

# The INSIDE GAME

The Official Newsletter of SABR's Deadball Era Committee



VOL. XIX, No. 4: "LET'S GET THIS LUMPY LICORICE-STAINED BALL ROLLING!" SEPTEMBER 2019

## DEADBALL AT SABR 49

Although not a prominent feature on the convention agenda, Deadball Era baseball was given attention at SABR 49 in San Diego. Leading off was author-historian Steve Steinberg with an engrossing presentation on the interplay of American entry into World War I, player free agency after the minor leagues abandoned play during the 1918 season, and the ensuing battle over the services of veteran pitcher Jack Quinn. As Steve explained, the competing claims of the New York Yankees and Chicago White Sox over the pitcher contributed to growing strain between American League club owners and league president Ban Johnson. And when the Quinn claim was resolved in New York's favor, White Sox owner Charles Comiskey was furious with Johnson, advancing their already-frayed relations to a breaking point that would soon be reached by the major league reorganization proposed by the Lasker Plan and by the Black Sox scandal.

Thereafter, a regrettable scheduling conflict forced convention-goers to choose between attending the presentations of two of this newsletter's foremost contributors: Dan Levitt and Herm Krabbenhoft. [Note to readers: This



Photo by Dixie Tourangeau

**DEC keynote speaker Norman Macht**

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can't lose/can't win situation may now be remedied by listening to either or both presentations via the SABR website.] Dan enlightened his audience about the New York Giants regime of Charles A. Stoneham, John McGraw, and Frank McQuade, the fractious triumvirate that assumed control of the franchise in January 1919. While the Giants enjoyed success on the playing field, the oversight of the ball club was racked with turmoil, most of which Dan attributed to the shenanigans of club secretary McQuade (although club president Stoneham and VP-field manager McGraw were hardly innocents). Intra-management squabbles continued for years, culminating in a drawn-out but ultimately unsuccessful lawsuit filed by McQuade after his ouster from the club secretary post, and then by the deaths of McGraw and Stoneham, all in the mid-1930s.

Meanwhile, Herm Krabbenhoft was settling the question of the total career runs scored by Detroit Tigers legend Ty Cobb. Using the exacting methodology familiar to newsletter readers, Herm reviewed the discrepancies presented by various statistical authorities before

establishing conclusively the correct total runs scored by Cobb: 2,245.

Of interest to many DEC members was the expert panel presented by the Black Sox Scandal Research Committee. Moderated by committee chairman Jacob Pomrenke, various aspects of the corruption of the 1919 World Series, and the myths and misconceptions that subsequently came to becloud the scandal, were explored by Jacob and accomplished Black Sox researchers-Deadball Era book authors Bruce Allardice, Bill Felber, and Rick Huhn.

Deadball-related convention activities concluded with the annual meeting of the Deadball Era Committee presided over by chairman John McMurray. Audio of the meeting has been posted on the SABR website for those who could not make San Diego. Skip Desjardin, recipient 2019 Larry Ritter Award, was unavailable to attend the meeting, but conveyed his thanks via a message transmitted from London, reproduced on page 6, within. (Mark Sternman's review of Desjardin's award-winning *September 1918: War, Plague, and the World Series* begins on page 26.) The highlight of the gathering was the keynote address of eminent baseball historian Norman Macht, author of the definitive biography of Philadelphia Athletics owner-manager Connie Mack. Norman's comparative analysis of manager Mack and his celebrated contemporary, New York Giants manager John



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**FEDERAL LEAGUE WRITE-UPS  
SOUGHT**

For some years, a cooperative project of SABR's Business of Baseball Committee and the BioProject has been producing histories of the ownership of major league franchise (<https://sabr.org/bioproj/topic/team-ownership-histories>). We are now trying to expand that project to other areas of baseball history and are looking for people willing to research and write ownership/business histories of the teams of the Federal League. If interested, please contact Andy McCue at [amccue@sabr.org](mailto:amccue@sabr.org)

McGraw, offered fascinating insights into these two highly successful but very different field leaders. Although both men had fierce tempers, Mack rarely put his on display for his charges. Instead, the A's boss was a low key leader who encouraged his players, many of whom were college graduates, to game strategize for themselves and to take advantage of on-field opportunities as they arose without first securing his permission. McGraw was just the opposite, dictating every move made by Giants players, and mercilessly berating those who failed to

carry out his orders. The six Deadball Era pennants captured by both the Philadelphia A's and New York Giants established that both the Mack and McGraw methods could be employed successfully. The choice of whether Mack or McGraw was ultimately the better manager, however, Norman left to his audience. A lively and informative Q & A with meeting attendees rounded out the Macht appearance.

Finally, newsletter editor Bill Lamb was named the 2019 recipient of the Bob Davids Award.



*Photo by Dixie Tourangeau*

***Grand Hyatt, San Diego***



*Photo by Dixie Tourangeau*

***Chairman John McMurray***



*Photo by Dixie Tourangeau*

***Dan Levitt***



*Photo by Dixie Tourangeau*

***Herm Krabbenhoft***



*Photo by Dixie Tourangeau*

***Steve Steinberg***



Photo by Dixie Tourangeau

***Norman Macht***



Photo by Dixie Tourangeau

***Black Sox panel: Left to right, Rick Huhn, Bill Felber, Bruce Allardice, and Jacob Pomrenke.***



Photo by Dixie Tourangeau

***Jacob Pomrenke***

## LARRY RITTER AWARD ACCEPTANCE REMARKS BY SKIP DESJARDIN

Normally, I'd start by saying how sorry I am that I can't be joining you in San Diego for SABR 49. And I am – in a way. But I will admit that my disappointment is mitigated a great deal by the reason I can't join you – which is I am in London for the historic series this weekend between the Boston Red Sox and the once-and-future bane of my baseball fandom, the New York Yankees. Nothing, however, can preempt the pride and humility I have felt since learning that my book *September 1918: War, Plague, and the World Series* was chosen as this year's honoree for the Larry Ritter Award.

I am so pleased to be joining authors whom I have long read and enjoyed, like Jim Leeke and Glenn Stout, who have previously received this award. And, of course, to be associated in any way with Lawrence Ritter and his classic *The Glory of Their Times* is such an honor. *September 1918* is my first book, so I feel like I've had a rookie experience akin to my hometown favorites – Pudge, Fred Lynn, Nomar, or Justin Pedroia. I'm fearful, however, that I'll end up more like ex-Red Sox players Eric Hinske or Andrew Bailey or Scott Williamson – Rookies of the Year who never quite lived up to the early hype.

I didn't set out to write a book. I set out to read one. I'm a big fan of the novelist Dennis Lehane, a Boston guy who's turned out a string of bestsellers, many of which were turned into movies – like *Shutter Island*, *Mystic River*, and *Gone Baby Gone*. He wrote a book called *The Given Day*, which was set in Boston in 1919 and featured Babe Ruth as a central character. I was fascinated by his portrayal of the young Ruth: a supreme athlete in his prime, not the fat, pigeon-toed figure we know from old newsreels in which he runs around the bases in fast-motion. Through Babe, the book touches on some of the events of the previous year, including the Red Sox and the World Series, as well as the Spanish Flu epidemic. And those mentions caused me to wonder a couple of things: (1) Why was the 1918

World Series played in September instead of October? and (2) Why in the world would anyone go out to Fenway Park to watch the Series at exactly the time when do so – quite literally – could kill you? My quest to answer those questions and satisfy my own curiosity were the first steps down the path that eventually led here to San Diego.

As I learned more about the 1918 Red Sox season and the Spanish Flu, I began to stumble across more and more information about what else was going on in September 1918. First, it became clear that the answers to my questions about why the Series was played a month early and why people ignored a killer virus to watch the games were inexorably connected to World War I, which in turn, was affecting every aspect of American life.

A quick recap: In order to build an army from scratch (because the United States didn't have a standing army when war was declared in 1917) the government issued an order that required every man between 18 and 35 to choose one of three paths – to enlist in the military, register and be exposed to the draft, or have a job in a war-related industry. That meant jobs like shipbuilding and manufacturing rifles or boots or blankets for the troops. Every able-bodied man had to do his part. No frivolous jobs like store clerks – or baseball players.

The "Work or Fight" rule effectively ended the 1918 baseball season on Labor Day, leaving just the Red Sox and the Cubs to wrap up the Series before those players had to get to work or get to the recruiting office as well. Baseball was shut down for the duration of the war, though no one knew at the time that the war had barely two months to go. The flu epidemic was also tied to the war, as the government conducted what we'd now call a PR campaign designed to boost morale, raise money through war bonds, and keep productivity high in those war-related industries.

The flu epidemic remained largely hidden through the first three weeks of September in Boston. Even as one person died in the city every nine minutes, the government refused to

acknowledge the danger. Newspapers also downplayed the severity because emergency wartime laws said editors and publishers could be jailed if they wrote stories that hindered the war effort or hurt public morale. And what could be worse than finding out that thousands of your fellow citizens were dying around you?

The more I researched, the more amazing connections I found between Massachusetts and the events in America and around the world, all taking place in a remarkable 30 day-period:

- A division of Boston-area troops won the first World War I battle fought by an all-American army, and turned the tide of the war;
- A woman from Boston singlehandedly led the lobbying effort that led to the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution – giving women the right to vote – to a vote in the Senate;
- The biggest booster of the war in Washington, and the most vocal opponent of women’s suffrage, was Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts, the Senate Majority Leader;
- Painter John Singer Sargent was at the front with troops from his home state of Massachusetts, finding inspiration for his famous depiction of the effects of chemical warfare called *Gassed*;
- A high school football star from Cambridge, Mass., went out for the football team as a college freshman, and his first day of practice was also the first day for his school’s new coach – Notre Dame’s Knute Rockne;
- And, of course, the Red Sox won their last World Series before an 86-year drought.

As I read these stories, I began to think that there just might be a book in all this.

It was seven years from the time my curiosity prompted me to look into the events of September 1918 and the time the book was published. I spent hours in libraries and

scanning books and newspapers on-line. Then, I’d take bits and pieces of research on the road with me. I travel a good deal in my job as Head of Sports for YouTubeTV, and the vast majority of the book was actually written on airplanes and in hotel rooms at night.

Along the way, I learned that a writer, at least one working on his first book – but any book, I’d imagine – gets so close to it over time that they lose perspective. We write to scratch our own itch, to tell a story we want to hear. But will anyone else care? Will anyone who cares think we’ve done a good job? It’s hard to know in the weeks before a book is published.

I love the process, and I’m really happy with the book. But receiving the Larry Ritter Award is an unexpected honor and welcome validation that I’m not the only one fascinated by these events, and this time period, and the ways in which baseball is – and always was – woven completely into the fabric of the American experience. So, I thank you. And now, if you don’t mind, I’ve got a ball game to watch!

#### FEDERAL TO SEEK YOUNGER PLAYERS

CHICAGO—Young blood is to be favored in Federal League ranks next year. The stars who jumped from the big to the third circuit will have to show their reputations for past efficiency. If they don’t they are to be thrown in the discard.

This announcement was made today by President Gilmore. The decision was reached after many postal and verbal conferences with Federal owners. In each instance the owner agreed with Gilmore that the fans want to see a newer generation of stars in the making rather than watch the dimming stars that have been.

The announcement was taken to mean that the Federals will shortly resume the offensive against organized baseball in a series of well-planned raids not so much in big league camps but in the minors affiliated with O.B.

*The Pittsburg Press, November 24, 1915*

## ON HAL CHASE'S CASE

by **Matt Rothenberg**

56 is one of those hallowed numbers in baseball history. Naturally, it refers to Joe DiMaggio's 1941 consecutive-game hitting streak. The figure is both a New York Yankees record and a Major League Baseball record. But whose Yankees record did DiMaggio break? Well, it depends on the source, and even modern sources are not always in accord.

An email from Brian Richards arrived in my inbox at the Hall of Fame Library in Cooperstown on April 18, 2018. Receiving a thought-provoking email from Richards, a former Hall of Fame intern who now curates the museum at Yankee Stadium, is not an unusual occurrence. The subject line read: "Question About Hal Chase's 33-Game Hitting Streak." Though aware of Hal Chase, I was unaware of Chase hitting safely over 33 consecutive games in 1907. As Brian explained, the *New York Yankees Official Media Guide & Record Book*, since at least 2008, recognizes Chase's 33-game mark from 1907 as the second-highest total in team history. DiMaggio's famed 1941 56-game streak is naturally tops, and the 29-game streaks of Roger Peckinpaugh (1919), Earle Combs (1931), and Joe Gordon (1942) fall in tied for third.<sup>1</sup>

Richards' research showed Chase with a 10-game streak (the first game of a June 24 doubleheader through July 3) and a 22-game streak (the second game of a July 4 twin-bill through the first game of a July 26 doubleheader) sandwiched around one game in question, the first game of that Independence Day doubleheader against the Philadelphia Athletics. His questions were:

- When, why, and by whom was Chase credited with a hit in the first game of the Independence Day doubleheader?
- Do Chase's original batting logs – or the game's official scorecard – indicate a scoring change?
- Could the 33-game streak result from an erroneous mark in Chase's batting logs?



*Hal Chase*

- Was this the result of the meticulous work performed by experienced baseball researchers?

Well, this certainly got interesting.

I asked a few baseball researchers with knowledge of that time period if they were aware of Chase's 33-game streak, and I received replies professing not to have been aware of such a record.<sup>2</sup> So I knew some digging had to be done. First, I could check the Hall of Fame Library's holdings for a scorecard from that Yankees (or Highlanders) tilt against the A's. Alas, nothing to be had.

Next, I checked the collection of Yankees media guides to see how long Chase had been credited with hitting safely over 33 consecutive games. The first issue with statistical top-10 lists was the 1977 media guide, and sure enough, under consecutive-game hitting streaks, Chase is listed with 27. This remained the same through the 1993 edition. However, the 1994 media guide

offered a different figure, 33 games, moving Chase into second place, past Peckinpugh, Combs, and Gordon.<sup>3</sup> All media guides published since show the same total.

So what happened between the publishing of the 1993 and 1994 media guides that altered Chase's total? Obviously someone had done further research, but who? The Yankees offer special thanks to the Elias Sports Bureau in their recent media guides.<sup>4</sup> Was it one of their representatives? Was this found through an individual's exhaustive research, as Brian asked? Did someone in the Yankees front office pursue the matter? We may never know.

Although no scorecard, filled out by a fan or a baseball writer, was available for this game, there was another resource to check: the American League's Official Average Volume for the 1907 season. First, however, it would be helpful to know the scenario which took place in the first game of the July 4, 1907 doubleheader. Accounts tend to vary depending on the source. According to *The New York Times* recap on July 5, in the first inning, "Chase ... beat out an infield hit" to account for one of the three hits accredited to Philadelphia hurler Chief Bender. The *Times* describes that "Conroy doubled and Chase bunted safe toward third. Chase stole second after Nichols dropped Davis's throw, and Conroy romped home."<sup>5</sup> The game's box score, however, credits New York with two hits – none by Chase. We know that Chase hit the ball in the direction of third base, and Athletics third baseman Jimmy Collins is credited with two errors in the *Times*' box score.

*The (New York) Sun* poses a slightly different scenario: "There were two out when Conroy doubled. Chase beat out a punch to Collins, Conroy annexing third. Chase skipped for second with Schreck holding the ball, and Schreck threw down. Conroy slipped in while the Athletics were trying to run the eel-like Chase down, which they did not do after all, Davis making a wild throw."<sup>6</sup> Chase is awarded a hit in the box score, and Collins is only charged with one error. In fact, Chase's defense is highlighted by *The Sun*, which remarked on his "copyright catches at first base"

and being "the alpha and the omega of a fast double play."<sup>7</sup>

The *New-York Tribune* does not offer much in the way of detail in its recap of the first game, but its box score features statistics similar to those in the *Times*.<sup>8</sup> The box scores in the *Washington Post* and *Boston Globe* also corroborate the statistics and, likewise, offer no play-by-play detail.<sup>9</sup>

So what does the road team's press say in Philadelphia? The box score in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* also portrays Chase as hitless and Collins as having committed two errors. The game story also claims Bender allowed three hits while the box score says he gave up two. The *Inquirer* offers a different view of Chase's first-inning plate appearance. "With two down in the first inning Conroy rapped a double over Lord's head and raced to third when Collins made a wild throw of Chase's hit. Chase made a bluff to steal second and Davis threw wildly to head him off, Conroy scoring in the meantime."<sup>10</sup>

The Philadelphia newspaper seems to show that Collins may have committed an error in the process of fielding Chase's bunt. Or did he? Did Chase safely beat out the throw, as the New York newspaper describes? Collins' throw to first base may have been off target, but would it count as an error had Chase arrived safely at first base first?

Most other newspaper accounts, found through Newspapers.com, offer only tidbits. Line scores in Salt Lake City's *Inter-Mountain Republican* and the *Nashville Tennessean* reveal three hits for the Yankees.<sup>11</sup> However, *The (Washington, D.C.) Evening Star* offers something else in its box score of the twin-bill lid-lifter: a hit for Chase and only one error credited to Collins. Aside from *The Sun*, this is the only indication of such statistics in all the box scores I found. Even *The Sporting News* and *Sporting Life* followed in lockstep with the other newspapers.<sup>12</sup>

This begs the question: Did *The Sun*, *The Evening Star*, the *Inter-Mountain Republican*, and the *Nashville Tennessean*, seeing as how their information differed, know something the

other newspapers did not? Perhaps one explanation could be that these newspapers may have received different information at a later time through the telegraph wires. A western or evening newspaper published on July 5 might be getting later – and possibly better – information than what would be published for a morning edition. At this point, it was likely a full 24 hours after the game occurred. That theory would not account for *The Sun's* evidence, being that it was a New York newspaper.

For what it is worth, a modern resource, Retrosheet, shows its box score as awarding a hit to Chase and crediting Collins with one fielding error.<sup>13</sup> Now to check the American League Official Average Volume for 1907. The first page of Chase's stat sheets seems a bit unwieldy, as early season games are not in chronological order. However, starting June 24 and ending July 3, it is clear that he hit safely in 10 consecutive games. Starting with the second game on July 4 and ending with the first game on July 26, despite it being out of order, it is also clear he had a 22-game streak. Yet it is as clear as day, that for the first game on July 4, the number one is noted in the column for base-hits. No erasure marks are evident, nor was anything else visibly altered in any way. In total, it is apparent that Chase indeed hit safely in 33-consecutive games.

Checking Collins' stat sheets also reveals that he was charged with only one error in that July 4 game.<sup>14</sup> A check of box scores from a variety of sources indicates numerous discrepancies with the Philadelphia fielding statistics, including who received credit for errors. The New York defensive statistics all seem to be the same across the board.<sup>15</sup> If there were official scoresheets for the game, they are unavailable now, provided they still exist.

