

The **INSIDE GAME**

The Official Newsletter of SABR's Deadball Era Committee



VOL. X, NO. 2: "LET'S GET THIS LUMPY, LICORICE-STAINED BALL ROLLING!" AUG. 2010

THE CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

by John McMurray

Please be sure to join us for the annual meeting of the Deadball Era Committee at SABR 40 in Atlanta. This year's meeting will take place on Friday, August 6 at 8 AM. Even though it will take place early in the morning, one advantage of this scheduling is that our meeting will not conflict with the Joe Jackson gravesite visit.

I am pleased also to announce that Trey Strecker has agreed to join the Deadball Era Committee as Vice-Chair. Many of you likely are already familiar with Trey's work as the editor of *NINE: A Journal of Baseball History and Culture*. Trey has been involved with SABR since 2000 and currently serves as Vice-Chair focusing on 19th century players for the BioProject Committee. He also co-chairs the Oscar Charleston Chapter of SABR (Indianapolis-central Indiana area). Trey teaches English and sports studies at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana. He will be assisting the Committee with a variety of projects, including serving as a liaison between the DEC and the BioProject Committee, developing content for the website redesign, and with new projects.

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COLEMAN AS COBB

by Mark Ruckhaus

"I'm a ham." So says SABR member Norm Coleman.

Before I go further, many of the regular readers will likely remember that Coleman appeared in a recent issue of *The Inside Game*. But, as he'll be performing his one-man Ty Cobb show at the upcoming SABR convention in Atlanta, in Cobb's home state of Georgia, I thought it would be a good idea to get to know Norm a little better.

He's a man who enjoys challenges. For instance, being an amateur photographer led to being an assistant with a ballet photographer. That blossomed into a thirty-year career, much of it doing portraits and weddings and later producing consumer shows for brides. For a number

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The Original Curse: Did the Cubs Throw the 1918 World Series to Babe Ruth's Red Sox and Incite the Black Sox Scandal? both by David W. Anderson

Jack Coombs: A Life in Baseball by Ben Klein

PETE HUSTING MONUMENT

by David Stalker (attheballyard@yahoo.com)

Berthold Juneau ("Bert" or "Pete") Husting, who pitched on the early fringes of the Deadball era and who walked away from his baseball career at the age of 24 to practice law, was honored with a monument in his hometown of Mayville, Wisconsin. With many family members in attendance, the monument was unveiled at the Limestone School Museum where the young Husting attended. At the time of last summer's dedication, the house in which Husting grew up was directly across the street. Unfortunately, it has since been razed and replaced by a parking lot.

Husting's grandfather, Solomon Juneau, a French Canadian fur trader, is considered the founder of Milwaukee, establishing a trading post there in 1818, later purchasing the land and, in 1846, being elected its first mayor. After the family moved from Fond du Lac, Pete was born in Mayville on March 6, 1878. He graduated from Mayville High School having both pitched on the baseball team and played halfback on the football team prior to attending college at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. At Wisconsin, Pete continued to play both sports and received his law degree.

After graduating from Wisconsin and playing ball in Fond du Lac, Husting made his first foray into professional ball with five starts for the Connie Mack-managed Milwaukee Brewers in 1900 in what was then the minor league American League, going the distance in all and winning four. Husting was then acquired by the Pirates and made his major league debut with two inauspicious late season relief appearances.

The following season, he was back in the Badger state pitching with the now major league Brewers. His 9-15 record was not as bad as it may first appear, considering the team was in last place, 35 1/2 games behind the league champion White Sox. Husting's name appears on a monument unveiled at Miller Park in June of 2009. This monument tells about the AL forming in Milwaukee, and highlights the five Wisconsin natives that were on that team (Ed Bruyette, Pink Hawley, Davy Jones and George McBride being the other four). Many of the Husting family attended the unveiling of this marker as well.

The Brewers moved to St. Louis after one season and, in 1902, Husting briefly joined Boston of the American League for one game, before being purchased by the man who had managed him two years earlier as Connie Mack was now manager and part owner of the Philadelphia Athletics.

Joining Hall of Fame pitchers Rube Waddell and Eddie Plank as the number three pitcher on the

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The Official Newsletter of SABR's Deadball Era Committee

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Pete Husting as a member of the University of Wisconsin baseball team, 1898. He's reclining, on the right.

