by tossing a mere three pitches in the ninth. This effort of 65 total pitches established a new, and still existing, major league record for a nine-inning complete game, besting Christy Mathewson's previous mark of 69 pitches. The faithful Red fans had barely warmed their seats when Sallee Day came to an end, as this contest lasted all of 55 minutes, believed to be yet another major league record.

Except for losing, this game exemplified Slim Sallee's 1919 season. He injured his back in 1918 while hurling for John McGraw in New York, and the injury continued to plague him throughout 1919. Efficiency of effort became crucial to relieve his back from the stress of pitching. Known for his excellent control, Sallee's *modus operandi* was to throw as few pitches as possible, entice hitters to swing early in the count, and let his fielders do the work. That strategy was successful: he walked a mere 20 men while striking out only 24 batters in 227.2 innings. His 0.79 walks per nine innings in 1919 ties him for the seventh-best single-season mark in 20th century major league baseball. On September 26, the last day of the season, Sallee picked-up win number 21, and became one of only two 20-game winners with more wins than walks in a single season. He was the first major league pitcher in modern history to win 20 games while appearing in fewer than

30 games, a record that lasted until 1942, when Ernie "Tiny" Bonham matched the feat.

Sallee was a man who liked people, and both he and his wife Kate were well known throughout Brown County as outgoing and warm-hearted. Being recognized on Sallee Day by his employer, the local railroad company, and all his fans and friends from his hometown and surrounding communities was a special honor. Sallee returned some of this appreciation by setting two major league records on this day, and sent the local folks back to the Carrel Street Station quite impressed with neighbor Slim.

But, as fate would have it, Slim Sallee's successes were normally followed by disappointment. After a highly successful minor league career, which included two successive championships, he was sold to the lowly St. Louis Cardinals in 1908. In 1913, he led the Cardinals with 19 wins, but the team won only 51 games and finished 49 games in the cellar. In 1916 he was a major contributor to the New York Giants' 26-game winning streak, only to be the losing pitcher when the team finally lost.

The following year, Sallee was 18-7 for the pennant-winning Giants, including 10 wins in a row, and then suffered defeat twice at the hands of the White Sox in the World Series. Finally, and perhaps the biggest disappointment of them all, within 12 months of winning the 1919 World Series, Slim and the Reds were advised their championship was tainted, a status that appears will survive eternity. So, to be honored with Sallee Day, respond by setting two records, and yet ultimately suffer defeat, seems somehow only fitting.

*Eric Sallee, a CPA from Bellevue, Wash., and Paul Sallee, a music teacher from Eatontown, N.J., are distant cousins who were brought together by communicating separately with Slim's niece. The two are collaborating on a story about Slim's final minor league season, and recently got the southpaw inducted into the Ohio Baseball Hall of Fame.*



# Park Size and Inside the Park Home Runs

byronselter

A preliminary study of the relationship between Inside the Park Home Runs (IPHR) and park size in the Deadball Era was conducted. The 1912-19 time period was chosen as 1911 marks the adoption of the cork-centered ball. Thus for the 1912-19 time period the ball was no longer particularly dead, but it was still quite dirty. In addition, park data are better for 1912 than for earlier years (especially pre 1910). The IPHR data were supplied by SABR's David Vincent, who included the warning that IPHR data represented work in progress.

During the eight seasons 1912-19 the AL hit 247 IPHR and the NL 542. Why such a pronounced difference? The first hypothesis was that NL parks in this time period (like Braves Field) were substantially larger than AL parks. The computation of the average LF, CF and RF distances for each of the AL and NL parks were undertaken. This is NOT the same as the LF, CF and RF distances found in ballpark reference books (e.g., Green Cathedrals). By example, the 1912 Polo Grounds had LF, CF, and RF listed distances of 277, 433, and 258. The computed average distances for the 1912 Polo Grounds were LF 364, CF 436, and RF 347. Park size was measured by the unweighted mean of the LF, CF, and RF average distances. The park size results together with the total IPHR and IPHR /season data are in the box.