And even if Chase had streaks of 10 and 22, where did the Elias Sports Bureau – or anyone else – come up with the 27-game hitting streak that was previously credited to Chase?<sup>16</sup> Were there any big deals made of Chase's streak in 1907 – or beyond? Much was made of Chase's defensive abilities at first base and his offenses



***Hal Chase***

against organized baseball, but not as often his offensive prowess. Usually his only major batting feat mentioned was the 1916 National League batting crown he won with Cincinnati. In fact, a search of Chase's entire clippings file at the National Baseball Hall of Fame Library reveals nothing about a record hitting streak. The *Reach* and *Spalding Guides* for 1908 mentioned nothing of the feat. In fact, all *The Sun* and the *New York World* reported on July 27, 1907, the

day after Chase's streak ended, was a disturbing matter related to Hal's female companion (often referred to as his wife, though they were not yet married), Nellie Heffernan.<sup>18</sup>

Bob Hoie, SABR's Bob Davids Award recipient in 1987, wrote extensively on Chase. His "The Hal Chase Story," was featured in the *Baseball Research Journal* in 1974 and the *Baseball Historical Review* in 1981. An unabridged version ran in the 1991 *Grandstand Baseball Annual*. Yet no mention is made of the 1907 hitting streak by Hoie.<sup>18</sup> Other authors of published works on Chase mention little to nothing about his hitting streak. Fred Lieb, in his 1977 work *Baseball as I Have Known It*, includes a chapter on Chase but it only focuses on the 1911 season and later.<sup>19</sup> Martin Donnell Kohout only refers to a 22-game streak – the one started in the second game of the July 4 doubleheader.<sup>20</sup> Donald Dewey and Nicholas Acocella refer to a 27-game streak between June 24 and July 26, the right time-frame, but certainly an incorrect total of games.<sup>21</sup> No mention of Chase's streak exists in his entries in the *Biographical Dictionary of American Sports* or *The New Biographical History of Baseball*. Oddly enough, Dewey and Acocella were the authors of *The New Biographical History of Baseball*, published two years before their work on Chase.

Newspapers of the period seem to have concentrated a bit on Chase's hitting streak. Peter Morris claims that "[a]round 1910 performance streaks began to attract attention, but there was no accurate tally of the record for such streaks," noting that "[i]n 1914 George L. Moreland reported that the longest hitting streak was twenty-five games by Otis Clymer" with later research discovering "longer streaks, including a forty-four-gamer by Wee Willie Keeler."<sup>22</sup>

The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* noted Chase's improvement in batting average, "gaining a point or so almost every day," which shows that someone was paying attention to his string of games with a hit, even if they were not calling it a hitting streak.<sup>23</sup> By late July the media began to recognize his feat. The *Washington (DC) Times* of July 22, 1907 said Chase reached 24

consecutive games with a hit, calling it "a notable record of prolonged hitting."<sup>24</sup> The *New Castle (Pennsylvania) Daily Herald* of July 26, 1907 claimed that Chase's two hits on July 24 "makes 27 straight games in which he has hit safely. He has not failed to make at least one bingle in any game since June 24, his hits in the 27 games since that time totaling 46." The math is erroneous, however, as the Yankees – and Chase, specifically – played 31 games from June 24 through July 24.<sup>25</sup>

So whose Yankees record did Joe DiMaggio best? Most literature, even that published after 1994, will say Peckinpaugh and Combs, if the previous holders are even mentioned to begin with.<sup>26</sup> Derek Gentile's 2001 *The Complete New York Yankees: The Total Encyclopedia of the Team* offers nothing in its profile of Chase, while the fourth edition of *The Yankee Encyclopedia* sides with Peckinpaugh and Combs. However, Kostya Kennedy, in his 2011 work, *56: Joe DiMaggio and the Last Magic Number in Sports*, refers to Peckinpaugh and Combs as the previous record holders, but he relegates Chase to a footnote which says that later research shows that Chase held the record instead.<sup>27</sup>

What is the earliest publicly available instance of Hal Chase being credited with a 33-game hitting streak in 1907? It may be information in a graphic printed in several major newspapers starting on June 25, 1993. It is a list of American Leaguers under the age of 25 who had the longest hitting streaks. The Toronto Blue Jays' John Olerud, 24 years old at the time, had his 26-game hitting streak snapped on June 23, 1993. Hal Chase is listed third, having a 33-game streak in 1907 when he was 24 years old. No source is given for the statistics.<sup>28</sup> The *Yankees 1993 Information Guide* was likely published sometime between the start of spring training and the start of the regular season, so it appears that the discovery was made sometime, perhaps, in the late winter or spring of 1993.

There remain unanswered questions regarding how Chase went from being credited with a 27-game hitting streak to, much later, a 33-game streak. This longer streak has even gone under

the radar for Joe DiMaggio biographers, who rightly or wrongly focus on the men who held the previous record as thought in 1941. Many sources often refer to Chase's pratfalls and miscues in baseball and in life, which may have cost him dearly in the long run. For 33 games in the summer of 1907, however, "Prince Hal" was as regal as ever.

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#### ENDNOTES

1. This can be found on page 297 of the 2018 *New York Yankees Official Guide & Media Book*.
2. Inquiries were made with SABR gurus Tom Shieber and Bill Lamb.
3. See page 24 of the 1977 *New York Yankees Press, TV, Radio Guide*. It is unknown who compiled such statistics. Likewise, there seems to be no source given for the statistics in the *Yankees 1993 Information Guide* (page 72) or *Yankees 1994 Information Guide* (page 76).
4. The 2008 edition might be the first to have this notation thanking Elias, though it does not seem to recur in editions published thereafter.
5. "Yankees Lose One, Then Win a Game," *New York Times*, July 5, 1907, 8.
6. "Lost First and Won Second," *The (New York) Sun*, July 5, 1907, 4. Schreck refers to A's catcher Ossee Schrecongost.
7. Ibid.
8. "The Baseball Pennant Fight: Yankees Take Second," *New-York Tribune*, July 5, 1907, 4.
9. "One Each in New York: Quakers Get First Game and Yankees Take Second Contest," *Washington Post*, July 5, 1907, 9, and "They Break Even: New York and Philadelphia the Only Ones to Split on Double Bill," *Boston Globe*, July 5, 1907, 9.
10. "Athletics Divide With Highlanders," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 5, 1907, 11.
11. "In the Big Leagues," (Salt Lake City) *Inter-Mountain Republican*, July 5, 1907, 7, and "Yankees Split Even With Athletics," *Nashville Tennessean*, July 5, 1907, 15.
12. "American League," *The Sporting News*, July 11, 1907, 5.
13. Retrosheet box score: Philadelphia Athletics 3, New York Highlanders 1 (1), Retrosheet.org,

<https://www.retrosheet.org/boxesetc/1907/B07041NYA1907.htm>.

14. Information on Chase's and Collins's stat sheets comes from the American League Official Average Volume [aka "Day for Days"] for 1907, held at the National Baseball Hall of Fame Library in Cooperstown.
15. The figures for New York's putouts and assists in the Retrosheet box score match those found on each New York player's stat sheet from the 1907 American League Official Average Volume. However, the defensive figures for Philadelphia differ from the box scores in the *New York Times*, *Washington Evening Star*, *New York Sun*, and *Philadelphia Inquirer*. There is no visible indication that any of the figures were altered on the Official Averages Volume stat sheets.
16. Brian Richards noted that Chase hit safely in 27-consecutive game days (from June 24 through July 26), rather than in 27-consecutive games. The Yankees played 34 games during this stretch. Richards suggested this as a possible reason for 27 being the length of Chase's streak.
17. "Baby Case Stirrs Baseball Circles," *New York Herald*, July 27, 1907, and "Found Baby's Body in Bonfire Ashes," *New York Sun*, July 27, 1907. Photocopies of both articles in the Hal Chase clippings file at the Hall of Fame Library. No article page numbers are evident.
18. A photocopy of "The Hal Chase Story" by Bob Hoie is contained in the Chase clippings file at the HoF Library. An editor's note states that "about 40% of the article was edited out of the *BRJ*." A preface by Hoie says that Betsy Tunis had been working on a full-length biography of Chase in the 1980s that went unpublished.
19. "Hal Chase: He Had a Corkscrew Brain" chapter in Fred Lieb, *Baseball As I Have Known It* (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1977), 97-103.
20. Martin Donnell Kohout, *Hal Chase: The Defiant Life and Turbulent Times of Baseball's Biggest Crook* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2001), 51.
21. Donald Dewey and Nicholas Acocella, *The Black Prince of Baseball: Hal Chase and the Mythology of the Game* (Wilmington, Delaware: Sports Classic Books, 2004), 70. Dewey and Acocella's research notes were later donated to the Hall of Fame Library, but were unavailable for reference at this time of this writing.
22. Peter Morris, *A Game of Inches: The Story Behind the Innovations That Shaped Baseball* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2010), 457-458.

23. "In Our Set: Being Little Stories of People in the Sport World," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 11, 1907, 4. On page five, the *New York Sun* of July 10, 1907 also noted how "Chase has been hitting the ball the last two weeks," improving his batting average."
24. "Baseball Notes," *Washington Times*, July 22, 1907, 8.
25. "Sportograms," *New Castle* (Pennsylvania) *Herald*, July 26, 1907, 2. The stat sheet for Chase from the Official Average Volume refutes this erroneous claim.
26. A sampling shows Richard Ben Cramer (*Joe DiMaggio: A Hero's Life*) in 2000 and Al Silverman (*Joe DiMaggio: The Golden Year, 1941*) in 1969 refer to Peckinpaugh and Combs as

being the previous record holders. Joseph Durso (*DiMaggio: The Last American Knight*), Jerome Charwyn (*Joe DiMaggio: The Long Vigil*), and Morris Engelberg (*DiMaggio: Setting the Record Straight*) all make no mention of the previous record holders.

27. The footnote can be found on page 116. It reads: "years later research revealed that in 1907 Yankees first baseman Hal Chase had actually hit safely in 33 straight games, a fact unmentioned and unknown in '41." No credit is given for those whose "research revealed" the Chase streak's correct length.
28. "The Hit Parade," graphic in the *Baltimore Sun*, June 25, 1993, 4D

## ACCURATE RBI RECORDS FOR PLAYERS OF THE DEADBALL ERA: PART 17 — THE PLAYERS ON THE 1907 DETROIT TIGERS

by **Herm Krabbenhoft**

Run Batted In — "A run that is caused by a particular batter and that is officially credited to him as part of his record." That's the definition given in "*The Dickson Baseball Dictionary*."<sup>1</sup> The run-batted-in statistic has been around well over a century, having been introduced by a Buffalo newspaper in 1879 and picked up the following year by the *Chicago Tribune*. However, as Thorn and Palmer wrote, the run-batted-in stat did not survive as readers were not impressed with the metric because the men who batted at the top of lineup did not have the same opportunities to bat in runs as the players in the heart of the batting order.<sup>2</sup> And, in 1891, the National League rules committee rejected Henry Chadwick's suggestion that the run-batted-in statistic be recognized in the official records and box scores. The RBI stat did not surface again until 1907 when Ernest Lanigan, a "statistical fiend of the *New York Press*," began compiling "records of all major league batsmen in the matter of batting in runs even at personal sacrifice."<sup>3</sup>

In the December 19, 1907 issue of *The Sporting News*, Lanigan's copious runs-batted-in com-



**Ty Cobb**

pilations for the 1907 season were presented.<sup>4</sup> From then on, Lanigan single-handedly kept the runs-batted-in statistic in the news, at least in annual reviews at the end of a given season, through the 1919 campaign. Then, beginning with the 1920 season, the run-batted-in statistic was recorded in baseball's official records — *The summary shall*

contain: *The number of runs batted in by each batsman.* [Rule 86, Section B] That was the official scoring rule for runs batted in — just those thirteen words! Those thirteen words made up the entire official description of runs batted in for each of the seasons during the 1920-1930 period. Thus, each game's official scorer could assign RBI credit or not assign RBI credit according to his own personal ideas of what constituted an RBI and what did not constitute an RBI. The official rules did not specify any guidelines that the official scorer was required to adhere to. It was not until 1931 that the run batted in was officially defined — *Runs Batted In are runs scored on safe hits (including home runs), sacrifice hits, outfield put-outs, infield put-outs, and when the run is forced over by reason of the batsman becoming a base-runner. With less than two outs, if an error is made on a play on which a runner from third would ordinarily score, credit the batsman with a Run Batted In.* [Rule 70, Section 13]

Back to 1907, Lanigan's runs-batted-in statistics showed that Ty Cobb topped the American League in runs batted in with 116. And, since Cobb played in 150 games, his runs-batted percentage was .773, also the highest in the Junior Circuit. With regard to what constituted a run batted in, according to Lanigan, "runs scored on base hits, on long flies to the outfield, or on infield grounders on which there was no chance to nail a runner at the plate are counted as runs batted in." Lanigan also reported, for each team (but not individual players), the runs scored on errors, wild pitches, steals of home, bases on balls, missed third strikes, passed balls, and hit batsmen.<sup>4</sup>

Though not official, Lanigan's 116 runs-batted-in number for Cobb's 1907 season was presented (a) in each edition of *The Official Encyclopedia of Baseball* (1951-1979), (b) in each edition of *Daguerreotypes of Great Stars of Baseball* (1951-1990), and (c) in each edition of the various baseball record books published by *The Sporting News* (1943-2004) (e.g., *Official Baseball Guide*, *One for the Book*, *Complete Baseball Record Book*).<sup>5-7</sup>

In the mid-1960s, David S. Neft directed a group of researchers who ascertained the RBIs achieved



**Ty Cobb**

by all major league players for each season from 1891 through 1919. Neft first presented his runs-batted-in numbers in 1969 in *The Baseball Encyclopedia* published by Macmillan.<sup>8</sup> Subsequently, Neft's RBI numbers have been utilized in (a) in each edition of *The Baseball Encyclopedia* (1969-1996), (b) in each edition of *The Sports Encyclopedia: Baseball* (1974-2007), (c) in each edition of *Total Baseball* (1989-2001), and (d) in each edition of *The ESPN Baseball Encyclopedia* (2004-2008).<sup>9-12</sup> Neft's RBIs are also currently used on several Internet sites, such as MLB.com (the official website of Major League Baseball), Baseball-Reference.com, and retrosheet.org.<sup>13</sup> In contrast to Lanigan's 116 RBIs for Cobb, according to Neft, Cobb achieved 119 runs batted in.

So, whose 1907 RBI number for The Georgia Peach is correct — Lanigan’s 116 or Neft’s 119? Or, is neither number correct? The answer is provided in this report.

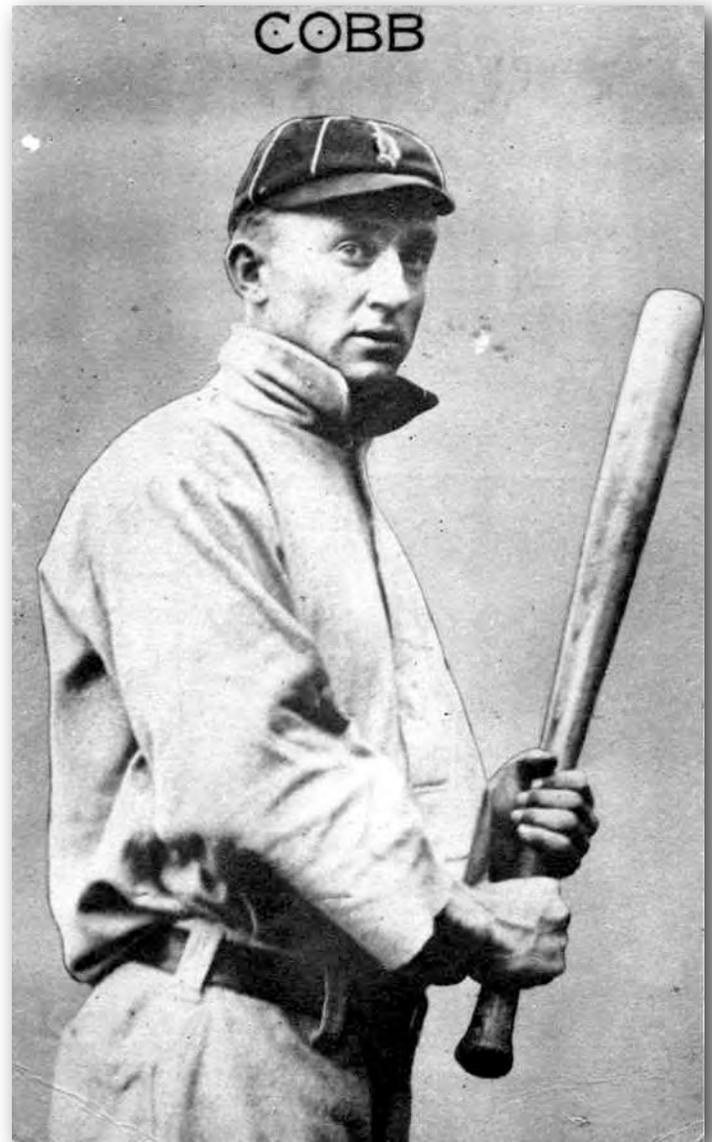
### RESEARCH PROCEDURE

For the present investigation, I utilized the same rigorous *modus operandi* employed in my previous research efforts.<sup>14</sup> Thus, for each of the 693 runs scored by the Tigers in 1907, I sought to obtain three critical components: (a) the identity of the player who scored the run; (b) the details of the run-scoring event [e.g., a 2-RBI double, a balk, a 1-RBI grounder (batter safe on a fielding error), a 0-RBI grounder (batter safe on a fielding error), a 1-RBI bases-loaded walk, etc.]; and (c) the identity of the player who completed his plate appearance during the run-scoring event (i.e., the player who could be credited with batting in the run). I followed the appropriate official scoring rules to credit or to not credit a player with an RBI — i.e., the official scoring rules used in 1931, as given above. I then provided the complete documentation that I assembled to Retrosheet’s Tom Ruane and Dave Smith for their independent review, upon which we achieved 100% agreement and Retrosheet incorporated all of the runs-scored and runs-batted-in numbers in its Box Score file (and derived Player Daily files) in its Fall-2018 release of updated information.<sup>15</sup> Appendix A-1 (available on SABR.org) provides a tabulation of the critical “(a)-(b)-(c)” information for each of the 693 runs scored by the 1907 Tigers.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the RBI numbers, according to my research, for each of the 24 players who participated in at least one game for the Detroit Tigers in the 1907 campaign. Also shown for comparison are the RBI numbers claimed by Lanigan and by Neft.<sup>4,8</sup>

Probably the most-glaring aspects of Table 1 are the ranges of RBIs given in the “This Work” column for Bill Coughlin, Red Downs, Ed Killian, Charley O’Leary, Fred Payne, Claude Rossman, and Germany Schaefer. That’s because complete runs-batted-in details could not be ascertained for the second game of the doubleheader between



*Ty Cobb*

Tigers and the Senators played at Bennett Park in Detroit on July 18. The Tigers tallied a total of eleven runs in that contest, scoring single runs in the first, second, and fourth innings and quartets of markers in both the fifth frame and the sixth session. While complete details for the first three runs are provided in the game accounts presented in the relevant newspapers, the information given for the last eight runs is not sufficient to ascertain with 100% confidence who batted in whom. Appendix 2 presents the text descriptions given in the various newspapers for each of Detroit’s eleven runs. The game accounts consulted were those in the four daily newspapers published in Detroit (*Free Press*, *Journal*, *News*, and *Times*) and the four daily newspapers published in

Washington, DC (*Evening Star, Herald, Post, and Times*). Assuming that the runs-scored information given in the official DBD records is accurate, one can deduce the minimum number of RBIs [necessarily zero (0)] and maximum number of RBIs for each of the seven above-mentioned players. Appendix 2 also provides the complete details for the deduction process. It is important to emphasize that, based on my research, only Crawford and Cobb have specific RBI numbers in the game — zero (0) and one (1), respectively.