MORDECAI BROWN HISTORICAL MARKER

by Cindy Thomson
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One of the premier pitchers of the Deadball era, Mordecai "Three Finger" Brown, unlike many of today's players, didn't make enough money from baseball to retire on and went to another line of work to make ends meet. For Brown, it was working for the Indiana Refining Company (later known as Texaco) as a fire inspector and manager of its baseball team before using some of his company stock to purchase a gas station in his home town of Terre Haute, Indiana.

Gas stations back in the 1930s and '40s weren't the self-service, gas only places they are now. Customers received full service and developed relationships with the owners. Brown and his wife, Sarah, lived within walking distance of his station. The neighborhood pharmacy, a local gathering spot, was just across the street, and people today still remember chatting with Brown there.



Brown's Texaco station
**"You can trust your car to
the man who wears the star."**

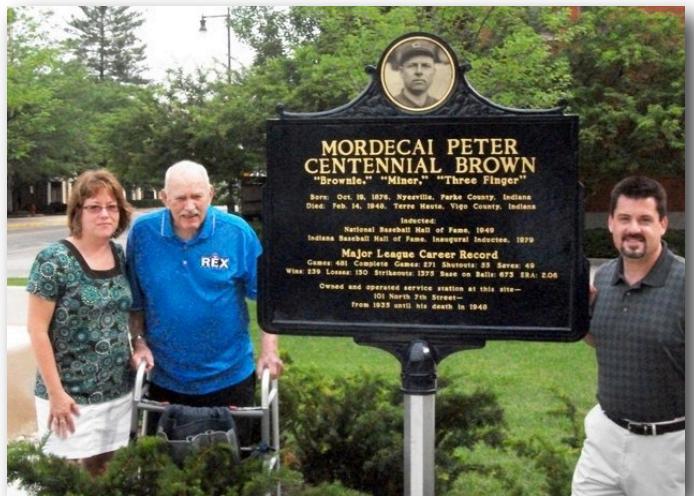
The corner of Seventh and Cherry Streets has changed since Brown's day. Now a part of Indiana State University, there's still a garage there. Only this one is a well-landscaped parking garage and, on June 5, a marker recognizing both what was there as well as its famous owner was added.

Participating in the marker's unveiling were Gene Crume, Indiana State University Foundation president and co-owner of the city's new team in the collegiate wood bat Prospect League, the Terre Haute Rex, along with Terre Haute historian and SABR member Mike McCormick. As co-authors of the only full-length biography of the Hall of Famer, as well as relatives, Scott Brown, first cousin to Mordecai, three times removed, and I, first cousin twice removed, also participated.

On the preceding day, Scott and I joined Mike in pre-game ceremonies at Bob Warn Field, home of the Rex as well as the Indiana State Sycamores. Scott presented the team with a canister of soil to remind them of the great baseball ties the area has due in part to Mordecai's contribution. Mordecai went 25-8 in leading the Terre Haute Tots to the Three-I League championship in 1901 and later managed them in 1919 and 1920. The canister contains a mix of ground from the places Mordecai played at while in Chicago: West Side Park and Weeghman Park (later Wrigley Field). We also met Rex co-owner Kevin Hoolehan. The Rex staff and Indiana University Foundation staff and volunteers were very gracious to us and the hometown crowd was more than thrilled to have baseball back in Terre Haute after a fifty-year hiatus.

The funds for the marker, which cost approximately \$2,000, were raised by a pop can drive at the university. Scott said a few words on behalf of Brown's family. Mordecai's closest living

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At the marker dedication...
**(L-R: Cindy Thomson, Fred Massey,
Scott Brown**

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

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A highlight of this year's meeting will be the presentation of the 2010 Ritter Award to Robert Peyton Wiggins for his book *The Federal League of Base Ball Clubs: The History of An Outlaw League*. Gabriel Schechter, the Chair of the DEC's Ritter Award subcommittee called the book "an extensively researched and thorough examination of the Federal League, its two-year struggle to establish itself as a third major league, the people who owned, managed, and played on its teams, and the effects of its demise." We also plan to discuss the activity of the Committee during the past year, including the editorial changes at *The Inside Game* and its future direction. We also will review the recent "Boiling Out" in Arkansas directed by R.J. Lesch and will discuss potential new projects. If you have any items which you would like to see addressed at the meeting, please let me know.