These results while not perfect had a rank-order correlation that was somewhat encouraging. Hilltop, the largest park, had the highest IPHR/season, while Sportsman's Park, the smallest park had the fewest IPHR/season. The relationship of IPHR and park size for the other parks was more mixed. The corresponding data for the NL are in the box to the right.

Examining AL and NL parks together was discouraging. The average 1912-19 park size for the AL (388) was slightly more than for the NL (381) while AL IPHR were less than half the NL total. Clearly, park size could not explain the differences in IPHR between the two leagues. Within each league, park size was roughly aligned with the average number of IPHR per season. A second hypothesis is that this measure of park size may be inappropriate for IPHR. OF distances beyond some threshold would increase the average park size but would likely have no impact on the number of IPHR. Example-A ball hit to the OF wall would likely be an IPHR whether the wall was 450 or 550 ft from HP.



Ebbets Field, 1913

To find a better explanatory variable for IPHR, the proportion of OF fences at 400 or more ft from HP was estimated for each park for each season. I believe this measure of park size is appropriate only for IPHR purposes. This measure of park size was shown in the prior tables as OF>400 (which is the percentage of the OF fences greater than 400 ft from HP). As one would hope, the NL ranked higher with 42% of the OF distances > 400 ft Vs 37% for the AL. Still it seems to me that this small difference does not explain the NL having more than double number of IPHR than the AL. During this time period two parks were used by both leagues. Fenway Park used by the Red Sox and Braves in 1914-15 (part of each season by the NL) and the Polo Grounds by the Giants and Yankees for 1913-19. One

would expect that if the NL had more hard-hitting fast-running batters (the ideal characteristics for hitting IPHR), then in the same parks the NL should have clearly accounted for more IPHR/season. Alas, the real world data is not cooperating with this notion. In the Polo Grounds, over seven seasons, the AL had 6.9/season and the NL 6.5/season. In Fenway, with less time in use by both leagues, the AL had 5.0 IPHR/season for 1914-15 while the NL had 10.0 IPHR/season over 0.8 of a season.

Fellow researchers have cautioned that IPHR totals are incomplete, and therefore may be differentially incomplete between parks and leagues.

Ron Selter is an economist for the space program. He has penned several SABR articles on minor league history.

AL (1912-19)					
City	Park	IPHR	IPHR per Yr.	Park Size(ft)	OF>400 (%)
BOS	Fenway	35	4.4	401	43
CHI	Comiskey	24	3.0	388	20
CLE	League	34	4.3	380	37
DET	Navin	26	3.3	391	26
NY	Hilltop (1 Yr.)	13	13.0	430	72
	Polo Grds	43	6.1	382	49
PHL	Shibe (1912)	3	3.0	403	44
	Shibe (1913+)	9	1.1	386	28
STL	Sportsman's	11	1.4	375	32
WAS	Griffith	49	6.1	388	53
<b>League Totals</b>		<b>247</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>388</b>	<b>37</b>
NL (1912-19)					
City	Park	IPHR	IPHR per Yr.	Park Size(ft)	OF>400 (%)
BOS	S. End	2	0.7	376	5
	Fenway	8	10.0	401	43
	Braves	54	12.4	437	81
BRO	Wash.	13	13.0	377	44
	Ebbets (1913)	19	19.0	401	62
	Ebbets (1914+)	76	12.7	391	57
CHI	W. Side	46	11.5	394	62
	Wrigley	13	3.3	363	19
CIN	Redland	93	11.6	391	46
NY	Polo Grds	45	5.6	382	49
PHL	Baker(1912-16)	4	0.8	336	0
	Baker(1917-19)	0	0	338	8
PIT	Forbes	71	8.8	390	30
STL	Robison	8	12.2	381	38
<b>League Totals</b>		<b>542</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>42</b>

April brings 'cold, cheerless' weather, pitching and patriotism

## Deadball Opening Days

**1901 - april 18:** Brooklyn opens its pennant defense in the "raw, chilly atmosphere" of Philadelphia's Baker Bowl with a 12-7 win. The Superbas knock ex-mate Jack Dunn out of the box in the first inning with six runs. Wild Bill Donovan tosses a complete game for Brooklyn. Also on this day, St. Louis manager Patsy Donovan announces the signing of famed sprinter Bernard Wefers, who would never play a game in the majors, as a reserve outfielder.