Inspection of Table 1 reveals that, according to my research, Ty Cobb achieved 118 runs batted in — two RBIs more than the 116 RBIs asserted by Lanigan and one RBI fewer than the 119 RBIs claimed by Neft. While I have assembled batter-by-batter play-by-play descriptions for each of the 693 runs the Tigers scored in 1907 (see Appendix 1 for a comprehensive summary for each of the 693 runs), no such game-by-game summaries are extant to support the full-season RBI numbers provided by Lanigan and by Neft. Thus, it is not possible to ascertain the specific games for which my RBI numbers differ with the RBI numbers of Lanigan and Neft. As shown in Appendix 1, there were sixteen runners who scored as a consequence of at-bats by Cobb, although Cobb did not merit RBI credit for any of these runs. Table 2 summarizes the pertinent information for these runs; Appendix 3 provides the relevant descriptions from several newspaper game accounts for these runs. It is worthwhile to re-emphasize that Retrosheet has reviewed the evidence I assembled and that we achieved 100% concurrence for the RBI numbers, which were then incorporated on the Retrosheet website.

Considering now the other players on the Tigers 1907 roster, examination of Table 1 shows that my RBI numbers are different from Lanigan's RBI numbers for 17 of the 24 players (including Cobb). Thus, the agreement between Lanigan's RBI numbers and my RBI numbers is only 29%. While most (11) of the differences are small (one or two RBIs), for four players the differences were five or more — Red Downs (+7), Germany Schaefer (+6), Bill Coughlin (+5), and Charley O'Leary (-5). With regard to the comparison of my RBI numbers with Neft's RBI numbers, our RBI numbers differ for

16 players (including Cobb). Thus, the agreement between Neft's RBI numbers and my RBI numbers is just 33%. While most (11) of the differences are small (one or two RBIs), the largest is the plus-13 RBIs delta for Rossman. For the ten players who would be considered regulars or principal secondary players (i.e., those players who participated in at least 50 games), Lanigan's RBI numbers are wrong compared to my RBI numbers for 90% of the players. Likewise, Neft's RBI numbers are wrong for 90% of the players.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

The key research results reported in this article show that Ty Cobb actually led the American League in runs batted in during the 1907 season with 118, not 116 nor 119 RBIs as shown in the various baseball encyclopedias and on several baseball websites. Indeed, as shown in Table 1, the RBI numbers presently provided in these sources for most of the 24 players on the 1907 Detroit Tigers are erroneous.

Looking ahead, the next team-season on my schedule for ascertaining accurate RBI numbers is the 1905 Detroit Tigers — during which Cobb made his major league debut and collected either 12 or 15 RBIs in his first Big League season, depending on which source one consults.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank Retrosheet's Tom Ruane and Dave Smith for reviewing the evidence that I assembled in support of the runs-batted-in numbers ascertained in my research and reported in this article.

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13. Accessed on June 25, 2019.
14. Herm Krabbenhoft, "Accurate RBI Records for the Players of the Deadball Era: Part 16 — The Players on the 1908 Detroit Tigers," *The Inside Game*, Volume XIX, No. 1 (February 2019), 9.
15. Email correspondence between Herm Krabbenhoft and Tom Ruane and Dave Smith, October 4-9, 2018.

**TABLE 1. RUNS-BATTED-IN NUMBERS  
FOR PLAYERS ON THE 1907 DETROIT TIGERS**

Player (Games)	RBI (Lanigan)	RBI (Neft)	RBI (This Work)	Player (Games)	RBI (Lanigan)	RBI (Neft)	RBI (This Work)
Jimmy Archer (19)	1	0	<b>*0</b>	Ed Killiian (46)	11	11	<b>*9-13*</b>
Ty Cobb (150)	116	119	<b>*118*</b>	Bobby Lowe (17)	6	5	<b>*9*</b>
Bill Coughlin (134)	43	46	<b>*48 or 49*</b>	Herm Malloy (1)	0	0	0
Sam Crawford (144)	81	81	<b>*79*</b>	Matty McIntyre (20)	8	9	<b>8*</b>
Bill Donovan (39)	19	19	<b>*22*</b>	George Mullin (71)	12	13	<b>*11*</b>
Red Downs (105)	37	42	<b>*44-46*</b>	Charley O'Leary (138)	40	34	<b>*35-37*</b>
Tex Erwin (4)	1	1	1	Fred Payne (53)	10	14	<b>*9-11*</b>
John Eubank (15)	0	1	<b>0*</b>	Claude Rossman (153)	84	69	<b>*82 or 83*</b>
Hughie Jennings (3)	0	0	0	Germany Schaefer (112)	28	32	<b>*34 or 35*</b>
Davy Jones (126)	28	27	<b>*27</b>	Boss Schmidt (105)	26	23	<b>26*</b>
Elijah Jones (4)	1	0	<b>*0</b>	Ed Siever (39)	5	4	<b>5*</b>
Red Killefer (1)	0	0	0	Ed Willett (10)	1	1	1

NOTES: [1] In the "Player (Games)" column, the number of games in which the player participated is that calculated from the player's Retrosheet "Player Daily" file; the numbers shown here are the same as given on the player's Retrosheet "Player Profile" page except for — Archer (18), Donovan (37), Jennings (1), Mullin (70), O'Leary (138), Schaefer (112), and Schmidt (105). [2] In the "RBIs (This Work)" column, an asterisk before the RBI number indicates that it is different from Lanigan's RBI number; an asterisk after the RBI number indicates that it is different from Neft's RBI number; if the RBI number is different from Lanigan's RBI and/or Neft's RBI number, the entry is shown in boldface.

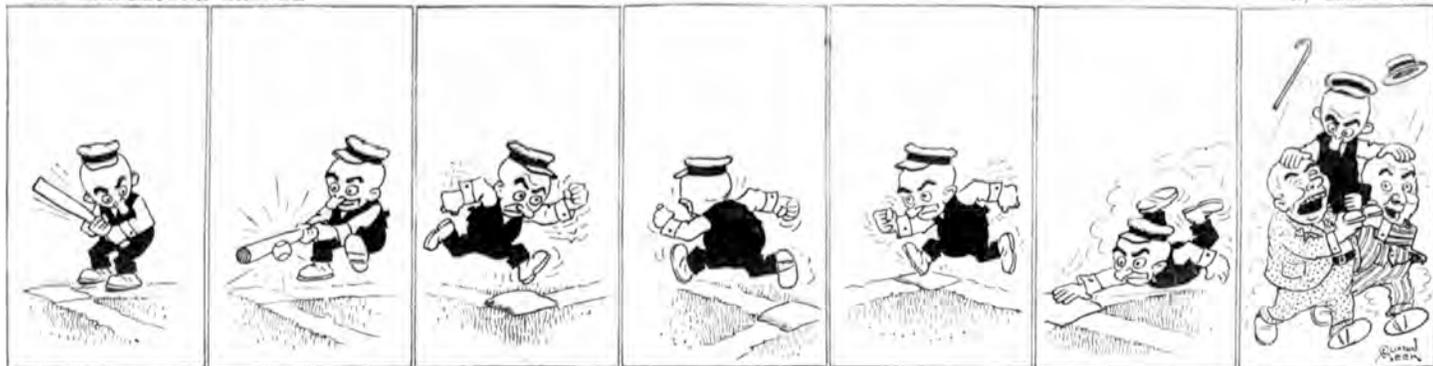
**TABLE 2. RUNS SCORED AS A CONSEQUENCE OF COBB'S  
AT BATS — WITH NO RBI CREDITED TO COBB**

Game	OPP	Inning	Run-Scorer (starting base)	Run-Scoring Play with Cobb the Batter
4-23	STL	1	Coughlin (2nd)	Safe on fielder's choice plus error by the catcher (wild throw to first)
5-17	NY	4	Coughlin (2nd)	Groundout plus error by the first baseman (wild throw to third)
5-30 (2)	CLE*	7	Crawford (2nd)	Safe on error by the right fielder (muffed flyball)
6-29	CLE	2	Cobb (batter)	Triple plus error by the catcher (muffed catch)
7-2	STL	7	Crawford (2nd)	Safe on error by the shortstop (wild throw)
7-8	BOS	8	Crawford (2nd)	Infield single coupled with error by the second baseman (wild throw to first)
7-16 (2)	WAS	4	Crawford (1st)	Double plus error by the second baseman (wild throw to second)
8-1	NY*	1	Coughlin (2nd)	Safe on error by the left fielder (muffed flyball)
8-3	WAS*	3	Mullin (3rd)	Safe on fielder's choice plus error by the catcher (muffed catch)
8-24	WAS	3	Coughlin (3rd)	2-out Passed ball on missed third strike.
8-27	WAS	8	Coughlin (2nd) Crawford (1st) Cobb (batter)	Infield single plus error by the first baseman (wild throw to first).
9-8	CHI*	11	Coughlin (2nd)	Sacrifice bunt plus error by the catcher (wild throw to first)
9-24	BOS*	4	Cobb (batter)	Triple plus error by the second baseman (wild throw to third)
10-2 (1)	WAS*	8	Crawford (1st)	Single plus error by the right fielder (fumbled pickup)

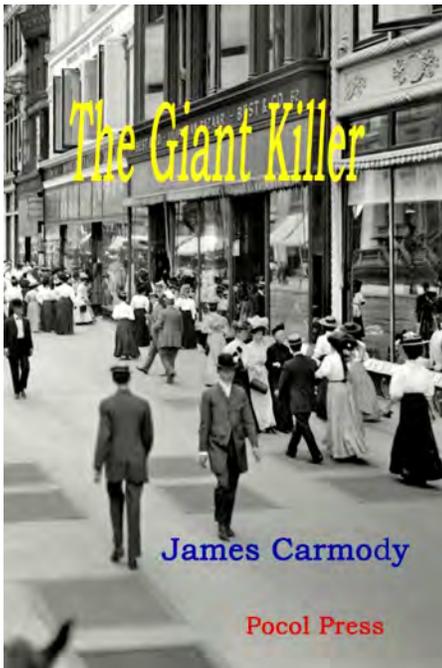
An asterisk in the "OPP" column entry indicates that the game was played at the opponent's ballpark.

OLD GRINDSTONE GEORGE

By Clifton Meek



*The (New York) Evening World, July 18, 1917*



## THE GIANT KILLER

By James Carmody

2018, Pocol Press  
[ASIN: B07D1T2T84, 176pp.  
\$14.95 USD. Softcover]

Reviewed by  
**Vince Guerrieri**  
vagnerrieri@gmail.com

A legendary detective investigates a series of extortion-related murders in 1905 New York City, and that investigation brings him into contact with various members of the New York Giants and other turn-of-the-twentieth-century celebrities in *The Giant Killer*, the first novel by James Carmody. The book is a work of fiction, but draws on many real-life elements, such as the experiences of the significant Italian population in New York City in the early 1900s. Carmody's plot focuses on the Black Hand, a sort of forerunner of the Mafia that

## EDITOR'S NOTE AND PUBLISHER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Likely because the most recent issue of the newsletter was confined to Black Sox-related material, we have accumulated a backlog of book reviews. In our view, it would not be fair to our book reviewers to further defer publication of their work. Nor would delay in getting the book reviews out serve our readers. This issue therefore contains all 14 book reviews currently in hand. For manageability purposes, this issue bifurcates the book review section, with critiques of Deadball Era-related books beginning here. The review of recent works of general baseball interest starts on page 37, within.

Obviously, we have a lot of publishers to thank for providing us with the books being reviewed. *Breaking Babe Ruth* comes from the University of Missouri Press and can be ordered by telephoning 800-621-2736 or emailing [orders@press.uchicago.edu](mailto:orders@press.uchicago.edu). *Baseball and American Culture* was published by Rowman & Littlefield and can be obtained by calling 800-462-6420 or via [orders@rowman.com](mailto:orders@rowman.com). *Now Taking the Field* is published by ACTA Publications and can be ordered by telephone at 773-271-1030 or via [www.actapublication.com](http://www.actapublication.com). *The Giant Killer* was put out by Pocol Press and can be obtained by calling 703-870-9611 or via [www.pocolpress.com](http://www.pocolpress.com). Sunbury Press is the publisher of *Gettysburg Eddie* and can be ordered by telephone: 855-338-8359 or email: [orders@sunburypress.com](mailto:orders@sunburypress.com). Both *Here's the Pitch* and *They Played the Game* were published by the University of Nebraska Press and can be ordered via 800-848-6224 or [orders@longleafservices.org](mailto:orders@longleafservices.org). Three of our books, *Charles Ebbets*; *The Page Fence Giants*, and *September 1918* come from McFarland and can be ordered by telephoning 800-253-2187 or emailing [info@mcfarlandpub.com](mailto:info@mcfarlandpub.com). *Baseball Gods in Scandal* was published by Summer Grove Books and can be ordered from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) and other book retailers. *A Franchise on the Rise* comes from Skyhorse Publishing and can be obtained by phone: 212-643-6816 or email: [orders@simonandschuster.com](mailto:orders@simonandschuster.com), while *The Big Fella* was published by Harper and can be ordered by calling 800-242-7737 or emailing [harpercollins.en.cs@digitaldriver.com](mailto:harpercollins.en.cs@digitaldriver.com). As always, your patronage of these publishers is appreciated.

extorted money from Italian immigrants who had nowhere else to turn, often resorting to violence when their demands were not met.

The book is peppered with real people as well, including its protagonist, New York Police Lt. Giuseppe Petrosino. Called "The Italian Sherlock Holmes"

and hailed even today for his innovative investigative techniques, Petrosino seems like the ideal candidate for a murder mystery. (The author is hardly alone in thinking this. Petrosino's been the subject of several movies since his 1909 assassination in Italy at the hands of organized crime – and Leonardo DiCaprio is slated to portray him in an upcoming movie about his fight against organized crime.)

Petrosino's investigation leads him to the New York Giants, where he butts heads with manager John McGraw and talks to players including Christy Mathewson, Roger Bresnahan, and the ultimately ill-fated Dan McGann. Petrosino also encounters other famous people, like President Theodore Roosevelt, which is entirely plausible, since Roosevelt was himself a former police commissioner in New York City, and William Sydney Porter, better known as O. Henry. Porter says he's working on a story about a policeman meeting an old friend (ostensibly "After 20 Years," which was published in 1906, the year after this novel takes place) – which feels a bit too contrived and more than a little force-fed.

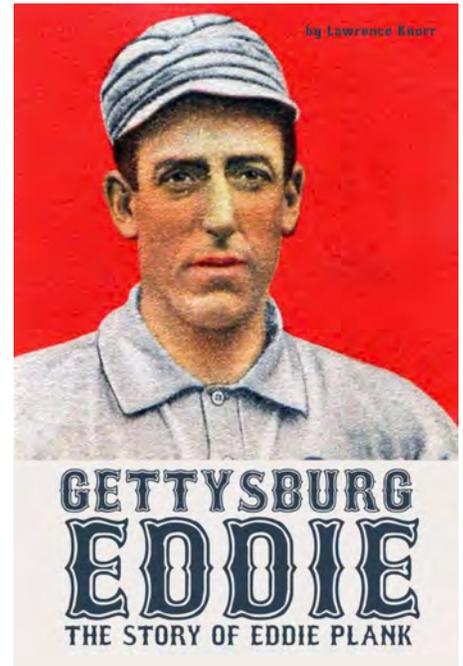
And that's the problem with the book writ small. The story idea seems like a good one (why else would Leo want to make a movie about Petrosino?), but the execution is flawed. Italians appear in the book and then quickly disappear, usually in a bombing or some other type of

homicide. Real people glide in and out of the book with no real reason related to the plot but showcase the author's knowledge of the time and place.

The research IS scrupulous, with day-by-day accounts of Giants games from the 1905 season. There are, however, a couple exceptions. The book references a car called a Raulang; the parent company was in existence at that point, but that particular model was still a decade away. A conversation between Petrosino and Roosevelt (who at the book's outset is in New York for the wedding of his niece Eleanor to a distant cousin, Franklin) talks about the forming of the Bureau of Investigation (later the FBI) – which would not happen until 1908.

The plot moves fairly quickly, keeping the reader engaged, but the book's climax, without spoiling it, relies on a *deus ex machina* plot device – admittedly, an event that really happened – to bring events to a resolution. Overall, *The Giant Killer* is mildly entertaining, if uneven, and you'll probably enjoy it if you're a fan of early twentieth century history or the New York Giants.

*Vince Guerrieri is a SABR member and Indians fan from Youngstown, Ohio (Hometown of Jimmy McAleer, Bonesetter Reese, and Billy Evans). He is a journalist and author who has recently written about stadium construction for Deadspin.*



## GETTYSBURG EDDIE: THE STORY OF EDDIE PLANK

By Lawrence Knorr

2018, Sunbury Press  
[ISBN: 978-1620061701. 382 pp. \$19.95 USD. Softcover]

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Connie Mack's Philadelphia Athletics, winners of six pennants and three World Series during the first two decades of the twentieth century, reigned as the American League's first great dynasty. The dynasty emerged in the fog of the American League's war for parity with the National League, thrived in the peace that followed, and disintegrated as the two major leagues contended against the upstart Federal League for players and fans. Lawrence Knorr's *Gettysburg Eddie: The Story of Eddie Plank* adds to

the literature of the Deadball Era Athletics by telling the story of the crafty lefty who was one of the constants during these times of glory and upheaval, and who helped power the team from its founding in 1901 through their upset loss to the Boston Braves in the 1914 World Series.

Eddie Plank may have experienced professional upheaval caused by the politics of the national game, but his father experienced the catastrophic upheaval of the Civil War, having had his Gettysburg farm commandeered by Confederate forces during the Battle of Gettysburg and left in ghastly disarray. Growing up in the aftermath of the war, Eddie Plank became a local phenomenon through his pitching prowess, gaining acclaim as a hurler for the Good Intent School and later for Gettysburg College.

Joining Mack's squad at the beginning of the 1901 season, Plank began his career in the American League just as Ban Johnson was declaring major league status for the league. Major league baseball as we know it was hammered into place following the 1902 season when the American League and National League concluded the National Agreement, setting the stage for the World Series. The Athletics would represent the American League in five of the first eleven Fall Classics, and Plank was central to the success of the Athletics, who boasted the pitching of Plank, Chief Bender, Rube Waddell, and Jack Coombs, and featured the "\$100 Thousand Infield" of Stuff

McInnis, Eddie Collins, Frank "Home Run" Baker, and Jack Barry.

After claiming the 1910, 1911, and 1913 World Series, the Athletics were prohibitive favorites to be champions again in 1914, but were upset in a four-game sweep by the "Miracle" Boston Braves. The loss was so devastating that Mack scuttled his mighty lineup before the 1915 season. As one of the stars cast aside, Plank found a home with the Federal League's St. Louis Terriers in 1915. Following the collapse of the Federal League after the 1915 season, Plank returned to the American League with the St. Louis Browns for two final seasons in 1916 and 1917, pitching in a league that was coming to be dominated by the soon-to-be-disgraced Chicago White Sox and Babe Ruth's Boston Red Sox.