One of the potential projects which has been brought up to me periodically is the idea of a year-by-year history of the Deadball Era. Looking back 100 years provides some idea of where this project could lead: a chapter chronicling the 1910 season, for instance, could include analysis of no-hitters thrown by Addie Joss and Chief Bender as well as details of two unusual batting titles: where Sherry Magee uncharacteristically hit .331 to lead the National League and Napoleon Lajoie bunted successfully eight out of nine times in St. Louis in an attempt to take the batting title from Ty Cobb in a particularly contentious race. And although the 1910 World Series between the Philadelphia Athletics and Chicago Cubs lacked drama, with four of the five games being decided by more than three runs, this sometimes-ignored Series did include a strong performance by Eddie Collins as well as appearances by nine other Hall of Fame players. In short, this season alone offers fertile ground for research and discussion.

Of course, any project depends on the interest in and involvement of DEC members. In that spirit, if you are interested in working on such an initiative—or have other suggestions—please let me know. It has been several years since the two *Deadball Stars* volumes were published and now would be an excellent time to initiate a

new large-scale Committee project.

Also, in conjunction with SABR's move to redesign the Research Committee websites, the DEC website at <http://www.sabr.org/sabr.cfm?a=cms,c,264,5,5,0> will soon be receiving a new look. If you have not visited it lately, the site already includes every prior issue of *The Inside Game* and links to a variety of Deadball Era resources. The next step will be to make the site more useful on a day-to-day basis by including more consistent updates and making it a resource for project information.

Most of all, please be in touch with me with your suggestions and updates at deadball@sabr.org. As always, we are eager to receive your input.

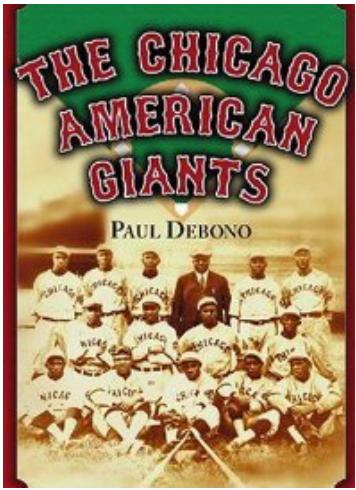
FROM THE BOOK REVIEW EDITOR...

by **Gail Rowe**

Traditionally, British book reviewers have been more acerbic and self-serving than their American counterparts. If their acidity entertains British audiences, it has also broken authors and contributed to prolonged, heated, and largely unprofitable exchanges. British writers publishing in the same field or on the same subject often become unabashedly territorial, using reviews of their competitors' work to increase their own reputations and sales—or to trivialize their rivals' work. Though this tradition of acrimonious and spiteful reviews is diminishing, it still occasionally surfaces. Generally, American book reviewers have been inclined to offer less passionate, personal, and selfish analyses. For the most part they refrain from pointing out authors' personal limitations, lapses of judgment, pitiful research, inadequate educations, abominable prose, or juvenile vocabularies, preferring instead to damn with faint praise or countless digressions.

Book reviewing should not be viewed merely as a way to obtain complimentary books or to wreak revenge on a professional adversary. Reviewing must be a serious and constructive enterprise. To faithfully describe a book's subject and methodology, offer readers a critical appraisal of

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**THE CHICAGO
AMERICAN GIANTS**

BY PAUL DEBONO

2009. Jefferson, NC:
McFarland and Company
[ISBN: 978-0-7864-2590-7.
280 pages. \$45.00 USD,
hardcover]

Reviewed by
Christopher Hauser
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Paul Debono's *The Chicago American Giants* is the second of his chronological surveys of significant ball clubs from the Negro Leagues. Similar to his first book, *Indianapolis ABCs: History of a Premier Team in the Negro Leagues* (McFarland, 1997), Debono's latest book provides the central facts of the American Giants organization and its on-field history.

The club's 19th century history is sketchy, but Debono traces it from the Chicago Unions, who were a force in Chicago baseball by 1886. When they disbanded in 1901, the roster provided the shell for Frank Leland's Chicago

Union Giants, which became a fixture in the otherwise all-white, semi-pro City League in Chicago. It was this club that Andrew "Rube" Foster, arguably the most important figure in Negro Leagues history, joined in 1907. Foster was already a dominant pitcher when he signed with Leland, but his real significance, as an owner and league organizer, was still to come.