**1902 - april 17:** After marching around the grounds to the tune of "There'll be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight," Christy Matthewson fires a first-pitch strike that elicits an ovation "fully three minutes" against Philadelphia. Matthewson's four-hitter propels McGraw's men to a 7-0 win.

**1903 - april 16:** In 'cold, cheerless weather,' "Honus Wagner made the sensational play of the day, taking down a line hit of (Joe) Kelley's by jumping in the air and then being compelled to juggle the ball before finally holding it." Pittsburgh's 7-1 win, behind Deacon Phillippe's two-hitter, inaugurates Cincinnati's renovated park, "The Palace of the Fans."

**1904 - april 14:** The 15,000 cranks who braves a morning snow at Hilltop Park witness "a spectacle unusual for baseball grounds. As Batsman (Patsy) Dougherty took his place at the plate, the band plays 'The Star Spangled Banner' and instantly every occupant of the seats arose and remained standing until the band ceased player." Jack Chesbro gives up six hits and two runs, while his Highlander mates get to Cy Young early for an 8-2 win over Boston. Christy Matthewson twirls a six-hitter for the Giants in a 7-1 win over Brooklyn at Washington Park.

**1905 - april 15:** In the Polo Grounds, 40,000 fans "filled every nick and crevice" to honor the champion Giants, as "sixteen years of pent-up enthusiasm broke lose (sic)." Mike Donlin gets three hits and Joe McGinnity pitches a three-hitter, tripling and scoring twice as NY beat Boston 10-1. In Cincinnati, a six-run Pittsburgh sixth clinches a 9-4 win.

**1906 - april 13:** Every Chicago position player records at least one hit as the Cubs beat Cincinnati 7-2. Miller Huggins has three hits for the Reds. In Boston, "the chilly atmosphere did not dampen the ardor of the Rooters," as Cy Young shuts out Brooklyn 2-0 on two hits.

**1907 - april 11:** The Phils win a 9-0 forfeit when a near-riot occurs at the Polo Grounds. After umpire Bill Klem confronts a group of fans trying to beat the rush in the eighth inning by exiting across the field, fans storm portions of the playing field. When order cannot be restored, the game, which Philadelphia is winning anyway, is declared a forfeit. Ty Cobb scores the only two runs of Detroit's win over Chicago.

**1908 - april 15:** Chicago pounds the defending champion Tigers 15-8, with Fielder Jones scoring three runs, while St. Louis defeats Cleveland 2-1 despite five Addie Joss strikeouts. Cy Young beats the Superbas 9-3 in Brooklyn.

**1909 - april 15:** Red Ames of the Giants takes a no-hitter into the 10th inning, but loses 3-0 to Brooklyn in 13.

**1910 - april 14:** President William Howard Taft initiates the tradition of the Chief Executive throwing out the first ball at a Washington opener, but the day belongs to the Big Train. Walter Johnson holds the Athletics to one hit in a 3-0 win.

**1911 - april 12:** President Taft extends a one-year old tradition by tossing out the first ball to Dolly Gray in Washington. Clyde Milan is 3-for-

5 for the Nationals with a run and two stolen bases in the 8-5 Washington win, while Joe Wood strikes out six for the BoSox. In Philadelphia, the Highlanders, "heralded as the most dangerous team to prevent the present world's champions from repeating," beat Connie Mack's A's 2-1. Hippo Vaughn tosses a complete game three-hitter, beating Chief Bender. The Athletics recover to easily outdistance the league, including sixth-place NY.

**1912 - april 11:** Jack Coombs helps the Athletics successfully open defense of their World Championship with a 1-0 win over Walter Johnson and the Nationals.

**1913 - april 9:** Ebbets Field is inaugurated on a chilly afternoon, a day ahead of the rest of baseball as the Phils top Brooklyn 1-0. Tom Seaton beats Nap Rucker. **april 10:** The new season begins in earnest when new President Woodrow Wilson throws out the first ball in Washington, then watches the Senators edge New York in its first official game as the "Yankees" 2-1. NY's first-inning run - it is unearned - is the last Walter Johnson allows for 56 innings.