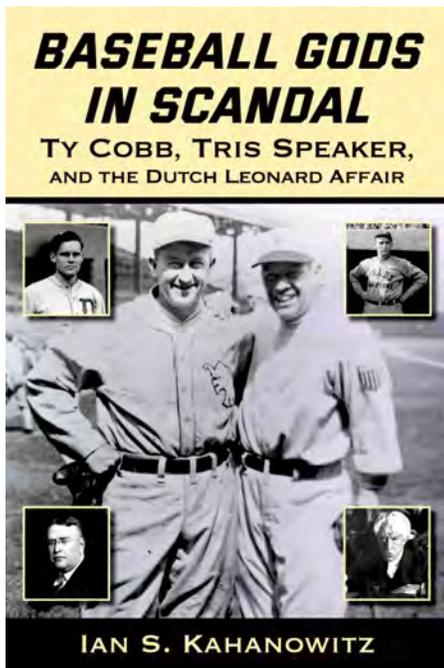
To read Knorr's book is to come to appreciate that the arc of Eddie Plank's story closely corresponds with the arc of the story of the Deadball Era itself. Plank was present at the dawn of the era, and left the game as it was transitioning out of it. Along the way, Plank regularly waged battles against Ty Cobb, Napoleon Lajoie, and other American League immortals, and locked horns in the World Series with John McGraw's New York Giants. One would expect Plank's story to be full of crescendos and memorable moments that would leave readers with indelible impressions of the Deadball Era and elevate Eddie Plank's place in baseball history.

Although the book is meticulously researched and

thoroughly recounts Plank's storied career, readers may be left thirsting for a narrative that more prominently highlights some of the era's more notable events and more vividly explores Plank's role in those events. With the exception of the opening and closing chapters, each chapter corresponds with a season, proceeding in chronological order. The book devotes approximately equal emphasis to each season, and readers may be left wanting more details and analysis around the more noteworthy seasons, such as the 1914 season and its aftermath, as compared to other, less notable seasons. If a shortcoming of the book is the flatness of the narrative over Plank's career, a similar shortcoming could be found in individual chapters. For example, the accounts of the 1910 World Series games are given roughly the same depth of treatment as ordinary regular season games.

*Gettysburg Eddie: The Story of Eddie Plank* is a welcome contribution to the literature as a trove of research that reveals Eddie Plank's career to be a valuable window into Deadball Era. The book, however, missed an opportunity to go a step further to elevate Eddie Plank's place in baseball history by more vividly recounting his role in some of the Deadball Era's most momentous events.

*Ben Klein is a SABR member who has contributed to works on the 1970 Orioles and 1965 Twins. Ben serves on the Larry Ritter Award and Ron Gabriel Award subcommittees. He lives in Rockville, Maryland.*



**BASEBALL GODS IN  
SCANDAL: TY COBB, TRIS  
SPEAKER, AND THE DUTCH  
LEONARD AFFAIR**

By Ian S. Kahanowitz

2019, *Summer Game Books*  
[ISBN 978-1-938545-87-0, 271  
pp., \$17.99 paperback]

Reviewed by  
**Bill Lamb**  
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Some seven years after the fact, former Boston Red Sox left-hander Dutch Leonard alleged that he and baseball icons Ty Cobb and Tris Speaker, plus pitcher-turned-outfielder Smoky Joe Wood, had conspired to fix the Tigers-Indians regular season finale of 1919. According to Leonard, the four expected to make a tidy sum on bets privately placed on the game's outcome, but were thwarted when their intermediary could not get the

bets down. These claims, their investigation by Commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis, and the baseball scandals that preceded the Leonard contretemps are explored in *Baseball Gods in Scandal*, a newly-released consideration of the near century-old controversy by baseball blogger-attorney Ian S. Kahanowitz.

Scandal-knowledgeable readers are likely to open the Kahanowitz book with mixed expectations of hope and trepidation – and see both realized. This is because the author's analysis of the Dutch Leonard affair is uneven – excellent in some parts, less so in others. The work's shortcomings stem largely from incomplete research, most notably a failure to examine contemporaneous sources regarding certain assertions of fact. Rather, the endnotes reveal that the author often relied on a single source, typically a modern-day biography or a recent on-line post. In this reviewer's estimation, Kahanowitz would have served his readers better by expanding his research to include contemporaneously-published material. The text is also marred by errors of fact, particularly on matters Black Sox-related.

For example, the author embraces discredited scandal canards like the "stolen" player confessions. Contemporaneous newspaper accounts of the Black Sox criminal trial (and current scandal scholarship)

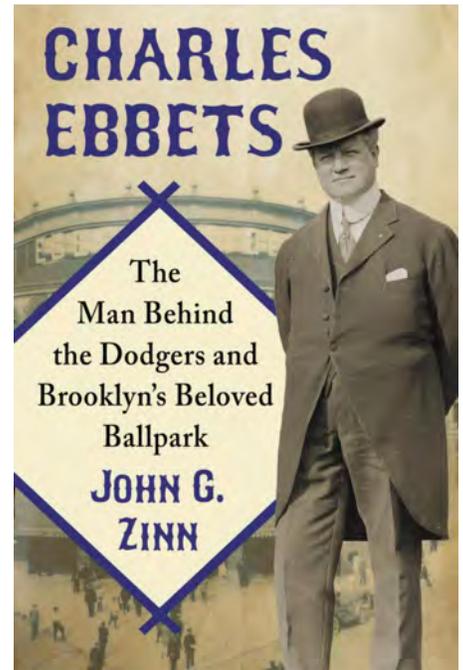
establish that the prosecution made extensive use of the player confessions before the jury, but to no avail. Another aspect of the text that might have benefitted from additional research is the narrative on the early game, as reflected in the following Chapter 1 passage: "Unlike professional baseball for the last 100+ years which is played in large metropolitan areas, early on the game was played in small country towns. It was a game among farmers and farming towns," citing a 2013 post on a Texas A&M website as authority for this proposition. In fact, the early game was urban, not rural. As early game scholars John Thorn, Bill Ryczek, Richard Hershberger, Larry McCray, and the Protoball Project, et. al., have documented, the formation of baseball clubs traces its origins to lower Manhattan and Brooklyn in the 1840s (if not earlier), and then spread to other Northeastern cities. Baseball was not widely played in farming and rural communities until soldiers came home from the Civil War.

The book is much better once it gets to its title subject: the Dutch Leonard affair. Although the treatment is not original, it is thorough and comprehensible, an excellent exposition of the Leonard-Cobb-Speaker-Wood controversy for readers previously unfamiliar with it. The book also contains an informative segue into the Landis investigation of the

Swede Risberg-Chick Gandil allegation that the 1917 White Sox had rewarded the Tigers for laying down against them during the pennant race. Meanwhile, mini-biographies of the Leonard affair principals, plus American League President Ban Johnson and MLB Commissioner Landis, should be helpful to the non-expert reader. Because the author is himself an attorney, his commentary on the judicial philosophy of Judge Landis during his tenure on the federal bench makes interesting and welcome reading, even for those who, like this reviewer, do not agree with it. In any event, it is difficult to take issue with the fact that an autocrat like Landis was just what Organized Baseball needed in the midst of the Black Sox scandal, and his banishment of the courtroom-acquitted players was, as the author aptly notes, bold and salutary action that served the game well.

Whether or not his cohorts did what Dutch Leonard accused them of – and the evidence seems facially damning in the cases of Cobb and Wood, much less so with Speaker – those interested in how baseball dealt with post-Black Sox embarrassments will find valuable information in Ian S. Kahanowitz’s exploration of the affair. Particularly illuminating is the author’s publication of those aspects of Smoky Joe Wood’s interview by Lawrence Ritter that did not find their way into his 1965 classic *The Glory of Their Times*. In the final analysis, *Baseball Gods in Scandal* is worth reading, a decent book that would have been better with more thorough research and fact-checking.

*Bill Lamb is the editor of The Inside Game and the author of Black Sox in the Courtroom: The Grand Jury, Criminal Trial and Civil Litigation (McFarland, 2013).*



**CHARLES EBBETS: THE MAN BEHIND THE DODGERS AND BROOKLYN'S BELOVED BALLPARK**

**By John G. Zinn**

*2018, McFarland  
[ISBN: 978-0786499731. 252 pp. \$35.00 USD. Softcover]*

Reviewed by  
**Steve Landau**  
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The memory of Charles Ebbets has receded into the mist of baseball’s past. Ebbets Field is a legendary stadium thanks in parts to Jackie Robinson, the glory of New York baseball from 1947-1956, and Roger Kahn’s memorable *Boys of Summer*. John G. Zinn has reintroduced Ebbets to us, as a man in addition to an iconic ball park, documenting an association with the Dodgers over 30 years. Zinn’s work



(Washington) Evening Star, January 8, 1915

successfully intertwines the personal stories of Ebbets' marriage, local political career, and financial struggles with his baseball career.

The most compelling aspect of Zinn's work is his accounting of the front office operations and the ownership of a major league team in the early days of baseball – when franchises were small and struggling businesses and club owners were struggling to master the business of baseball. Ebbets association with the Brooklyn major league team began with its founding in 1883 as “assistant secretary and handyman,” leading to the franchise's debut season in the American Association in 1884 and entry into the National League in 1890. The author is at his best when describing the small front offices, the meetings and political jockeying of NL franchises from the 1880s to the 1920s, and the direct relationships among owners, managers, and field captains, which are unlike these relationships today.

Zinn features Ebbets' central role in the struggles of the early years of baseball as a business, and the collaboration and rivalries among owners. Among the highlights are the economic need for Sunday baseball and the political fight to secure it, Ebbets rise to prominence within the NL in developing a fair schedule supported by all owners, his feuding with fellow owners John T. Brush and Andrew

Freedman, and of course, the development of Ebbets Field.

Ebbets was born in 1859 and his future baseball career came with several advantages. First, his family was apparently comfortable, and his life was not a story about a hard-scrabble childhood, even though he was born in an eclectic neighborhood of bars, brothels, and “rowdies” now known as SoHo in Manhattan. More importantly, Ebbets was born into a baseball family. The Ebbets family was represented on the Knickerbocker Club of New York in the 1840s and another relative played baseball in the 1850s.

The early days of the business of baseball are underscored by Zinn's estimate of Ebbets' first annual salary at \$300-\$500, which was roughly the average annual wage of workers in the United States at that time, though Ebbets apparently supplemented this income with other part-time endeavors. Zinn pegs average player salaries at less than \$1,500. During Ebbets' tenure, the value of the Dodger franchise was growing. The team was founded and capitalized with \$20,000, worth about \$540,000 in current dollars. Rivalry with the Brooklyn team of the Players League and eventual consolidation of the two teams in the National League led to the recapitalization of the Brooklyn franchise at \$250,000 in 1890. In 1914, as the American and National Leagues were dueling

with the Federal League, Brooklyn was recapitalized at \$550,000 in common and preferred stock, in addition to the \$700,000 value placed on Ebbets Field.

Ebbets served a virtual apprenticeship to team founder and president Charles Byrne until the latter's death in 1898. (Unfortunately, this is not clear in the book; due to a typo the date of Byrne's ultimately fatal illness is given as May 1987). Ebbets then became president of the club, and although his ownership stake varied over the years, as the economics of baseball changed, he controlled the Brooklyn club until his death at the outset of the 1925 season.

Zinn expends a great deal of space justifying Ebbets' reputation for “cheapness” because of the struggles of baseball economics and the fact that many owners of the time, including Ebbets, were not wealthy outside of baseball and were financially dependent on the profitability of the clubs. Remember, Ebbets operated in an era before television contracts or taxpayer-subsidized ballparks, and club income was solely dependent on turnstile income and concessions. Also, as Zinn describes, the reserve clause gave Ebbets' players no leverage other than when other new leagues rose to challenge the established order.

If the best parts of this book are the struggle of establishing the business of baseball against

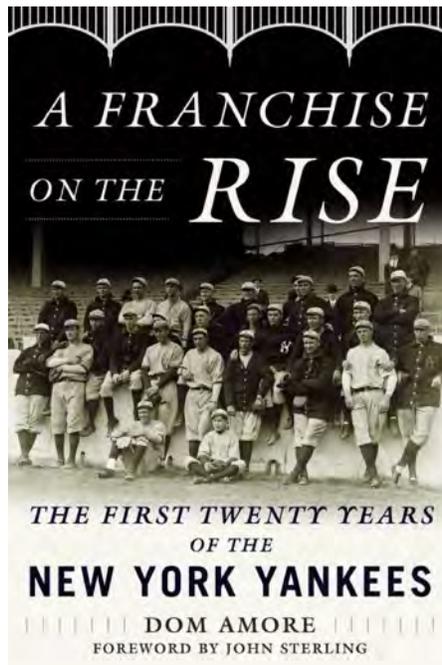
local and national economic trends, an annoyance while reading the book is the overuse of the word “magnate” to describe owners. Magnate may have been a commonplace term for referencing nineteenth and early twentieth century baseball owners, but the term was overused and will distract readers not familiar with of the vocabulary of early baseball. Many owners were struggling businessmen who were trying to keep afloat on the backs of players and in the face of significant debt. Zinn documents this well, particularly in the case of Ebbets, and I wish he curbed the references to “magnates.”

Overall, however, *Charles Ebbets: The Man Behind the Dodgers and Brooklyn’s Beloved Ballpark*, presents an excellent account of the efforts required to establish the business of baseball in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and of Charles Ebbets’ significant contributions towards that end.

*Steve Landau is a SABR member and a frequent attendee at the national convention. He is an economic consultant from Boston and a member of the Deadball Era Committee.*



Pete Gurwit 1914



**A FRANCHISE ON THE RISE:  
THE FIRST TWENTY YEARS  
OF THE NEW YORK  
YANKEES**

**By Dom Amore**

*2018, Skyhorse Publishing  
[ISBN: 978-1613219478. 328  
pp. \$27.99 USD. Hardcover]*

Reviewed by  
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Most baseball fans think of the twentieth century New York Yankees as a juggernaut, winning pennant after pennant and World Series after World Series. I would imagine a question posed to the patrons in your favorite family breakfast restaurant asking how many pennants the Yankees won from 1903 to 1965, would be answered with “all of them.” Now we learn from Dom Amore in *A Franchise on the Rise: The*

*First Twenty Years of the New York Yankees* that the early New York American League teams were human, in all that being human means.

Amore follows the early Yankees in a way that never leads to boredom. Basically, he tackles each year by highlighting one player or person and leads us through that year and beyond. In this way people, and not team season results, become front and center. For example, the chapter on Willie Keeler is one of the best of a player that I have ever read. We all know his “Hit ‘em where they ain’t” philosophy, but we now learn how it came about. And Amore’s comparing Keeler to Ichiro Suzuki provides a recognizable image to a more recent generation of fans. Another interesting read is the chapter relating to the purchase of the team by Jacob Ruppert and Til Huston. The relationship of these two men is a reoccurring topic throughout the rest of the book.

Just as interesting and informative is the chapter featuring Ed Barrow. Amore quotes Barrow as saying: “The spotlight should be reserved for the players and players alone.” I disagree when it comes to books. Off-field occurrences are always of great interest to SABR readers. The chapter titled “The House That Was Built in a Hurry” is a nice read for anyone interested in ballpark construction. And how many of us knew the

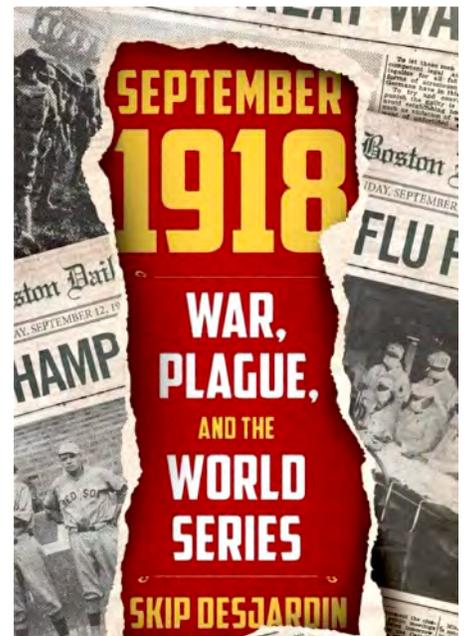
interlocking NY as the Yankee signature came from a medal honoring police officers? Another interesting tidbit I had never heard was the story of the Miracle Braves killing a jinx involving \$2 bills. It is small things like this that make sports history interesting and fun.

I really don't know how much of this diverse information is available in other sources, but it is nice to have so much information and so many stories of the famous and not-so famous in one book. One disappointment for me was the lack of footnotes or endnotes. I miss this. It's not that I don't trust the author or his information. But so many times I have been intrigued by a short story or topic in a book or article and went back to the original source to find out more. This has led to endless avenues in baseball curiosities. Having said this, I will add this could have been an editor's decision, decided by space considerations. I am also aware there are many who find footnotes or endnotes a

distraction. Whatever the case for or against these notes, their omission does not take anything away from the Yankee story.

*A Franchise on the Rise* is an informative, enjoyable read. What I liked about Amore's writing style is that it is serious, but not stuffy. Part of Amore's first sentence in Chapter 19 reads: "The phone jangled on the nightstand and the big man rolled over, pushed aside an empty glass and an ashtray with cigar butts, and picked it up." I was pushed into the world of Raymond Chandler or Dashiell Hammett. But still the author gives us what we want to know about the early New York Yankees. I hope others will gain some knowledge and have as much enjoyment as I did reading the early history of the Yankees. I do believe this book should be on the shelf of Deadball readers. And yes, even you Yankee haters!

*Dennis Pajot, a retiree from the City of Milwaukee work force, participates in various Deadball Era activities.*



## SEPTEMBER 1918: WAR, PLAGUE, AND THE WORLD SERIES

By Skip Desjardin

2018, Regnery History  
[ISBN: 978-1621576204. 320 pp. \$29.99 USD. Hardcover]

Reviewed by  
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Skip Desjardin won the coveted Larry Ritter Book Award from the Deadball Era Committee for *September 1918*. Surprisingly but perhaps fortunately, the baseball action of this work concludes with the Red Sox winning the World Series on page 91, leaving the last 168 pages to focus on admittedly weightier matters like World War I and the spread of disease.

Regrettably, the baseball portion of the book is far from error-free. Desjardin makes basic mistakes in the second

Scratch a man who cares nothing for baseball, whose pulse does not leap when the home team wins, whose brow does not grow cold and clammy when it faces a shut out, and you will find a man who puts lead quarters into the collection plate and wishes that he was as rich and sinful as E. H. Harriman. It would do such a man lots of good if he could be forced to attend, say, 23 games. It would reform and civilize him and make him walk in the path of truth and fairness. It would give him a taste of the joy of honest defeat. Baseball is the one perfect game. It is honest, American and manly. It is invigorating as six fingers of the best old rye and as pure as a bottle of pasteurized milk.

*The (New London) Day, June 5, 1907*

paragraph of the first chapter of the book when he misidentifies Philadelphia's John Watson as a Boston pitcher who had started both ends of a late-season Saturday doubleheader. In fact, Carl Mays of the Red Sox had started and won both ends of a doubleheader the prior day. Like a hurler giving up a gopher ball on the second pitch of a game, these early Desjardin errors fail to inspire confidence in the discriminating observer. The problem recurs on the second page when he writes that the Red Sox had won four of the fifteen World Series played before 1918 in spite of the fact that only fourteen World Series took place through 1917. Perhaps he did not know that the 1904 championship never happened? On page 11, Desjardin says that Boston did not let all of its starters finish the last game of the season although two of them (Stuffy McInnis and George Whiteman) completed the contest. On page 80, Desjardin writes about a former Sox second baseman named Jimmy Corey, a name not found in Baseball Reference. *September 1918* does have an index; oddly, Corey's name is not in the index (the index has other problems, including some municipalities but excluding others like Haverhill on page 169).