Debono understandably devotes great attention to Foster's efforts to become a manager and promoter of black baseball. His eventual split with Frank Leland around 1910 seems inevitable given his ambition. For a while, odd circumstances allowed Foster to retain use of the name Leland Giants for his club, while Leland fielded another club in Chicago at the same time. Then, in 1912, Foster renamed the club the American Giants and established it as a keystone in the typically unstable Negro Leagues.

Members of SABR's Deadball Committee will be especially interested in the first third of the book, which traces the origins of the Chicago American Giants and culminates in the foundation of the first successful organized black baseball league, the Negro National League, in 1920. Debono describes the organizational failures that preceded the NNL, some with Foster at the center, as well the eventual triumph.

The end of the Deadball Era marked the beginning of organized baseball for the Negro Leagues with Foster and the Chicago American Giants at the center. But organizational failure didn't mean the end of semi-pro match-ups around Chicago and barnstorming that would always be a significant portion of the American Giants' schedule. No black club could ever survive without significant extra-league booking.

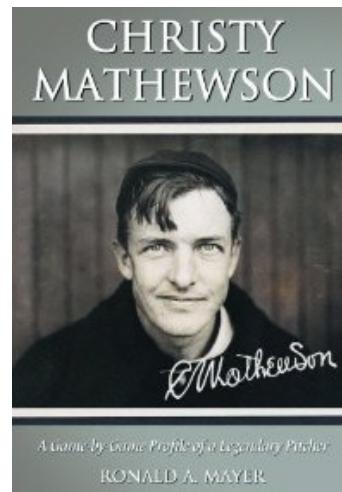
Foster remained at the helm of the NNL and the American Giants for six seasons, but during the 1926 season the league lost his guiding hand when he was committed to an asylum where he died four years later. Despite his absence, the club endured, changing ownership several times, first with William Trimble, Robert Cole, and then Horace Hall until J.B. Martin took over the club in the 1940s.

In steady sequence, Debono offers useful snapshots of each season. The club, like all Negro Leagues clubs, had many up and downs and was in continual financial peril but, unlike most others, it experienced the full range of Negro Leagues history. It was there at the outset and remained after Jackie Robinson signed with the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1945 and debuted in 1947, drawing fan attention and playing talent away from the Negro Leagues.

Debono provides brief biographies of Chicago American Giants players which, at times, reads like a who's-who of the Negro Leagues. In addition to Foster, the club's uniform was worn Dave Malarcher, Willie Foster, Bruce Petway, Cool Papa Bell, John Beckwith, Oscar Charleston, Bingo DeMoss, Bill Gatewood, "Candy" Jim Taylor and Turkey Stearnes.

Another and more unique feature is nearly thirty pages where Debono lists the game results for the Chicago American Giants, beginning with their precursor, the Leland Giants in 1909. While Debono concedes that the game summaries are not complete, and most likely never will be, the existing summaries help illustrate the types of opponents black ball clubs encountered both in the Deadball Era and after.

The book consolidates the history of one of the Negro Leagues most important clubs in a single volume, and is a useful addition to the growing Negro Leagues literature and, more broadly, to the history of baseball.



**CHRISTY MATHEWSON:
A GAME BY GAME
PROFILE OF A
LEGENDARY PITCHER**

BY RONALD A. MAYER

2008. Jefferson, NC:
McFarland Publishers
[ISBN: 978-0-7864-4121-1.
380 pages. \$35.00 USD,
softcover]

Reviewed by Irwin Cohen
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Ronald A. Mayer scores with his wonderful account of Christy Mathewson. In the preface, Mayer tells us what to expect by asking, "What kind of a book is this?" And he answers, "It isn't a biography and it isn't a chronology. It's something in between; a hybrid I call a chronography." I call it a combination biography and chronology. But that's the kind of baseball book I like and, whatever it is called, the book is excellent. Stat mavens especially will enjoy the tables of Mathewson's accomplishments and the capsule reports of all of his 373 victories.

Mathewson's personal life is spotlighted through homey photos sprinkled throughout the well-researched book. We really get to know the man and the pitcher and learn how he coped with the illness that robbed him of his energy, active middle-aged years and retirement. Jack Sher, in a 1949 *Sport* magazine article (according to the notes), captures the esteem in which Mathewson was held, writing: "Although the fans never got close to Mathewson, the way they later did to Ruth, they showered on him the same sort of affection. They respected his shy dignity. They seemed content to worship him from a distance. They seemed to know, instinctively, that here was a fine, gentle, decent man. Why they did is a mystery, because he had none of the expansive, colorful characteristics usually found in those who grab and hold public attention" (p. 271). Mayer adds, "His popularity with the public was more closely aligned with the type of adoration given the great Joe DiMaggio" (p. 271).