**1914 - april 13:** The Terrapins beat Buffalo 3-2 behind Jack Quinn in the first-ever Federal League game. A crowd of 27,000 stood 15 rows deep in the outfield to witness the return of Big League ball in Baltimore.

**1915 - april 14:** Herb Pennock opens the season for the A's with a 5-0 win over Boston. The only Red Sox hit is a 7th-inning single by Harry Hooper.

**1916 - april 18:** Over 20,000 fans "imbibed with spring madness" watch Walter Johnson beat the Yankees 3-2 in 11 innings. In Detroit, Harry Coveleskie tosses the first of his 22 complete games, this one a three-hit shutout of the White Sox. Coveleskie goes 4-for-4 at the plate and scores a run, while Ty Cobb goes 2-for-3, the only other player with a multi-hit game. In New York, with much attention focused on McGraw's Federal League signees, the Phillies open defense of their pennant with a 5-4 win. Benny Kauff, "Ty Cobb of the Feds," was 0-for-3, while Grover Alexander strikes out five and goes the distance.

**1917 - april 11:** Babe Ruth shuts out the Yankees 10-3, walking three and striking out one in the Polo Grounds. Walter Johnson shuts out the Athletics 8-0 on three hits, striking out 11, while Hippo Vaughn and the Cubs beat Pittsburgh 5-3.

**1918 - april 15:** In New York's 6-3 triumph over the Senators, the Yankees "handed Clark Griffith, Walter Johnson and 15,000 loyal fans a rude jolt," scoring in the top of the first on "the cannonball king" and never trailing. President Wilson declines to throw out the first ball, instead dealing with war concerns. Wally Pipp is 2-for-2 with a pair of runs scored. **april 16:** The rest of baseball opens its season a day later, with the Giants besting Brooklyn 6-4 "in the midst of a patriotic spectacle." In St. Louis, on the day Grover Cleveland Alexander is notified by officials in Howard County, Nebraska, that he would be subject to the draft instead of being allowed to join the Navy, he loses to the Cardinals, 4-2.

**1919 - april 11:** Yankee hopes were high, but "long before the warm sun was casting shadows under Coogan's Bluff the cheers had turned to groans for the greatest opening day since the American League was established here 16 years ago because of a ludicrous

roul" by the Red Sox, 10-0. Babe Ruth's first opening day as a mostly-full-time outfielder is a success, as he slams a "lucky" two-run homer over center fielder Duffy Lewis' shoulder. Carl Mays' four-hit shutout comes against the team he would join just months later. Ruth would follow to open 1920.



From *Dode Paskert*, from page 2

Paskert's teammates likened him to an extinct bird (unlikely) or, slightly more likely, a reference to Paskert's stupid or dull-witted nature. Of course, I have absolutely no evidence that Paskert was either stupid or dull-witted, but it's fun to speculate. My apologies to Paskert's descendents if I have brazenly blemished their ancestor's good name and intelligence.

As a player, for those of you who haven't looked at his record recently, Paskert seems to have been, by contemporary descriptions, a good-field, average-hit center fielder. His best offensive season came in 1912 with Philadelphia, when Dode notched career highs in batting average (.315), slugging (.413), OBP (.420), runs, hits, doubles and walks. That year Paskert finished third in the NL in runs, second in doubles, second in walks, and third in OBP, helping the Phillies to a mediocre 73-79 finish.

After batting just .251 for those Phillies in 1917, Dode was traded to Chicago for Cy Williams, a fellow outfielder six years his junior who had already led the league in home runs once and would perform the trick three more times for the Phillies. In every respect, the trade ended up being a bad one for the Cubs. Paskert played only four more seasons, failing to hit .200 in two of them. Yet immediately after the trade one sportswriter for *The Sporting News*, defended the Cubs' end of the swap:

*In some of the comment on the Paskert-Williams trade there were critics who inclined to put weight on the fact that Paskert is considerably older than Williams. It even was said that Dode had passed his prime. That may be true of a majority of ball players who have passed the now popular draft age, but it is hard to see where the new outfielder of the Cubs is any less "prime" than he was ten years ago, when his sensational work with Atlanta won him a berth in the big show with Cincinnati. He was known then as a man who could go as far for a fly ball as any outfielder ever could or did, and he still has it on most of his fellows in covering ground. His arm is as dangerous to a base runner as ever and his hitting eye does not seem to have lost any of its keenness. (Sporting News, 1/17/18)*