One can pass a much more pleasant time reviewing a book than fact-checking it, but when basic facts do not check out,

one wonders what in the name of Henry Chadwick has happened? The acknowledgements at the end of the text provide the best answers. What motivated this book? "I first had the germ of an idea for this book after reading Dennis Lehane's novel, *The Given Day*." What is the thesis? "The more I looked into this period, the more I discovered the amazing string of events that took place in Boston over the course of a month, and *September 1918* began to take form." How was this book researched? "At the risk of sounding self-serving, I could not have done the research required for a book like this without the miraculous technology developed by my employer, Google."

Readers faced with a choice between Lehane's fiction and Desjardin's non-fiction should choose the former, which is no knock on the *September 1918* author given the prowess of the best-selling writer. But finding interesting coincidences that happened in the artificial construct of a month fails to make for a compelling read. And someone who works for Google and who thanks Google for its wonderful technology should make better use of its search engine. More damningly, the good SABR people who doubtless read widely and take seriously their duties of selecting the Ritter Award should bypass books with basic research errors that do not focus on baseball.

Physician, heal thyself. The author of this screed confesses that he, too, has made horrible errors in his baseball writing. We all do. That's why the Good Lord saw to it that Warren Corbett and his terrific team of volunteer fact-checkers do their good work. If they can do so for free, surely a publishing house can pay a person or people to do some basic due diligence of their own.

Good books that focus in whole or in part on the 1918 Red Sox abound, including Allan Wood's *Babe Ruth and the 1918 Red Sox*, Glenn Stout's *The Selling of the Babe*, and SABR's own *The World Series in the Deadball Era* (disclosure: I contributed to the SABR book, but not to the 1918 section). If you want a good book on one month of World War I, *The Guns of August* by Barbara Tuchman will suit you. And if you prefer a mash-up of multiple themes, look to Lehane. As far as the Ritter Award, wait till next year and hope for a book mainly about baseball by a writer whose research you can trust.

*A loyal fan of the New York Yankees although he has lived in Massachusetts since 1995, Mark Sternman would have rooted against the Boston Red Sox in the 1918 World Series.*



Robert Edgren 1913

# When Baseball Met Big Bill Haywood



The Battle for Manchester,  
New Hampshire, 1912–1916

Scott C. Roper and  
Stephanie Abbot Roper

**WHEN BASEBALL MET BIG  
BILL HAYWOOD:  
THE BATTLE FOR  
MANCHESTER, NEW  
HAMPSHIRE, 1912– 1916**

**By Scott C. Roper and  
Stephanie Abbot Roper**

2017, McFarland

[ISBN: 978-1476665467. 252  
pp. \$29.95 USD. Softcover]

Reviewed by

**Mark Wernick**

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Talk about a niche topic! In reading and reviewing a book, there are two things I'm alert to: is the book entertaining, and is the book educational? I'm pleased to be able to say that this book fits at least one of the two criteria; I found it educational. However, I derived little pleasure from reading it and found the book somewhat of a slog. Though it took me a while to work

through this book, in the end I'm glad I read it. My lifelong love of baseball has unwittingly been a gateway for understanding and appreciating more about history, economics, mathematics, and even physiology than I otherwise might have experienced. This book exemplifies how that sort of process can work in the political and socio-economic domains.

I'll begin by offering the opinion that the title of this book is misleading in two ways. *When Baseball Met Big Bill Haywood* is neither about baseball nor about Big Bill Haywood, a founder and leader of the Industrial Workers of the World labor movement. (Haywood lived out his life in exile in Russia as a fugitive from U.S. law enforcement.) Bill Haywood is mentioned a grand total of 12 times in this book. While the socio-political movement he led bore a central relevance to the book's primary interest — the relationship between textile industry management and labor in the period between the late 1890s and early 1920s — Haywood himself is mentioned only peripherally. Authors Scott C. Roper and Stephanie Abbot Roper focus almost entirely on the details of labor-management relations in one sector of the textile industry: the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company in Manchester, New Hampshire.

Baseball enters into the discussion a bit more often, particularly in the last third of

the book, when baseball's theorized use by Amoskeag executives in soothing relations between management and labor is explored. But even here, the focus is on illuminating the relationship between baseball and textile economic dynamics to explain socio-political events between Amoskeag management and labor. There is virtually no focus on baseball itself as a competitive sport, except in passing.

As a backdrop, the Ropers describe the labor unrest in New Hampshire as the textile manufacturing business sought to be commercially competitive by employing newly arrived immigrants and by paying them as little as possible, while working them as much as possible — including putting children to work — without fomenting revolution. Several tactics were perceived by management to be necessary to keep the workers from getting too restless.

First, management believed it had to keep organized labor away from these immigrant employees. To that end, a local police chief was enlisted as an enforcer, preventing community assembly arranged by labor organizers whenever he could catch wind of such activity. Labor countered with efforts to publicize and prosecute these efforts as violations of the First Amendment. The role of journalism in representing, or failing to represent, these maneuvers by labor and

management is explored in considerable detail. Second, the bosses also tried appealing to the workers American-style patriotism. Thus, patriotic tropes, flag symbolism, and appeals to corporate loyalty as an offshoot of patriotic loyalty are utilized as hopeful reminders that the employees have it better than they did back where they came from. And third, management aimed to build an atmosphere of family wholesomeness through shared picnics, holidays, and communal gatherings in parks and play areas built especially for children and families. It is with respect to this third rubric that we see baseball enter the labor relations picture.

It appears that Amoskeag saw baseball as an important modality for promoting a sense of community and loyalty among its employees. Fielding competitive and entertaining baseball teams under the banner of corporate benevolence was a prime feature of management thinking, but how to achieve that end was subject to significant confusion. Somehow, the central authorities of Amoskeag became persuaded that building a state-of-the-art baseball stadium would draw the loyalty of the workers, especially if talented professional teams from the minor and major leagues came to town to play exhibition games in the new concrete-and-steel ballpark, one of the earliest such ballparks in the country at that time. But management

seemed to be confused about how best to utilize that venue and bungled their efforts.

One amusing anecdote related by the Ropers is worth sharing. The locally-popular Boston Red Sox played an exhibition game at Textile Field on August 17, 1914. For the game Red Sox manager Bill Carrigan promised to play his big stars, which included Harry Hooper, Tris Speaker, Duffy Lewis, and Dutch Leonard, among others. But the 2,500 fans were disappointed to find that only three regulars played for the Red Sox that day. The *Manchester Union Leader* referred to the game's relatively unknown pitcher as "George Ruth" instead of by his now-immortal nickname "Babe." One day after the game, Babe Ruth would clear waivers and be sent to Providence of the International League.

One thing this book highlights is that these were nascent times in the development of baseball systematically as entertainment, as a business, and as a competitive sport. Similarly, these were nascent times in the development of just and fair management practices that combined both effective business principles for successful competition and legal protections for workers. The two processes seem to have evolved hand-in-hand, and perhaps even provided a synergy for that evolution.

*Native Texan Mark Wernick was enticed into SABR in 1997 by Bobby Plapinger and was mentored as a newbie by the late Bill Gilbert, with whom he shared an interest in Houston baseball history and statistics. Mark lives with his wife in Houston where he has a private practice in clinical and family psychology.*



## PAUL COBB: PLAYING IN THE SHADOW OF THE GEORGIA PEACH

by **Bill Lamb**

“I am proud of my two boys. Baseball is a clean, manly sport,” Amanda Cobb declared. “I cannot deny that I am prouder of Tyrus’ achievements than he ever is, and I know Paul will make good, too. He, some day, will be as great a ballplayer as his brother.”<sup>1</sup> Whatever her other talents, Mrs. Cobb proved a faulty judge of her younger son’s ball playing abilities. Not only would Paul Cobb fail to scale the heights attained by the legendary Ty, he would not even be afforded the chance. Despite several productive seasons in the high-minor Western League, Paul Cobb never played a single game of major league baseball, spending his entire nine-season professional career in the sticks. Later in life, Paul achieved a measure of success as a business and civic leader in his adopted hometown of Sarasota, Florida. But his post-baseball life was also beset by disappointment and misfortune, culminating in the stroke that left him a nursing home patient for the final twelve years of his life. The text below recalls this long-forgotten sibling of a baseball immortal.

John Paul Cobb was the middle of three children<sup>2</sup> born to schoolmaster William Herschel Cobb (1863-1905), and his wife, the former Amanda Chitwood (1870-1936). Like his three-years-older brother Ty, Paul was born in Royston,<sup>3</sup> then a sparsely-populated hamlet nestled in the farming country of northeast Georgia. He was educated through the eighth grade at the University School for Boys,<sup>4</sup> and thereafter followed Ty’s path onto the local amateur baseball scene. While still at home, Paul lived in comfort and enjoyed community respect, as his father had risen to local prominence as a county school board commissioner and the publisher of the Royston newspaper.

In August 1905, family tranquility was abruptly shattered by a violent event: the fatal shooting of William Cobb by wife Amanda. According to Mrs. Cobb, sleeping alone in the family residence late at night, she had fired in self-defense, mistaking her returning husband for a late-night intruder. Amid



*Paul Cobb, age 18*

rumor that the beautiful Amanda had been engaged in covering up an extra-marital affair, suspicious law enforcement authorities charged her with involuntary manslaughter.<sup>5</sup> Among the most vocal defenders of the accused was her now 16-year-old son Paul who categorically denied reports of friction between his parents. “Domestic relations between [my] father and mother were the most pleasant,” insisted Paul. “They lived together in perfect harmony, and the reports [to the contrary] are absolutely untrue.”<sup>6</sup> The beneficiary of sympathetic treatment by both the trial judge and a hometown jury, Amanda Cobb was subsequently acquitted.

By the time that his mother was placed on trial, Ty Cobb had already ascended to the Detroit Tigers. And by the close of the 1906 season, he was a Tigers outfield regular and on the cusp of stardom. During the 1907 preseason, Ty’s younger brother traveled from home to join him for workouts at the Tigers’

preseason camp in Augusta, Georgia. Once there, Paul made a good first impression. Although the Cobb brothers did not look much alike, the 6-foot/168 pound Paul had near Ty's size and physique, plus his sandy hair. Besides age, their primary difference was that Paul batted righty, not lefty. Also in Tigers camp that spring was Red Killefer, a recent acquisition from the Kalamazoo White Sox of the Class D Southern Michigan League. Acting on Killefer's recommendation, Kalamazoo signed the younger Cobb to his first professional baseball contract.<sup>7</sup>

As would prove the case throughout his pro career, Paul's surname generated oversized expectations. Even before he reached town, the *Kalamazoo Gazette* was hopeful, informing local fans that "young Cobb has traveled with the Tigers this [pre]season and is in good condition. He has been working out with them daily and has shown up remarkably well. ... While he is but 18 years old, he has the making of a professional ballplayer."<sup>8</sup> When Paul arrived in mid-April, Kalamazoo manager Maurice Myers and a brass band were on hand at the train station to greet him. Once the season began, the youngster got off to a fast start. But soon a slump at the plate, quarreling with teammates, and temper tantrums put Cobb in the Kalamazoo doghouse.<sup>9</sup> Batting a disappointing .242 with only four-extra-base hits after 34 games, Cobb was released in late June. Days later, Paul signed with another Southern Michigan League club, the Mt. Clemens Bathers.<sup>10</sup> An unspecified "hitch in the deal" nullified the move, but before July was out, young Cobb was playing outfield for the woeful (29-102) Leavenworth (Kansas) Convicts of the Class C Western Association. There, his work was a modest improvement on that of his new teammates; Cobb posted a club-high .250 BA, but committed 11 errors in 52 games-played.

In 1907, Ty Cobb cemented his status as a rising star, hitting .350 and capturing the first of his 12 American League batting crowns. The following season, he was again the league batting champ. Meanwhile, younger brother Paul continued playing in the Western Association. He began the 1908 season in the outfield of the last-place Enid (Oklahoma) Railroaders, but by June 1, he had



*Paul Cobb, 1908 Joplin Miners*

donned the livery of a circuit rival, the Joplin (Missouri) Miners. There, the Cobb bat caught fire. By early August, a reported .351 batting average<sup>11</sup> and the allure of the Cobb name had kindled major league interest in Paul, with St. Louis Browns manager Jimmy McAleer being the lead suitor. But before paying the \$3,000 price that Joplin club president A.J. Baker placed on Cobb, McAleer assigned trusted scout Jack O'Connor the task of checking out the youngster.<sup>12</sup>

Reportedly, O'Connor was not particularly impressed,<sup>13</sup> but McAleer, enamored of the Cobb name, urged Browns boss Robert Hedges to finance young Cobb's acquisition, anyway. And soon the press was reporting that Paul Cobb had been purchased by St. Louis.<sup>14</sup> With a competitive Joplin club still in the pennant chase, the plan was for Cobb to play out the Western Association schedule, and then report to St. Louis in late-September.<sup>15</sup> Paul finished the WA campaign with only a .273 batting average (with a Deadball Era-impressive 10 home runs),<sup>16</sup> but at season's end, he was not summoned to St. Louis as previously intended. Instead, he journeyed west to play some post-season exhibition games with the Oakland Commuters (or Oaks) of the independent California State League.<sup>17</sup> Thereafter, he returned home to Georgia to spend the off-season months fishing and hunting, often with brother Ty,<sup>18</sup> in anticipation of his audition in the Browns' 1909 spring camp. In the meantime, the *Augusta Chronicle* foresaw only success in the local boy's future: "Paul Cobb is a brilliant young athlete. Paul is expected to be a big and shining star in the American League in a year or two."<sup>19</sup>

Basking in such accolades, Paul was doubtless deflated when informed that he would not be an invitee to Browns training camp after all. The club had 41 ball players under contract,<sup>20</sup> and manager McAleer concluded that returning veterans would fill the Browns' outfield spots in 1909. Thus, the unseasoned Cobb would not be needed in camp.<sup>21</sup> Paul's fortunes spiraled downward from there. Anxious to place a promising local in their lineup, the Augusta Tourists of the Class C South Atlantic Association briefly put Cobb in uniform.<sup>22</sup> The St. Louis Browns, however, still held the Cobb contact rights, and when agreement with Augusta on option



***Ty and Paul Cobb***

terms could not be reached, Paul was sold to the Memphis Turtles of the Southern Association.<sup>23</sup> Class A competition was promptly adjudged too fast for the youngster, and he was released after a 10-day trial.<sup>24</sup> After contemplating quitting, Cobb headed back to the California State League where he landed a berth with the Fresno Raisin Growers.<sup>25</sup> Back home in Georgia at season's end, Paul's California sojourn was reported as a triumph in which "he batted hard and fielded brilliantly." It was even claimed that he hit seven home runs in his first six games in a Fresno uniform.<sup>26</sup> But in fact, Cobb washed out again and was released after batting a meager .208 (but with nine homers) in 36 games with Fresno. By early August, he was barely clinging

to a professional career, playing for an independent club in desolate Douglas, Arizona.<sup>27</sup>

Despite Paul's repeated tryout failures, the Cobb name retained its attraction, and somehow, he received yet another chance – and in a Class A circuit, no less. Placed in left field by the Lincoln (Nebraska) Antelopes of the Western League, the now 21-year-old suddenly blossomed. In 167 games, Cobb batted .310, with 43 extra-base hits and 37 stolen bases.<sup>28</sup> Undrafted by a major leagues club, Paul returned to Lincoln for an encore in 1911. By season's end, his numbers – a .306 BA in 168 games played, with 50 extra-base hits and 48 stolen bases – were near-identical to those of the previous year.

History was about to repeat itself for Paul Cobb. As it had three seasons earlier, Cobb's performance generated major league interest in him. And once again, the man most interested in him was Jimmy McAleer, now manager of the AL Washington Senators.<sup>29</sup> Before purchasing the Cobb contract, however, McAleer dispatched veteran scout Mike Kahoe to Lincoln to check out Cobb and second baseman Ed Gagnier. Unhappily for Paul, Kahoe was no more impressed than Jack O'Connor had been in 1908. While he deemed Paul a prospect, Kahoe reported that he was not ripe for the major leagues "just yet."<sup>30</sup> Thereafter, Cobb was further disappointed when he again went unclaimed in the late-season major league draft.

With his hopes for a big leagues chance seemingly dashed, Paul adopted a new strategy, one that might lead him into minor league club management. In concert with current Lincoln skipper Bob Unglaub, a one-time American League infielder, Paul attempted to persuade his now well-off brother Ty to purchase the Lincoln club and relocate it to Omaha. A spasm of press speculation about such a deal being in the works was published,<sup>31</sup> but in the end, nothing came of it. The Lincoln franchise was, indeed, available, but Ty never made an offer for the club.<sup>32</sup>

The 1912 season would prove a pivotal one for Paul Cobb. Dissatisfied with both his situation and his salary in Lincoln, Cobb sought and was granted permission to negotiate a deal for himself with another club.<sup>33</sup> But the \$1,500 demanded for Cobb's waiver by Lincoln club president Don Despain may

have been an insurmountable impediment.<sup>34</sup> Whatever the case, Paul found no takers and was therefore obliged to remain in the Lincoln fold.<sup>35</sup> He got off to another solid start, but the season's highlight occurred off the diamond. In late June, Paul married a 20-year-old Lincoln lass named Beulah Postal.<sup>36</sup> Unhappily, the union would be brief, childless, and end in divorce.<sup>37</sup> Back on the field, meanwhile, Paul continued to produce decent stats, if not quite on the level of his previous two Lincoln campaigns. Going into a September 12 contest against the Des Moines Boosters, he was hitting .265 in 144 games, with 50 extra-base hits and 22 stolen bases. Then, a fractured wrist courtesy of an errant Fred Sweet fastball brought the Cobb season to an end.

Cobb returned to Lincoln for the 1913 season – but he was not the same player. In 82 games, he batted a soft .253 with little of his former power. He was unconditionally released in late July. Still only 24, Paul resolved to continue his career and quickly signed with the Ogden (Utah) Cannons of the Class D Union Association.<sup>38</sup> A steady diet of UA pitching revived the Cobb bat. In 36 late-season contests, he hit .333 with a career-best .482 slugging percentage. With no competing offers to consider, Paul returned to Ogden the following year. He was batting .331 with a league-leading 43 doubles<sup>39</sup> when the Union Association folded in early August. Thereafter, the *Ogden Evening Standard* and *Salt Lake Telegram* named Cobb to their Union Association all-star teams. By then, he was back in Lincoln playing post-season exhibition games for his old Western League club.<sup>40</sup>

Cobb's fortunes hit rock bottom in 1915 when no club in professional baseball offered him a job. "Any other year, a player with his record could pick from several offers," commiserated the *Seattle Times*. Cobb "is at liberty now because there are fewer leagues, and fewer players on all minor clubs and less money is being paid out."<sup>41</sup> Paul spent the summer at his mother's residence in Georgia, but found work the following spring. He began the 1916 season with the Terre Haute (Indiana) Hottentots of the Class B Central League, but lasted only five games. A brief tour (six games) with the Newport News Shipbuilders of the Class C Virginia League

followed. Cobb's time in Organized Baseball then came to a close with an 18-game stint as player-manager of the Jacksonville Tarpons of the SALLY League, a circuit that he had played in briefly back in 1909.