Mayer also provides insights into the era's number one baseball villain, Giants owner Andrew Freedman, who owned the club during Mathewson's early years. "The downfall of the New York Giants began with the purchase of the club by Freedman back on January 17, 1895," Mayer writes: "An unscrupulous real estate lawyer, Freedman, in the

years ahead, would turn the entire team upside down while making enemies faster than rabbits multiply"(p. 11). Although the author offers readers an easy read and tosses in his own opinions here and there in his own style, I would have liked to have more information on life around the Polo Grounds and Manhattan during Matty's years there. For example, what were the daily rates at some of the top hotels? What were the monthly rentals of apartments? What did public school teachers earn? What were the salaries of police officers?

Even though Mayer's *Christy Mathewson* is backed with a section of notes and sources that is a staple of McFarland releases, it would be helpful if McFarland put the notes on the bottom of the page so that readers who want to look at the source don't have to keep shuffling to the back for more clarification. That said, there's really nothing to criticize about the author's information or presentation.

Mayer's readers learn tidbits about each game in which Mathewson pitched [i.e., the temperature reached 94 degrees when Matty made his big league debut in Brooklyn's Washington Park on September, 19, 1900] and bits of American history as well. They are informed that all games were canceled in the National and American Leagues on September, 19, 1901, as President William

McKinley, the victim of an assassin weeks earlier, was laid to rest. On May 14, 1906, the author notes, "the Standard Oil Company raised its price of gasoline to dealers from 15 to 18 cents a gallon. The dealers in turn raised their price to 25 cents."

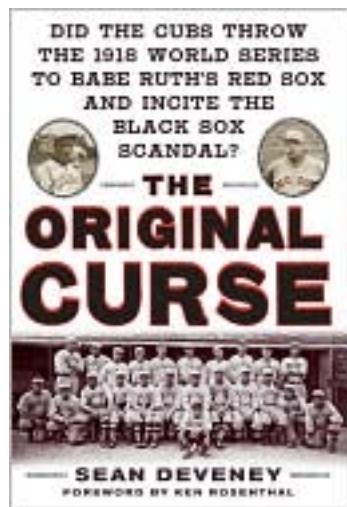
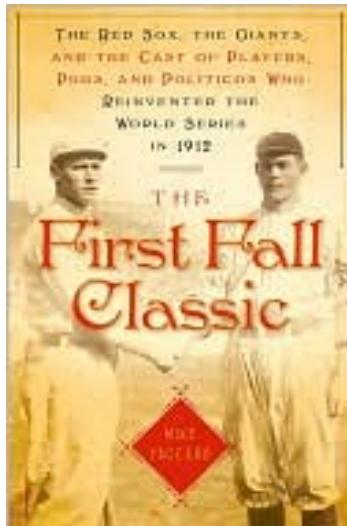
In sum, we get here a sense of the happenings of Matty's time and, most important, we get a book that belongs on all of our shelves.

Let's play two...

A pair of related books
reviewed by

David W. Anderson

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THE FIRST FALL CLASSIC: THE RED SOX, THE GIANTS, AND THE CAST OF PLAYERS, PUGS AND POLITICS WHO REINVENTED THE WORLD SERIES IN 1912

BY MIKE VACCARO

2009. New York: Doubleday
[ISBN: 978-0-385-52624-1
290 pages. \$26.95 USD
hardcover]

THE ORIGINAL CURSE: DID THE CUBS THROW THE 1918 WORLD SERIES TO BABE RUTH'S RED SOX AND INCITE THE BLACK SOX SCANDAL?

BY SEAN DEVANEY

*2010. New York:
McGraw Hill*
[ISBN: 978-0-07-162997-3.
242 pages. \$24.95, USD.
hardcover]

"Gambling in the Deadball Era? I am shocked!" This comment paraphrases Casablanca's Police Inspector Renault's cynical observation about ongoing illegal activities, but it is true; gambling was rife during the Deadball Era. Players knew where the gamblers were, and many sought them out.