This prose is graced by a clear love for the game of baseball, for the way it is played, so much so that the

writer has disregarded any statistical measure in his evaluation of Paskert. From what I have seen, this is common for the sportswriters of the deadball era. How strange that seems from our perspective, where no player can ever be discussed without citing "the numbers." Sometimes in our over-emphasis on statistics, we see only the .251 that Paskert put up in 1917, and can miss the "keen hitting eye" that has not escaped this writer's attention. That Paskert would soon be largely forgotten in the annals of baseball history is not the point, but rather that appreciation for the purity of the game and its myriad of overlooked players even now in our "SportsCenter Plays of the Week" mentality.

Before leaving, I want to share one other interesting feature of Paskert's career which I discovered while looking through the newspaper clippings at the Baseball Library here in Cooperstown. On October 29, 1913, according to contemporary newspaper reports Dode "ran down and fatally injured John Perris,

twelve, while driving his automobile through a crowded street in front of the department store where the boy was employed." For his part, Paskert was charged with violating the speed ordinance.

But then, in February 1921, toward the end of his career, Paskert atoned for his past sins. For, according to the papers, Paskert "saved the lives of five small children and helped save the lives of ten other persons when fire broke out in a clothing store...



Deadball Committee 'mascot' Dode Paskert

Paskert was passing the store when the fire was discovered. He made three trips into the burning building, carrying out five children wrapped in rugs and his overcoat, and directed the other members of three families to safety. In the rescues Paskert's hands and arms were badly burned and his face blistered by the flames."

The two incidents, the first occurring towards the beginning of his career, the second at the end, seem to indicate that if Paskert never learned how to become a great major league hitter, he at least learned that it was better p.r. to save children from burning buildings than to run them over and kill them with your "new-fangled" automobile.

Given this, I would humbly suggest a new statistic perhaps to replace the somewhat unwieldy Total Player Rating. Call it the "Net Kids Saved Funtion" or NKSF. The formula is shockingly simple for sabmetrics:

$NKSF = (Total\ Kids\ Saved - Total\ Kids\ Killed) / 1.$

After the necessary adjustments to league and park (both incidents occurred in Cleveland), we find Paskert had a lifetime NKSF of 4.0. I leave it to others more diligent than I to find where this ranks Paskert all time.

*David Jones, an Annapolis, Md., native and recent graduate of George Washington University, is a lifelong Orioles fan (the O's of Ripken, he points out, not Hanlon or Dunn), who currently resides in Cooperstown and volunteers at the National Baseball Library.*

## Russ Ford's Unrecognized Record

by Lyle Spatz

*The Sporting News Complete Baseball Record Book* recognizes Ed Summers as holder of the American League record for Most games won by rookie, season. Summers, won 24 for Detroit in 1908, but two years later, in 1910, Russ Ford won 26 for New York.

I mentioned this to *TSN Record Book* editor Craig Carter five years ago (detailed in the February 1994 Baseball Records Committee newsletter). Craig said that because Ford had pitched in a game in 1909 (three innings), he could not be considered a rookie.

I realize, as I said then, that no specific rules governed rookie status in 1910, although when SABR conducted its Retroactive Rookie of the Year survey in the mid-80s we used 45 previous innings as a cut-off, the amount used for a 154-game schedule when the

BBWAA began their selections in 1947.

Russ Ford was chosen as the American League's Rookie of the Year for 1910 in both that survey and in the Hypothetical Rookie of the Year Award selections conducted by Bill Deane for *Total Baseball*. Ford is also recognized as AL record-holder for wins by a rookie by Elias's *The Book of Baseball Records*.

Although this is less a factual error than a difference of interpretation, I believe that while there is no official guideline, sufficient precedents exist in baseball mores and "natural law" to recognize someone as a rookie whose only previous major league experience consisted of three innings pitched in one game.

*Lyle Spatz chairs SABR's Baseball Records Committee.*