In nine seasons played in Class A to Class D leagues, Cobb posted a combined .285 BA, with 299 extra-base hits and 189 stolen bases.<sup>42</sup> Had his surname been other than Cobb, most would have considered it a perfectly respectable professional career. As it was, the name of Paul Cobb (and Henry Mathewson, Joe Evers, Josh Clarke, and other unfortunates) was regularly invoked in cautionary sports columns about the predictable talent shortcomings of younger siblings of major league stars.<sup>43</sup> Reduced to playing semipro ball, Paul continued on, finishing the 1916 season with an independent team in Sanford, Florida, and then playing with clubs in Toledo and Lima, Ohio, the following year, before ending up back in Douglas, Arizona in early 1918.

On April 18, 1918, Cobb enlisted in the United States Marine Corps. With World War I raging, he was dispatched to Parris Island, South Carolina, for combat training. But soon, Paul found himself playing ball for a service team based in Quantico, Virginia. The Quantico squad also included Dots Miller, Nig Clarke, and other major/minor league players.<sup>44</sup> Cobb's unit arrived in France only three weeks before hostilities ceased, but remained overseas until July 1919. Upon receiving his honorable discharge, the no-longer-married Cobb took up residence in Atlanta with his mother and sister Florence. There, he met, courted, and later wed Atlantan Ella Rebecca Smith. Following their 1923 nuptials, the couple moved to Sarasota, Florida, where their only child, John Paul Cobb, Jr., was born in August 1924.

Still a young man, Paul Cobb finally found success in the Sunshine State. He opened a soon-thriving Sarasota real estate office, and thereafter immersed himself in the business and civic affairs of his new hometown. He was active in Sarasota Chamber of Commerce endeavors, and joined various local fraternal organizations.<sup>45</sup> Cobb also continued playing ball for area semipro nines.<sup>46</sup> Forays in the political arena yielded mixed results. In 1931, Cobb lost the first of several bids to become Sarasota



*Paul Cobb, c. 1935*

mayor. But the following year, he was elected chairman of the Sarasota School Board. Reelected four years later, Chairman Cobb spearheaded efforts to finance and build Booker High School, a new secondary school for local black youth. He was also instrumental in persuading the Boston Red Sox to conduct spring training at Payne Park in Sarasota. In his limited free time, Paul hunted and fished.<sup>47</sup>

In 1936, tragedy intruded on this fulfilling existence. On September 27, Ella Cobb, Paul's 48-year-old wife, committed suicide, asphyxiating herself via the gas jets of the kitchen oven.<sup>48</sup> Less than a month later, beloved mother Amanda died at home in Atlanta, leaving Paul to care for his sister Florence, unmarried and crippled by arthritis. Despite his troubles, Cobb forged on. Among other things, he continued to emcee the annual Sarasota High School sports banquet,<sup>49</sup> and began supervising the building of local housing projects.<sup>50</sup>

By the late 1940s, the death of his sister Florence (in June 1944) and the marriage and relocation to Mobile of his son Paul, Jr., left Cobb pretty much by his lonesome. In early 1952, he was incapacitated by

a stroke and, sadly, would spend the remainder of his life in a Sarasota nursing home. When Ty Cobb died in July 1961, his younger brother was unable to attend the funeral.<sup>51</sup> John Paul Cobb passed away at the nursing home on October 27, 1964.<sup>52</sup> He was 75. After funeral services conducted by a Presbyterian minister, his remains were interred next to those of second wife Ella at Manasota Memorial Park in nearby Bradenton.<sup>53</sup> The only immediate survivor was son John Paul Cobb, Jr.

## SOURCES

The most detailed source of information about Paul Cobb's playing days is "Paul Cobb, Georgia Peach II," posted on *DiamondsintheDusk.com*, July 23, 2015. Regarding our subject's later life, reliance was placed on "John Paul Cobb," a biographical essay by distant relative Wesley Fricks posted on *Find-A-Grave.com*, March 6, 2015. Biographical and baseball data have also been taken from US Census reports and Cobb family posts accessed via *Ancestry.com*, and from certain of the newspaper articles cited below, particularly the obituary published in the *Sarasota (Florida) Herald Tribune*, October 30, 1964. Unless otherwise noted, stats have been taken from *Baseball-Reference*.

## ENDNOTES

1. "Says Brother Will Equal Tyrus Cobb," *Trenton Evening Times*, July 14, 1912: 27.
2. The other Cobb children were the celebrated Tyrus Raymond (born 1886) and younger sister Florence (1892).
3. Other sources designate Paul's birthplace as Narrows or Dahlonga, Georgia. But in his signed and sworn WWI draft registration form, Paul himself gave Royston as his birthplace, and his *Baseball-Reference* entry is in accord.
4. Per "Paul Cobb, Georgia Peach II," *DiamondsintheDusk.com*, posted July 25, 2015. This and certain other sources also maintain that Paul attended Georgia Tech in 1906, but withdrew after his first semester.
5. More detail on the death of William Cobb is provided in Charles Leerhsen, *Ty Cobb, A Terrible Beauty* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015), 89-92, and William R. Cobb, "The Georgia Peach: Stumped by the Storyteller," *The National Pastime*, Summer 2010, 84-101.
6. As quoted in "Mrs. Cobb Gives Bail," *Washington Post*, August 13, 1905: 2.
7. As reported in "Young Cobb from Detroit," *Kalamazoo (Michigan) Gazette*, March 17, 1907: 10.
8. Per "Paul Cobb Here Next Week," *Kalamazoo Gazette*, April 11, 1907: 6.
9. Per "Paul Cobb Not a Lemon," *Kalamazoo Gazette*, November 23, 1907, and "Paul Cobb, Georgia Peach, II."
10. As reported in "Signs New Players," *Grand Rapids (Michigan) Press*, July 2, 1907: 6. See also, "So. Michigan Gossip," *Kalamazoo Gazette*, July 2, 1907: 6, reprinting an item published in the *Jackson (Michigan) Citizen-Patriot*.
11. As reported in "Is After Ty's Brother," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 8, 1908: 7. *Baseball-Reference* has no stats for Paul Cobb in 1908.
12. As reported in "Ty Cobb's Brother," *Grand Rapids Press*, August 11, 1908: 6, "Still Another Cobb," *Kalamazoo Gazette*, August 13, 1908: 6, and elsewhere.
13. As subsequently reported in "Will Try Out Cobb's Brother," (Springfield) *Illinois State Register*, December 14, 1908: 3, "Paul Cobb a Lemon?" *Milwaukee Journal*, December 21, 1908: 9, and elsewhere.
14. See e.g., "St Louis Buys Paul Cobb," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 16, 1908: 17, and "St. Louis Buys Ty Cobb's Brother," *Washington Post*, August 16, 1908: 4.
15. As per "Ty Cobb's Brother Is Also a Swatter," *Saginaw (Michigan) Times*, September 10, 1908: 4, and *Wilkes-Barre (Pennsylvania) Times*, September 24, 1908: 10, both with accompanying photo of Paul in his righty batting stance. See also, "Dope," *The (Columbia, South Carolina) State*, September 19, 1908: 5.
16. Per "Paul Cobb's Batting Record Was .273," *Detroit Times*, December 11, 1908: 7. The 10 homers were among the 35 extra-base hits registered by Cobb during 1908. See "Paul Cobb Says He Will Stick in Big Leagues," *Macon (Georgia) Telegraph*, February 19, 1909: 6.
17. It was further reported that Paul would accompany the Oakland club on a barnstorming tour of the Orient. See e.g., the *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 15, 1908: 11, and the (Portland) *Oregon Journal*, October 18, 1908: 22. But he did not.
18. See "Cobb Brothers Members of Hunting Party," *Augusta (Georgia) Chronicle*, November 21, 1908: 3.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Per "Forty-One Men on Brown Roster," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, December 30, 1908: 6.

21. As reported in "Nineteen Men with Browns," *Dallas Morning News*, March 5, 1909: 14, and "Are After Detroit," *Montgomery (Alabama) Advertiser*, March 7, 1909: 15.
22. As reported in "Augusta Lineup Much Strengthened," *Macon Telegraph*, May 2, 1909: 7, and "Paul Cobb Again in Tourist Line Up," *Augusta Chronicle*, May 4, 1909: 5.
23. See "P. Cobb Off to Memphis," *Columbus (Georgia) Enquirer*, May 15, 1909: 10.
24. As reported in "Paul Cobb Again Released," *Grand Forks (North Dakota) Herald*, May 28, 1909: 6, "Paul Cobb Released for Third Time," *Macon Telegraph*, May 28, 1909: 6, and elsewhere. According to "Paul Cobb: Georgia Peach, II," Paul went 5-for-14 (.357) in his brief trial by Memphis.
25. Per "Paul Cobb Will Play in the Outlaw League," *Macon Telegraph*, May 31, 1909: 7, "Brother Paul Cobb," *Charleston Evening Post*, June 2, 1909: 3.
26. "See Paul Cobb Back from His Travels," *Augusta Chronicle*, November 21, 1909: 6.
27. See "Douglas Gossip about Paul Cobb," *Bisbee (Arizona) Review*, August 10, 1909: 3.
28. The 1910 stolen bases stat comes from "Paul Cobb: Georgia Peach, II," as Baseball-Reference provides no stolen bases figure for any Cobb season.
29. McAleer had resigned as St. Louis Browns manager late in the 1909 season, and assumed the reins in Washington in 1910.
30. Per J. Ed Grillo, "Cobb and Gagnier Will Not Be Members of Nationals," *Washington Times*, July 28, 1911: 9. The rejected Gagnier would later play two seasons in the Federal League.
31. See e.g., "Georgia Peach May Buy Lincoln Franchise," *Colorado Springs (Colorado) Gazette*, September 29, 1911: 3, and "Ty Cobb May Be Owner of Ball Club," *Salt Lake (Utah) Telegram*, October 2, 1911: 7.
32. See "The Cobb Story Bull," *Kansas City Star*, October 9, 1911: 10, quoting Lincoln club president Don Despain as saying: "Tyrus has not made me a proposition yet. The story is funny."
33. As subsequently reported in "Sports Notes," *Erie (Pennsylvania) Times*, April 17, 1912: 15, and elsewhere.
34. Per a *Wichita Eagle* news item reprinted in the *Topeka State Journal*, April 5, 1912: 5.
35. See "Paul Cobb To Be With Lincoln Club," *Omaha Bee*, March 31, 1912: 44, and "Not Good Enough," *Topeka State Journal*, April 2, 1912: 4.
36. As reported with ink drawing in "Ty Cobb's Mother in Denver with Son Paul and His Bride," *Denver Post*, June 27, 1912: 11. See also, an untitled Cobb-Postal wedding article published in the *Missouri Valley (Iowa) Times*, June 27, 1912: 8.
37. See "Wife Wants Divorce; Husband Plays Ball," an unattributed September 15, 1916 news item reproduced in "Paul Cobb: Georgia Peach, II."
38. Per "Cobb's Brother Signs," *Washington Post*, August 1, 1913: 9.
39. According to the stats provided in "Paul Cobb: Georgia Peach, II." Baseball-Reference credits Cobb with only 37 doubles in 1914.
40. In late September, Paul pitched Lincoln to a 4-3 victory over a local semipro team. See "Fairbury Grays Lose to Lincoln Leaguers," *Omaha Bee*, September 29, 1914: 4.
41. "Ty's Brother Can't Get Job," *Seattle Times*, April 11, 1915: 44.
42. Cobb's minor league stats are taken from "Paul Cobb: Georgia Peach, II" which provides 1907 numbers and cumulative stolen base totals that Baseball-Reference does not.
43. See e.g., "One for the Scientific Chaps – Why Don't Star Athletes Have Brothers Who Star?" *Detroit Times*, August 4, 1915: 5, and "Jinx Has 'Kids' in Mighty Grasp," *Grand Forks Herald*, September 21, 1915: 9.
44. See "Baseball Is Quiet as Night of June 30," *Philadelphia Evening Public Ledger*, July 21, 1919: 18.
45. Per Wesley Fricks, "John Paul Cobb," Find-A-Grave memorial essay, 2.
46. See "Semi-Pro Baseball Here for Summer," *Bradenton (Florida) Herald*, April 16, 1925: 2.
47. Fricks, 2. Paul Cobb and youthful Red Sox owner Tom Yawkey were friends.
48. As reported in "Wife of Ty Cobb's Brother Kills Self," *Augusta Chronicle*, September 28, 1936: 1; "Mrs. J. Paul Cobb," *Bradenton (Florida) Herald*, September 28, 1935: 8, and elsewhere.
49. See "Great Eleven Stopped Tide," *Charleston Evening Post*, January 15, 1938: 8.
50. Per Fricks, 2.
51. As noted in "Last Rites Set Today for Ty Cobb," *Dallas Morning News*, July 19, 1961: 2.
52. The John Paul Cobb death certificate lists respiratory failure from pneumonia as the immediate cause of death. The underlying cause was advanced cerebral arteriosclerosis.
53. See "John Paul Cobb," *Sarasota Herald Tribune*, October 30, 1964: 2.



**BREAKING BABE RUTH:  
BASEBALL'S CAMPAIGN  
AGAINST ITS BIGGEST STAR**

**By Edmund F. Wehrle**

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While most Americans have some familiarity with the legend of Babe Ruth, the rags-to-riches story from orphanage to home run king and national idol, Edmund F. Wehrle, a history professor at Eastern Illinois University, doesn't retrace that familiar ground with his biography of the slugger. Instead, Wehrle attempts (and mostly succeeds) to write an economic and cultural biography of the Bambino. Wehrle rejects the common depiction of there being only the naïve or child-

like Ruth and concludes that while Ruth certainly had those characteristics, he also realized that he had little leverage when it came to his salary because of the reserve clause, which chained players to one team.

Wehrle rightly points out that what we know about Ruth a century later is at best second-hand. Many of the columnists and reporters who created the "first draft of history" about Ruth traveled with their team at the club's expense and received what we would call "swag bags" each winter from the team they covered. Reporters thus had every reason to portray Ruth as a rascal who, on numerous occasions, such as his 1925 public apology (humiliation) to manager Miller Huggins, needed to be reined in and reminded of his subordinate position. Ruth the rascal, Wehrle writes, stood out in stark contrast to the reform movement organized baseball had undertaken after the Black Sox scandal, epitomized by the appointment of Judge Landis as the first commissioner and the campaigns against rowdyism and gambling among the spectators. Of course, one wonders if printing the details of Ruth's bacchanalian detours helped sell newspapers, a topic Wehrle barely touches upon. Also clouding any possible modern-day objectivity was Ruth's own publicity machine, e.g., ghostwritten columns, led by Christy Walsh, Ruth's manager and "spin doctor." However, that Ruth

understood enough about the mass media of the 1920s to know that he needed his own "spin doctor," helps support Wehrle's skepticism about describing Ruth solely as the overgrown boy with no self-restraint. The book would have been improved if Wehrle had argued for a causal connection between Babe Ruth becoming a brand and the branding of current sports celebrities such as LeBron James.

If Ruth the superhero had one persistent nemesis throughout his career it was Ed Barrow, who managed Ruth for two seasons in Boston (1918, 1919) and was the business manager for the Yankees from late 1920 to 1945. Barrow, who by 1923 was a 10% owner of the Yankees, resented Ruth for his large salary, which caused other stars to seek commensurate raises. Ruth quarreled over salary with Barrow and team owner Jacob Ruppert repeatedly, and Ruth often came to spring training unsigned. Ruth almost always accepted a salary far smaller than what he originally asked for. Wehrle vividly tells the story of Barrow refusing to name Ruth as the Yankees manager, because he could not be tamed. Instead, Barrow, according to Wehrle, arranged with Emil Fuchs, the cash-poor owner of the Boston Braves, to have Ruth be an "assistant manager" to Braves skipper Bill McKechnie. As one would expect, that didn't work out.

Ruth the rebel is well-represented in this book with

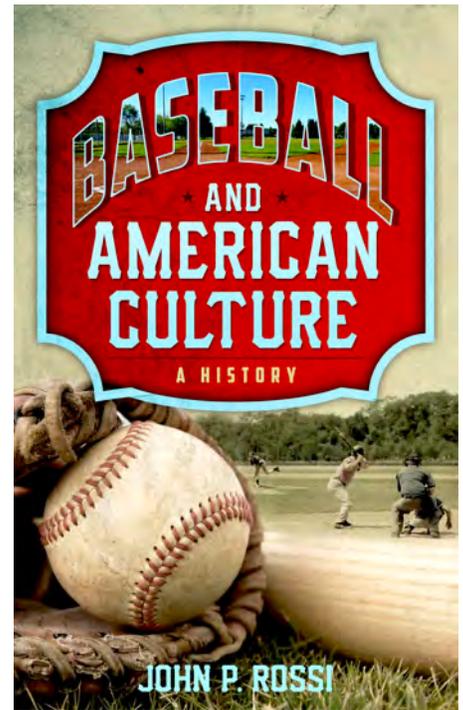
information new to this reviewer. Ruth was part of a union organizing effort in the 1910s called the Players' Fraternity, although a planned strike in 1917 never occurred. Ruth owned a farm outside Boston, and spent the winter of 1922-1923 there recuperating in the fresh air from his illness-plagued 1922 season. Ruth also campaigned for Al Smith, his fellow urban Catholic, during the 1928 Presidential campaign.

Several factual errors are laced throughout the book, including incorrect age calculations for Ruth based on an 1894 birth date (he was actually born in 1895), an inaccuracy that affects several age-based references. Some of these age-based errors may have been in the original materials, such as a poem published in a New York newspaper in March 1926. If these mistakes were found in the original materials, meaning the error should not be ascribed to the author, then the discrepancy should have been noted by [sic]. There are several other misstatements in

the book. The Yankees did not play the Athletics in the 1928 World Series as both teams were in the American League. This mistake is an oddity, since Wehrle correctly describes the Yankees sweep of the Cardinals in that World Series only a few pages earlier. The Players League sole season occurred in 1890, not 1889.

In sum, Professor Wehrle makes his case through extensive use of footnotes, referring the reader to contemporaneous sports reports and columns, sociological studies about popular trends, and numerous secondary sources, all to good advantage. He succeeds in proving the thesis of his book by providing a nuanced and well-researched economic and social biography of the game's greatest slugger, who was more than just the lovable and naïve Babe.

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**BASEBALL AND AMERICAN CULTURE: A HISTORY**

**By John P. Rossi**

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[ISBN: 978-1538102886. 267 pp. \$65.00 USD. Hardcover]*

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During the last 60 years there has been a virtual explosion of in-depth exploration of baseball's history and development in the United States and how this "national game" reflected the nation's culture and overall character. Beginning with Harold and Dorothy Seymour's seminal three-volume histories in the early 1960s, baseball became a subject for serious academic study and a continuous flow of books, articles in academic publications, and documentary films on virtually every aspect

**RUSS FORD DROPPED BY FEDS**

**FORMER YANKEE PITCHER IS RELEASED BY BUFFALO TEAM**

BUFFALO—Russell Ford, former Yank twirler, inventor of the "emery ball," and last season the foremost pitcher in the Federal League, has been given his unconditional release by the Buffeds.

Inability to make good without the emery ball, which was put under the ban by the Federal League at the close of last season, occasioned his release.