This said, we must take another look at what Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis did for the game. Yes, people were hurt during Landis' investigations, and he did not do much to desegregate baseball but, in the end, he saved the game. *Judge and Jury: The Life and Times of Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis* by David Pietrusza is a

good place to start. Pietrusza, a member of SABR, and its president from 1993 to 1997, argues that though many people did not care for Landis, his actions to curb gambling after 1920 ultimately "ratcheted baseball's moral code up several notches" and "restor[ed] public faith in the game's integrity" (pp. 194, 229).

Two new books, *The First Fall Classic*, by Mike Vaccaro, and *The Original Curse*, by Sean Devaney, confirm that until Judge Landis came along, baseball was a haven for gamblers. Both authors demonstrate that gambling then, like steroids today, was clandestine and widespread. Ken Rosenthal of Fox Sports, who provided an introduction to *The Original Curse*, says it was "This notion of a cover-up should ring true for those who follow baseball now, because baseball's gambling culture in that era was not unlike the steroid culture that infiltrated the sport eight decades later. Clandestine. Widespread. A charade worthy of deep and intense investigation" (pp. ix-x). As long-time Washington catcher Eddie Ainsmith told an interviewer before his death in 1981, "Everybody bet in those days, because it was a way of making up for the little we were paid."

While reading these books, it struck me again that the men who played the game did it for money, and very little else. In 1912, players made between \$1,500 and \$15,000. Although

some players added to their income by endorsing products, writing newspaper articles, or lending their names to businesses, most players did not have these opportunities. All, however, could throw games. Vaccaro in his *First Fall Classic* claims that, "The bookmakers who resided in the game's shadows at the turn of the century had been replaced by steroid suppliers at the dawn of a new one" (p. 3).



EDDIE AINSMITH
"Everybody bet in those days because it was a way of making up for the little we were paid."

This is true to a larger degree than we want to acknowledge. Gambling is everywhere today and deeply embedded in our culture. Seemingly, gambling is something we cannot do without. Government can't do without it either, as it provides additional revenue for schools and other public projects. Obviously, there are legitimate uses for steroids in medicine,

but they can be--and are--misused daily. My doctor tells me many high school athletes and their parents want steroids to improve their children's abilities. We have a pain-in-the-head, pill-in-the-mouth culture. Owners and league presidents in each era have denied these truths. Look at Bud Selig and the Players Association today and how they have handled steroids or, rather, how they have mishandled the mess. Baseball needed the home run derby in the first decade of the twenty-first century and the players complied, in part, by taking steroids. No one did anything about it until public pressure forced the owners and union to act.

As for the Deadball Era, there was a lot of noise about gambling but little action. Ban Johnson told everyone who would listen, "There is no room in baseball for the gambler, no room in the ball park for his evade presence" (p. 2). Yet gamblers were everywhere and were never far from players. The owners played a role in this as well by doing little to root out gambling. Because gamblers bought tickets and owners wanted to make the game profitable, little was done about gambling. There were rumors of players throwing games, but the owners merely held hearings and, until 1920, nothing substantial was done. Owners stood in the way of any enforcement and the ball players and sportswriters who had evidence always hit a stone wall of owners and fans who couldn't care less.

A prominent gambling figure in the Deadball Era was John McGraw, manager of the New York Giants. He opened pool halls in partnership with Arnold Rothstein who helped fix the 1919 World Series. McGraw was a great manager, but he wanted to see what he could get away with and no owner could, or would, get in his way. Noted Broadway showman George M. Cohan also often bet money on ball clubs. In 1914 he backed the Boston Braves in their upset of the Philadelphia Athletics. Just before the 1912 Series, Cohan put \$50,000 on the Boston Red Sox, according to *The Original Curse*. Sport Sullivan, another figure in the 1919 fix, backed him up.



ARNOLD ROTHSTEIN

"It never occurred to me that one man could start to play with the faith of fifty million people--with the singlemindedness of a burglar blowing a safe."

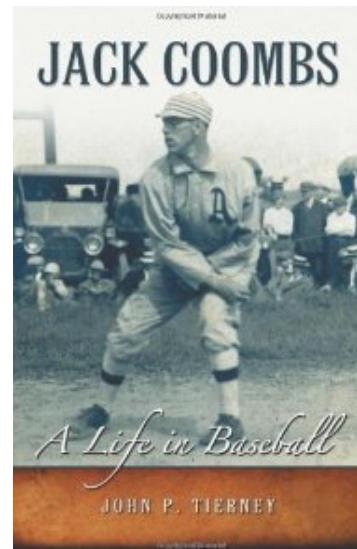
*F. Scott Fitzgerald
"The Great Gatsby"*

When Judge Landis shut the door on gambling in 1921, it was National League President

John Heydler who put it best: "I am in favor of running down the end of every rumor of crookedness from now on, and doing it openly and above board." The operative phrase was, "from now on" (p. 108). As Michael T. McGreevey, well-known proprietor of Boston's Third Base Saloon and a figure prominently mentioned in *The First Fall Classic*, might conclude: "Nuf ced."