*(Philadelphia) Evening Public Ledger, July 14, 1915*

of the game have followed. Several excellent one volume histories of the game have appeared since the early 1990s that have attempted to synthesize the rapidly expanding knowledge base. John P. Rossi's work is the latest and most up-to-date of this genre. Essentially, it is a textbook for courses in baseball history and includes discussion questions and supplementary readings, but it is written in a style and presented in an organizational format that should make it appealing to baseball fans and the general public as well.

Rossi's principal thesis, stated succinctly, is "that one can study American history through the study of baseball. Just about every theme in American life — immigration, industrialization, race relations, urbanization — is intimately linked and intertwined in America's history." By the early 1870s professional baseball had begun to take root, and in 1871 the National Association of Professional Base Ball Players established what Rossi considers the "First Major League." Run by the players themselves, the league, during its five years of existence "suffered from the kind of chaos," according to Rossi, "one would expect when the inmates run the asylum." In 1876 William Hulbert and other business-minded individuals founded the National League which succeeded in putting baseball

on a sound and profitable basis most notably by gradually implementing the reserve clause which bound players to the teams that held their contracts.

The decade of the 1880s, according to Rossi, constitutes "baseball's first Golden Age" with the sport, like the nation, reaching heights of unprecedented prosperity. Many aspects of the modern game like overhand pitching, the use of gloves, and the first postseason playoff series were adopted. The golden sheen of this era is considerably dimmed however by the 1887 drawing of the color line which in effect banned black players from Organized Baseball. Although baseball assumed its modern form in terms of the pitcher's mound and distance to home plate in the 1890s, the decade, according to Rossi, was "baseball's not so 'Gay Nineties.'"

After having grown to twelve franchises, in 1899 the league shuttered four franchises, paid off their owners, and returned to their old eight team setup. The National League, according to Rossi, "had completely misread the situation. The depression was over, prosperity was returning to the country, and there were many cities interested in major league quality baseball. Ban Johnson and his American League helped fill this void in 1901. Dubbed the "junior circuit" the new league proved highly successful and very rapidly surpassed the "senior

circuit" in attendance. The two-league setup coincided with what came to be called the "Deadball Era" when pitching-dominated games tended to be low scoring affairs.

Rossi considers the decade of the 1920s as the most significant era in the history of the game and the most worthy to be considered a "Golden Age." From his point of view, three individuals helped make this possible. In 1922 Oliver Wendell Holmes in his majority opinion for the Supreme Court upheld baseball's antitrust exemption which would prevail for the next 70 years. In 1920 team owners hired Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis as the sport's first commissioner. The most important figure, however, was Babe Ruth who Rossi considers "the single most popular and, in many ways, the most significant player in baseball history." In Rossi's opinion, "because of Ruth, the very nature of baseball changed," and "baseball shifted to the modern power game."

Like the nation as a whole, baseball was severely affected by the Great Depression as attendance sharply declined, team profits evaporated, and player salaries were cut to the bone. Despite these major setbacks, "the sport's response to the crisis of the Depression," according to Rossi, "was one of remarkable creativity." Fan interest intensified with innovations like night baseball, the All-Star Game, the Hall of Fame, the MVP award, radio

broadcasts, and the revival of the Negro Leagues.

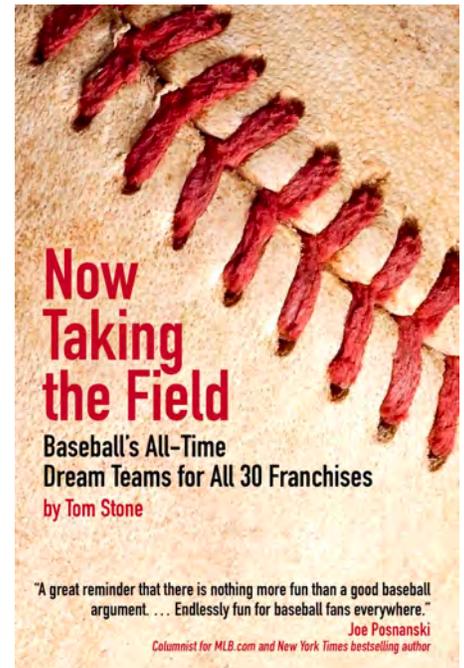
In the first years after the war ended there was a tremendous increase in baseball attendance and interest, which led many to believe that the postwar era was another “golden age” for the sport, a claim Rossi sharply disputes. “These years were no Golden Age,” Rossi argues, “but rather troubling ones that forced Major League Baseball to finally transform itself into a truly national sport open to everyone.” Other changes affecting the game included the rapid development of television, the growing suburbanization of the country, and the movement of populations out of large urban centers. Suburbanization played a major role in the relocation of four franchises and the Expansion Era which began in 1961.

While baseball continued to expand and generally flourish in the 1970s and 1980s and into the 1990s, several issues came to the forefront that would roil the sport and lead to major changes in how the game operated and was perceived by the public. Probably the biggest issue was the changing dynamic between the players and team management. Under the leadership of Marvin Miller, the Players Association won what Rossi describes as “the most revolutionary change in baseball history, the ending of the reserve clause” in 1975. Probably “the most devastating blow to the game,” according to

Rossi, “was the abuse of drugs, which became commonplace from the 1970s onward.” Efforts to deal with the issue became a bone of contention between the players union and management, especially over the use of drug testing. Matters came to a head in the early 2000s with the steroid crisis when a number of leading players admitted usage of performance enhancing drugs. Faced with the threat of Congressional action, the players union and management agreed to a drug testing program which became increasingly stringent.

Despite “all its troubles,” according to Rossi, “baseball’s future seems secure. It will continue to play a significant role in American culture.” Attendance-wise, it exceeds all other sports by a wide margin even though it has lost its position as the nation’s favorite sport to football. Its popularity has continued to grow in Latin America and the Caribbean and several major Asian nations. Nearly a third of major league players are non-Americans, a figure that is likely to increase.

*Ralph Christian is a retired historian and architectural historian who spent nearly 36 years with the State Historical Society of Iowa’s Historic Preservation Office. He has been a SABR member for 25 years and has made numerous presentations at SABR conventions and conferences.*



**NOW TAKING THE FIELD:  
BASEBALL’S ALL-TIME  
DREAM TEAMS FOR ALL 30  
FRANCHISES**

**By Tom Stone**

*2018, ACTA Publications  
[ISBN: 978-0879466664. 450  
pp. \$18.95 USD. Softcover]*

Reviewed by  
**Bill Felber**  
bfelber@att.net

Among baseball fans, debating the members of a favorite club’s all-time team is a guaranteed argument starter. Except, perhaps, among those who have read *Now Taking the Field: Baseball’s All-Time Dream Teams for All 30 Franchises*. Armed with the evidence presented in that book, they may actually be able to reach agreement. It’s not so much that the author Tom Stone lays down definitive and unassailable cases for his

selections of the best players ever to represent each team. He does, mostly, but there remains room for disagreement.

The most important thing Stone does is lift the debate out of the realm of the subjective by establishing criteria on which he bases his cases. So even in circumstances where you take great offense at one or two of his picks, you can at least figure out why he made the choices he did. The criteria have a strong statistical component: Wins Above Replacement, traditional stats, awards, and post-season performance. Stone considers only a player's accomplishments for the team in question but does not restrict a player to membership with one team only. Hence it is possible in Stone's system for Alex Rodriguez to simultaneously represent the Mariners, Rangers, and Yankees.

In deference to the desire to construct a plausible "team," Stone does impose some roster limitations: 12 pitchers (no more, no less) with at least two of them bullpen specialists, two players at each position in the field, plus two "wild card" choices for a 30-person roster. I had a bit of a problem with the 12-man staff and 30-person roster, both of which seem to me largely a means of avoiding difficult choices. But hey, it's not my book so I don't get to set the ground rules. In its broad parameters, Stone's system is defensible. The real question, of course, is how "good" a job Stone did of actually settling on each franchise's best 30.

Generally speaking, the answer is "quite good."

To answer that question more specifically in my own mind, I repeated his exercise, using his criteria and methodology but applying my own judgments. On average, my rosters and his roster agreed about 26 times out of 30. That's close to a 90 percent alignment, which for a book on such a debate-filled topic strikes me as about right. It's high enough to believe in the author's general construct but low enough to not entirely shut the door on discussion. To illustrate the method, let's biopsy the roster of one of Stone's 30 franchises with which people are likely to have both strong knowledge and strong opinions: the Brooklyn/Los Angeles Dodgers. Let the record show at the outset that we agreed on 26 of the selections. Here's the mutually agreed-on core:

Catcher: Roy Campanella and Mike Piazza

Infield: Steve Garvey, Gil Hodges, Dave Lopes, Jackie Robinson, PeeWee Reese, Maury Wills, Ron Cey, Pedro Guerrero

Outfield: Willie Davis, Duke Snider, Dixie Walker, Zach Wheat

Utility: Jim Gilliam, Dolf Camilli

Pitchers: Don Drysdale, Orel Hershiser, Clayton Kershaw, Sandy Koufax, Jeff Pfeffer, Don Sutton, Fernando Valenzuela, Dazzy Vance, Eric Gagne, Kenley Jansen.

That left us debating four spots: two pitchers and two outfielders.

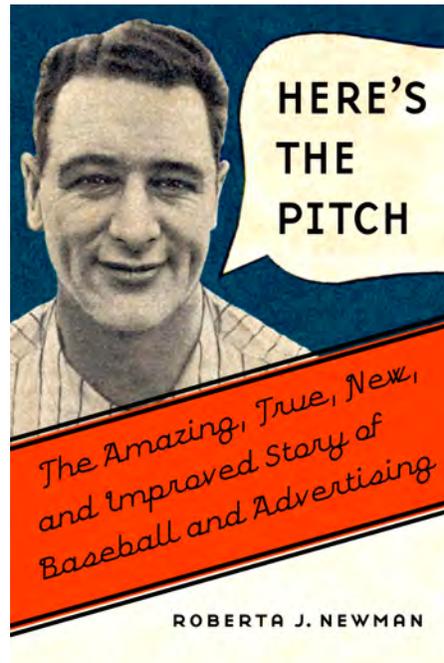
Despite the recurring presence of such giants, if you'll forgive the expression, as Koufax, Kershaw, Hershiser, and Vance, Dodger pitching has from time to time been lackluster. Stone's work-around to this reality involved giving one of those mound spots to a third reliever, Ron Perranoski. He also favored Don Newcombe based on his dominant role in the 1950s, which included NL Rookie of the Year, Cy Young, and MVP awards. Although Newcombe is a strong candidate, I preferred Bob Welch's credentials. It's a close call. At 123-67, Newcombe has a better won-loss record with the Dodgers than Welch (115-86), but Welch's career 32.7 WAR and 3.16 ERA with LA are both clearly superior to Newcombe's 22.3 WAR and 3.46 ERA. Beyond that, Welch pitched about 150 more innings in a Dodger uniform than Newcombe.

One of the weaknesses of Stone's book is his expressed tendency to "heavily discount" (his term) the accomplishments of nineteenth century and Deadball Era players, especially pitchers, due to the dated nature of the game they played. Nap Rucker is one of his victims. Rucker compiled a career 2.42 ERA – yes, that was good even back then – and his WAR has been pegged at 47.2. That's better than all but five of the Dodger pitchers Stone took. Given Perranoski's 100 saves for dominant Dodger teams of the 1960s, his selection is

understandable. I would have stayed with the tenth starter and picked Rucker. For his outfield, Stone selected Babe Herman and Carl Furillo as his fifth and sixth picks. I moved Pedro Guerrero to outfield and added third baseman Adrian Beltre, selecting Raul Mondesi as my final choice.

Beyond selecting and defending his teams, Stone includes a wonderful little addendum for each franchise: a history of previous such selections. These date back to 1950s era selections by *The Sporting News* or *Sport Magazine*, and include subsequent teams picked by such experts as Rob Neyer, Nick Acocella, Charles Faber, and the Nefts. Examining those, it's easy to get a sense of how perceptions of what constitutes a "great" player have changed over the years. Whatever the debates, Stone is obviously open to them. He's gone so far as to create a website, [www.nowtakingthefield.com](http://www.nowtakingthefield.com), where he is inviting reaction to, including disagreement with, his choices. You'll have some; I guarantee it. But the book would be a lot less fun to read if you agreed with every word.

*Bill Felber is a retired newspaper editor, a SABR member since 1982, and chair of the SABR Baseball Research Award Committee. He is the author of seven books, five on baseball. His latest book is The Hole Truth: Determining the Greatest Players in Golf Using Sabermetrics (University of Nebraska Press, 2019).*



**HERE'S THE PITCH: THE AMAZING, TRUE, NEW, AND IMPROVED STORY OF BASEBALL AND ADVERTISING**

**By Roberta J. Newman**

*2019, University of Nebraska Press  
[ISBN: 978-0803278479.  
319pp. \$\$34.95USD.  
Hardcover]*

Reviewed by  
**Bob Komoroski**  
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From its earliest days to the present, baseball has been linked with advertising in a way that has defined and mirrored its place on the American cultural landscape. *Here's the Pitch* is a look at the evolution of baseball advertising from the late nineteenth century to the current day. While an academic work, it makes for entertaining reading for the

serious fan interested in the nexus of the history of advertising and the national pastime. Newman, a cultural historian at New York University, uses a wide variety of sources, including academic journals, trade and mass market periodicals, and digital media to describe and analyze the ever-changing world of baseball-related advertising. While recent works such as James Walker and Robert Bellamy's *Centerfield Shot: A History of Baseball on Television* and Walker's *Crack of the Bat: A History of Baseball on the Radio* may have touched on the subject, the author's purpose is to offer a more complete overview of the field.

Baseball and advertising have been a profitable marriage that has long helped popularize the game. In the nineteenth century, professional baseball was dependent upon simple game announcements in local newspapers as well as ballpark signage. It didn't take long, however, for baseball to respond to its male-dominated fan base by joining with breweries, whiskey distillers, tobacco companies, haberdashers, and sporting goods companies to advertise in newspapers, magazines, and game programs.

While Bull Durham billboards may have been fixtures in ballparks and Honus Wagner and Ty Cobb were featured on tobacco cards, new consumer products from Coca Cola to automobiles were quickly added

to the mix. Cobb, the first superstar pitcher, was prominently featured in ads for Coca Cola and Nuxated Iron, a popular nutritional supplement of the day. He was also an early investor in Coke, owned a Hupmobile dealership in Augusta, and endorsed General Motors cars.

If there is one overriding theme throughout this work, it is the adaptability of advertising and baseball to changing technologies, products, and demographics to help deliver its product. The 1920s and 1930s were a time of revolutionary change for the game with the emergence of Babe Ruth and radio. With the help of agent and advisor Christy Walsh, Ruth became a major force in baseball advertising, endorsing everything from underwear to financial services. When William Wrigley became principal owner of the Chicago Cubs, he took the advice of fellow owner and advertising executive Albert Lasker and renamed the Cubs ballpark Wrigley Field. It was a stroke of genius which would help sell chewing gum and spread the Wrigley brand (and Cubs) to millions of households.

Early radio broadcasts were local and, in an era before broadcast rights, largely noncommercial. It wasn't until the 1934 World Series, when the Ford Motor Company paid \$100,000 to sponsor the Fall Classic, that advertising secured its hold on national baseball broadcasts. While Ford may have been an early national

sponsor, others soon followed. Once again, baseball extended its advertising reach by pitching to women and children when General Mill's Wheaties, "the Breakfast of Champions," and General Food's Post brands began to advertise on broadcasts and in print.

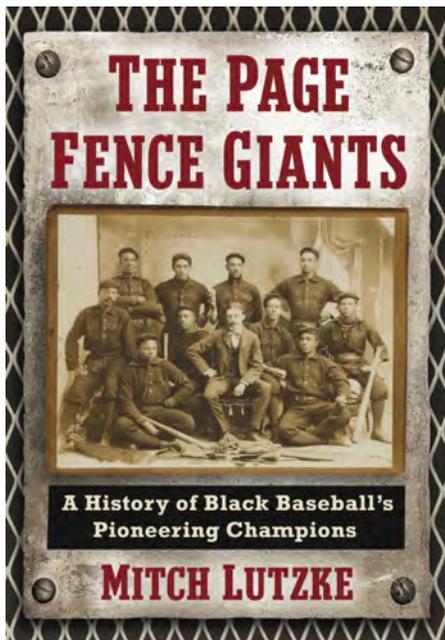
In the post-war years, television became the dominant medium and with it came new ways to pitch product. The late 1950s and 1960s were defined by the so-called Creative Revolution in advertising. This "Mad Men" era was characterized by the use of self-deprecating humor, irony, and irreverence. In the late 1950s, Doyle Dane Bernbach introduced America to a new Volkswagen ad which focused on the car's "liabilities" in an age of big cars. It used the terms "lemon," "think small," and "ugly." It was revolutionary. It was iconic. It was also named the top ad campaign of the twentieth century. While the VW ad was unconnected to baseball, baseball related advertising did join the creative bandwagon. Mickey Mantle appeared in silly cereal commercials crying, "I want my Maypo!" Yogi Berra pitched cat food with a trampoline jumping feline, and in the 1970s, broadcaster Bob Uecker pitched Miller Lite "from the front row," while Billy Martin and George Steinbrenner tried to answer the question "tastes great or less filling?"

It's in the later chapters where the author really hits her stride. Newman deconstructs a number of ground-breaking

ads. She examines the laws and regulations which led to direct-to-consumer marketing of prescription drugs. Ads for male enhancement drugs, marketed as a cure for "erectile dysfunction," soon appeared on television and in print with Rafael Palmeiro as their main pitcher under the tag line: "Let's just say it works for me." As the number of Latino players on MLB rosters has increased, so, too, has their presence grown in advertising, with Afro-Caribbean players like David Ortiz and Mariano Rivera becoming effective pitchers.

The story of baseball advertising, like the game itself, is a story of changing demographics and perception. Where once ads were primarily geared to an overwhelming white male fan base, ads now appeal to women, children, racial minorities, and non-English speakers. If I have one criticism of the book, it's that the author makes no mention of endorsements, or the lack thereof, from the increasing number of Asian players in the major leagues. Certainly, Ichiro Suzuki garnered huge sums for endorsements in his home country and was a fixture in every Japanese baseball publication for a generation, but what about here?

*Bob Komoroski lives in Minneapolis and is a member of the Halsey Hall Chapter of SABR. Although he grew up a Chicago White Sox fan, he is currently rooting for the Minnesota Twins to go deep in this season's playoffs.*



**THE PAGE FENCE GIANTS: A  
HISTORY OF BLACK  
BASEBALL'S PIONEERING  
CHAMPIONS**

**By Mitch Lutzke**

*2018, McFarland*

*[ISBN: 978-1476671659. 264  
pp. \$39.95 USD. Softcover]*

Reviewed by

**Todd Peterson**

mccarthy@sbcglobal.net

The Page Fence Giants of Adrian, Michigan (1895-1898) were the first truly successful professional black baseball team operating west of the Ohio River. Perhaps more significantly, the Giants were composed of a new generation of ballplayers that resuscitated black baseball in the late nineteenth century — most of the team would go on to enjoy long careers, with shortstop Grant “Home Run” Johnson and catcher George “Rat” Johnson playing on and

running ballclubs well into the 1920s. Mitch Lutzke’s *Page Fence Giants* is a precise, detailed account of this powerhouse unit that racked up a mind-boggling 492-83-2 (.840) record during its four-year run. The Michigan-based historian has set out to restore the legacy of the now mostly-forgotten Giants while at the same time providing a snapshot of America’s Midwest during the waning years of the nineteenth century.

For the most part Lutzke is successful, from both a baseball and a sociological standpoint. His book makes many original and significant contributions to the lore of the club and to blackball history in general. For example, the backstory of the 1894 Adrian, Michigan, Light Guard team and the Giants’ origin has never been gone over in such detail before, and the retelling here fills in quite a few gaps. Indeed, almost every aspect of the Page Fence story is touched upon, including their famous championship series with the Cuban X-Giants; the untimely on-the-field death of outfielder Gus Brooks; the team’s rivalry with the Grand Rapids Gold Bugs of the Western League; and an ugly trip to Flint, Michigan, where they were refused admission to several hotels and restaurants because of their color. Lutzke also covers Hall of Famer Honus Wagner’s brief tenure with the 1895 Adrian Demons minor league team (which also included six of the Giants at

one point or another), which reportedly ended because the great shortstop didn’t want to play with African Americans.

The book is not without its minor flaws. Although he displays a vast and comprehensive knowledge of Adrian history, the Page Fence Wire Company, and the Giants activities in general, the author doesn’t venture far from this somewhat provincial orbit. The players’ backstories are rather cursory and rarely more than a sentence in length, while the saga of J. Wallace Page, the company’s founder, rambles on for several pages. The author also ends his account rather abruptly at the close of the 1898 season, when the Page Fence Company severed ties to their blackball nine, and only briefly notes that the club moved virtually intact to Illinois in 1899 and continued playing as the Chicago Columbia Giants before eventually finishing their run in 1902. A more fleshed-out account of these additional four seasons as well as some info about the latter-day exploits and eventual fates of the players would have provided a useful coda.

Nitpicking aside, Lutzke clearly did his homework. On the whole, the book is well-researched and referenced — few if any mentions of the Giants in the Adrian newspapers have gone unnoticed or unremarked upon, although the Giants non-Michigan exploits could have been expanded upon by

consulting a few more out-of-state papers. Thirty images and illustrations enhance the volume, among them being several photos taken by the author documenting the locations of many lost ballparks, as well as an 1895 shot of the Adrian Demons with Honus Wagner and many other team portraits.

In addition, Lutzke has included year-by-year team rosters; statistics for the 1895 Demons; as well as won/loss records for the Giants pitchers. Nineteenth-century black baseball box scores were something of a rarity, so the author can be forgiven for not providing hitting and fielding records. The inclusion of a complete-as-possible game chronology would have proven useful, although the main text does a pretty good job of retracing the squad's path (especially the first two years). For the most part the author communicates well. His prose is precise while economical, and the narrative unfolds in an

easy-to-follow, sequential fashion. Lutzke also possesses the knack for the odd ironic phrase, which is helpful when describing the pervasively racist culture of the time, and he successfully evinces the tone and spirit of nineteenth century baseball and America at large.

Clocking in at a modest 264 pages, *The Page Fence Giants* is a heartfelt testament to an exceptional, though long-forgotten, outfit. Remarkably, Mitch Lutzke's tour-de-force is the very first complete history of a nineteenth century black ball club, and a welcome addition to McFarland's ever growing canon of Negro League team chronicles.

*Visual artist and educator Todd Peterson lives in Kansas City, Missouri. He is the author of Early Black Baseball in Minnesota (McFarland, 2010), and the editor of the forthcoming Negro Leagues Were Major Leagues (McFarland, now available for pre-order).*

### CY WILLIAMS QUILTS

Cy Williams, former Cub star, has quit baseball, and for good, he says. He wired President Baker of the Phillies that he had returned his contract unsigned and that no further negotiations would do any good. Williams went to the Phillies in the recent deal that brought "Dode" Pasket to the north side. A contract at a certain figure was submitted to him, but he turned it down. The player has an extensive farm in northern Wisconsin which he intends to take active management of himself. He left for the north last night.

*Editor's note: Williams came to terms with the Phillies and clubbed 217 home runs for them over the next 13 seasons.*

*Rock Island (IL) Argus, March 22, 1918*



### THE BIG FELLA: BABE RUTH AND THE WORLD HE CREATED

By Jane Leavy

2018, Harper  
[ISBN: 978-0062380227. 656 pp. \$32.50 USD. Hardcover]

Reviewed by  
**Alec Rogers**  
alecrogers@yahoo.com

Regardless of how one feels Babe Ruth would fare in today's game, the simple truth is that Ruth, who was in his prime nearly 100 years ago, continues to tower over those who have come since. Even though his lifetime and single-season home run records have since been eclipsed, he remains the game's leader in slugging percentage, OPS+, and WAR. More importantly, he transformed the game to a degree not seen since, while also establishing himself as a

national celebrity at a level unequaled by a baseball player.

Jane Leavy's *The Big Fella*, the 2019 SABR Seymour Medal winner for the best baseball history or biography, is in fact, *not* a traditional baseball biography of Ruth. Leavy quickly disclaims her desire to document "every pitch he threw, or home run he hit, or season he played." Rather, hers is a fascinating character study of the Bambino and the world that he was both a part of and helped create. Focusing on many other aspects of Ruth's life, she gives us a better understanding of who (and why) Babe Ruth was and how he fit perfectly into the America of the 1920s (aptly borrowing E.B. White's characterization of the era as "a monument to modern man's capacity for mischief"), while noting his struggles with his troubled past.

Leavy covers his early life much like any of his biographers might have, but perhaps in greater detail. Without the same coterie of ballplayers who played with Ruth available to be interviewed that earlier Ruth chroniclers might have approached, she focused instead on his surviving relatives. As a result, she discovered a key fact that eluded them – the divorce of Ruth's parents – that she believes helps to explain both his desire for stability combined with his need for manic action that disrupted that stability. Having worked

hard to discover that Ruth's childhood wasn't what we've always been led to believe, she uses it as a lens throughout his story to help us better understand him.

As she did in her Sandy Koufax book, Leavy alternates between a narrative timeline and another focused on a seminal event that can help us better comprehend the rest of the story. In Koufax's case it was his perfect game thrown against Chicago in 1965. For Ruth, she recreates his post-1927 season barnstorming tour in great detail, a month she calls the "best of his life," and uses rich details to help illustrate her understanding of the real Ruth.

Ruth changed our notion of what a hero looked like, and in Leavy's words "devised a new template for how to be famous in America." To do this "he challenged the prevailing ethos that great athletes must pay for their success with asceticism," she writes. Ruth was the first athlete to be appreciated for (and compensated based on) his entertainment value as well as sheer athletic ability. And if Leavy doesn't document every home run, she certainly documents every excess. Smashed cars, embittered mistresses, and virtually every aspect of Ruth's finances play a role in Leavy's story.

Ruth's legacy was to teach America to "think big – expect big." He was able to accomplish this in part by growing up in an era when

Americans were tuning in to baseball via newspapers like never before, devouring ghostwritten articles supposedly by the players themselves. Thanks to his business manager and agent Christy Walsh (a first for a ballplayer), Ruth was able to exploit the new science of public relations, providing him a notoriety that he was able to exploit for financial gains that far outstripped his baseball paychecks.

Readers should, therefore, be prepared for large chunks where neither Ruth nor baseball is present, while Leavy discourses on the ethos of the 1920s, the rise of countless newspapers with multiple editions, non-revocable trusts, and the like. Ruth's personal finances were zealously (and faithfully) guarded by Walsh, and the details of Walsh's deft handling of Ruth's investments take up more space than we'd expect in a Babe Ruth book. An entire appendix devoted to them demonstrates the time Leavy spent compiling the details that would be distilled into her analysis in the main narrative.

A longtime writer and former journalist with deep contacts in the baseball community, Leavy taps her sources to provide fresh perspectives on Ruth. Super-agent Scott Boras discusses Ruth's multifaceted appeal that would impact his team value today. Like she did with Koufax's pitching delivery, Leavy also spends time with modern-day hitting experts

breaking down Ruth's swing. All of this is done in her characteristically elegant and easy flowing prose, which sparkle with gems such as her observation that Ruth was "a one man antidote to the grimness of prohibition" — as brilliant and pithy an explanation for his popularity as you'll ever read.

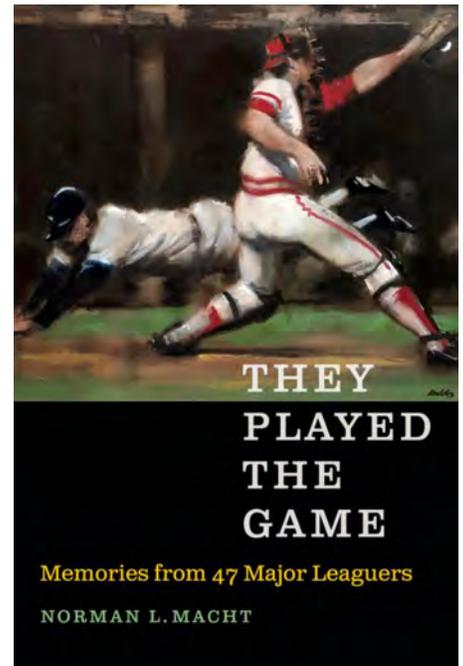
Perhaps the ultimate tragedy of Ruth's life was his inability to escape the public persona that he had helped create. His popularity largely stemmed from his fun loving "big kid" persona. But that same image held him back from what he wanted most after his playing days: a chance to manage in the big leagues. Teams such as Boston and Brooklyn would dangle opportunities in front of him in order to capitalize on his popularity, but at the end of the day owners weren't willing to put in charge of their franchise a man of whom it was said couldn't even be in charge of himself.

The Author's Note and Sources, broken down by chapter, will be of great interest to many. Leavy examined documents that indirectly shine light on the Ruth

story that hadn't been consulted by his traditional biographers. These included business records of Walsh's that came to light in an auction, such as letters, bank statements, and check stubs that helped her piece together the Babe's finances.

*The Big Fella* will appeal most to those who have already read a traditional Ruth biography or two and are ready to take a deeper dive into the non-baseball aspects of his life and times. Her bibliography and notes demonstrate the pains that Leavy took to understand the times in which Ruth played out his life. As a result, *The Big Fella* adds to our appreciation of Ruth and his place in baseball far more than one more traditional baseball biography likely would have.

*A "good field, no hit" Little League catcher and outfielder, Alec Rogers has retained his lifelong affinity for his hometown Detroit Tigers while acquiring another for his current home team Washington Nationals. A longtime consumer of SABR's work, he is a member of both it and the Deadball Era Committee.*



**THEY PLAYED THE GAME:  
MEMORIES FROM 47  
MAJOR LEAGUERS**

**By Norman L. Macht**

2019, University of Nebraska Press  
[ISBN: 978-1496205506. 308  
pp. \$29.95USD. Hardcover]

Reviewed by  
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Following the death of Ty Cobb in 1961, Lawrence Ritter, a Professor of Economics at NYU and a baseball aficionado, had an inspired idea. Why not interview those players from baseball's Deadball Era before they died off. His subsequent book, *The Glory of Their Times* (1966), was not only a work of genius but also inspired similar books, none as good as his. Now Norman Macht, author of the magisterial three-volume life of Connie Mack, has gathered some 47 interviews with an older generation of

It was the last half of the fourth inning, and the home team had three men on bases and nobody out. The next man up was the best batter on the team, if not in the entire league. He advanced to the plate swinging three bats and wearing a confident smile on his face. The stands were in an uproar of enthusiasm.

Suddenly the umpire stepped forward and held up his hand. "Game called on account of darkness," he announced.

He leaves a widow and three children.

*The Oklahoma City Times, May 8, 1916*

players that he accumulated during his research into baseball's past. Covering the period 1912 to 1981, the forty-seven interviews are principally focused on the years 1940-1965. Five of the interviewees are in the Hall of Fame, but only one of those interviews (Ted Williams), ranks among the best in the book. As usual in works of this type, the quality varies depending on the character and insights of the players interviewed. Sprinkled throughout the book are a handful of insightful moments. Travis Jackson on John McGraw's major flaw: he couldn't handle pitchers and didn't know when to take them out. Harvey Haddix arguing why pitchers make poor managers: "they are concerned with themselves all the time .... They don't study the whole game like catchers or infielders." Mickey Owen's prediction in 1990 that within a decade players would be signing \$100 million contracts.

I found it disappointing that only two interviews were with African American players: Bill Bruton and John Roseboro. This seems strange given the number of important African Americans players in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. The Bruton interview is bland while Roseboro comes across as an intelligent observer of the game. He has more interesting things to say about pitching than catching. Of the two great pitchers he handled, he was more impressed with Sandy

Koufax than Don Drysdale. On how Koufax went from a wild man to a disciplined hurler, Roseboro doesn't credit any of the Dodger coaches or scouts individually, saying: "One day he was shipped out to Montreal 'cause he was wild, and the next thing you know, he's striking out everybody." So much for the theory that Norm Sherry was responsible for Koufax's gaining control of his great stuff. Another shortcoming of the book is that there are no interviews of Latin players. From the late 1950s until the early 1970s, Latin players began to make their mark in baseball. They are invisible here.

Among the interviews, four stand out: Ferris Fain, Mike Marshall, "Vinegar Bend" Mizell, and especially Ted Williams. A two-time batting champ in the early 50s and a great defensive first baseman, Fain lives up to his nickname "Burrhead." Macht finds him in California, overweight, irascible, and in trouble for growing marijuana. What makes the Fain interview worth reading is not so much what he has to say about baseball in his time, although that is good. Rather, it's that you can almost hear him talking. He tells of the time he was reprimanded by Connie Mack for a bonehead play he made: "I'll tell you, Mr. Mack, before I take that ball and throw it for you again, I'll take it and stick right in my ass." Fain was traded to Chicago shortly after.

Mizell tells about pitching as a youth in his bare feet with a team made up of his extended family in North Carolina. The Mike Marshall interview reveals why Marshall has not found a place in baseball today. It is filled with arrogant comments about how the game is played and his own superiority complex. Interestingly, the only baseball personality that Marshall says anything complimentary about is Gene Mauch, an equally hard-nosed, opinionated individual.

The Ted Williams interview captures "Teddy Ballgame" perfectly. Williams talks about the past in an almost stream of consciousness manner, jumping from topic to topic: how powerful Jimmie Foxx was and what drinking did to his career; Lefty Grove's temper, and some of the long home runs he, Williams, hit.

Interview books like this are like peanuts. Once you start reading, you can't stop. The older generation of players were genuine and didn't see themselves as above the fans. Their backgrounds were a microcosm of the America that no longer exists: white, mostly rural, and almost all from poor backgrounds. Macht's collection is one that baseball fans won't want to miss.

*John Rossi is Professor Emeritus of History at LaSalle University in Philadelphia. His latest book is Baseball and American Culture (Rowman & Littlefield, 2018).*

## NEW DEADBALL ERA COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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

*Skip Desjardin*  
*Mark Jakubik*  
*Steven Jeremko*  
*Jeffrey Nayadley*  
*Katie Neipris*  
*Phil Rosenzweig*  
*Jay Wigley*

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

### BUCKLE CURVE THE LATEST

Baseball scientists have burned midnight oil to discover a substitute for the spitball, the "turkey trot," the fadeaway and the Frank Merriwell double shoot.

Wilbur Cooper, the Columbus recruit, who made his debut in the ninth inning [yesterday], has beaten them all to it with the shining "buckle curve." It is a deceiving thing—this buckle shoot. It buckles and it bends. At least that is what the batter thinks.

On the back of his glove Cooper has a shining silver buckle. At first we thought it was a diamond of greater carat and more brilliancy than the Kohinoor. The master of the "buckle curve" just assumes a pitching pose and wiggles his thumb and four fingers in the sunlight. Old Sol does the rest. The gleam from the buckle gets in the batter's eyes and he is as helpless as a handcuffed man. Witness the fact that Marsans and Grant struck out.

The "buckle curve" is destined to become famous. Mr. Marsans last night wired a Havana newspaper to beware of the "buckle" delivery when American barnstormers strike Cuba next winter.

*(Pittsburgh) Gazette Times, August 30, 1912*

## GAMES/BIOPROJECT

Since our last issue, the Games Project has published accounts of the Eastern League Buffalo Bison's home opener of 1906 by Stephen V. Rice; Otis Clymer's hit-for-the-cycle game for the 1908 Washington Senators by Mike Huber; Cy Young's final game in October 1911 by Thomas E. Merrick; a blimp disaster witnessed by fans attending a July 1919 Chicago White Sox game, and Babe Ruth's setting a new American League single-season home run record during an August 1919 Red Sox contest, both by Jacob Pomrenke. Meanwhile, the BioProject posted profiles of Deadball Era players Charlie Whitehouse, Dike Varney, George Dunlop, Ralph Works, Lave Cross, Charlie Schmutz, Andy Coakley, Willie Sudhoff, Ovid Nicholson, and Bill Gatewood, plus St. Louis Terriers and Browns owner Phil Ball. Please give these a look if you have not yet done so.

### FEAR OF BLOODSHED ENDS SERIES OF BALL GAMES

HONOLULU—Rioting by players and their adherents has resulted in the police department stopping the series of games scheduled to be played here by Keio University, Japanese, and a local team composed of Chinese.

Sheriff Jarrett said today that bloodshed would be sure to follow another game, and today the mounted police had their hands full.

The Keios won the first game played yesterday, and quit today because of the decision of the umpire, the score standing 5 to 2 in favor of the Chinese. The Keios lost games Saturday and Sunday to two other local teams. Leading Chinese and Japanese merchants have discussed the situation and have agreed that it would be best not to hold any more Chinese-Japanese games here.

A team representing the Fifth Cavalry will take the place of the Chinese team for the remainder of the series scheduled to be played by the Japanese.

*The Salt Lake Tribune, July 26, 1911*

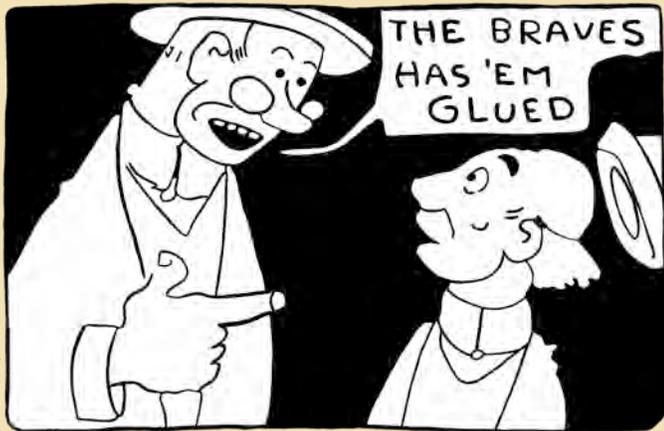
## THE FAN UBIQUITOUS

BY HUGH S. FULLERTON

Each morning as I ride to work  
A yawp like this I hear;  
"Those poor old Cubs  
"Are bums and dubs,  
"They'll finish eighth this year."



And when I move across the car  
The nuisance to elude  
Another pest  
Says, "It's a jest,  
"The Braves has them all glued."



Quite hastily I shift again,  
To seek another seat.  
The man I'm near  
Bawls in my ear;  
"Them Red Sox can't be beat."



So when I shed this mortal coil  
And land on Beulah's shore,  
I think St. Pete  
Will move his seat,  
To ask me what's the score.

*The Pittsburg Press, April 11, 1915*