The First Fall Classic is an uneven work. Its heavy coverage of the "trial of the century"—a charge of corruption against New York Police Lieutenant Charles Becker—is a distraction. It also lacks footnotes and bibliography, both of which could have made this book better and a more valuable research reference. Finally, *The First Fall Classic* suffers from a northeastern tilt. Too many books on baseball tilt on the New York-Boston radius in my opinion, leaving the impression that baseball isn't played in other places.

The Original Curse offers its readers footnotes and a bibliography and provides a good insight into gambling problems throughout the Deadball Era, including those involving Jean Dubuc, former pitcher who left baseball because of gambling interests, Ty Cobb, Tris Speaker, Dutch Leonard and others. It also describes how the 1918 World Series played out, and implies that the Cubs may have deliberately lost it.



JACK COOMBS: A LIFE IN BASEBALL

BY JOHN P. TIERNEY

*2008. Jefferson, NC:
McFarland Publishers*

*[ISBN: 978-0-7864-3959-1.
214 pages. \$29.95, USD,
paperback]*

Reviewed by Ben Klein
ben.klein1984@gmail.com

John P. Tierney's *Jack Coombs: A Life in Baseball* provides a detailed account of one of baseball's greatest and most overlooked Deadball Era pitchers. In recounting the life of the fascinating John Wesley ("Colby Jack") Coombs, Tierney transports his readers to a society that bears little resemblance to our own and immerses them in a game that has changed dramatically since Coombs first took the field for Connie Mack's Philadelphia Athletics in July, 1906.

Tierney begins the book in Boston on September 1, 1906, where Coombs turned in a performance that will never again be repeated, tossing a remarkable twenty-four inning complete game. His 4-1

victory for the Athletics was meaningless for Philadelphia's season, but Coombs' gutsy performance on that day in Boston foreshadowed a life that was consistently marked by courage and perseverance. Tierney demonstrates that these qualities drove Coombs to become the centerpiece of Connie Mack's pitching staff during Philadelphia's 1910 and 1911 World Series victories and propelled him to work his way back into the major leagues following a life-threatening battle in 1912 with typhoid fever.

Tierney argues that Coombs stood out among his contemporaries not only because of his physical ability, but also as a gentleman and an intellectual. After studying chemistry at Colby College in his native Maine, Coombs graduated in 1906 and made his way to Philadelphia to begin his career with the Athletics. The contrast between the refined Coombs and the stereotypical ballplayer of the day could not have been clearer, as when Tierney recounts Coombs' first interaction with Rube Waddell, a hard-drinking man-child. Although Coombs' sophistication may have placed him in the minority among his contemporaries, Tierney shows that this persona served him well both in his career and in his life following baseball.

Coombs proved not only to be a dominant pitcher, but a complete player. In 1908, Mack deployed Coombs to

the heart of the Athletics lineup. Although Coombs did not turn out to be the "next Ty Cobb" as he was touted, he proved to be a very serviceable outfielder and a decent hitter. He hit .255 in 1908, which was not only above the A.L.'s .239 average, but was third best on the Athletics behind Danny Murphy and Hall of Famer Eddie Collins. Despite his offensive contributions, Coombs' greatest years came as a pitcher in 1910 and 1911. He won thirty-one and twenty-eight games respectively in those seasons as the Athletics won two consecutive World Series.

After turning in another solid season in 1912, Coombs was stricken with typhoid fever. Though he would never be as dominant again on the mound, he courageously fought his way back to the major leagues and helped lead the Brooklyn Robins to the National League pennant in 1916, posting a 13-8 record and an ERA of 2.66. In addition to his pitching contributions, Coombs contributed to the Robins' success by helping to develop the young Brooklyn pitching staff. He returned to the Robins for the 1917 and 1918 seasons and came out of retirement to make two appearances for the Detroit Tigers in 1920.

Tierney reveals Coombs as a fine baseball mind, detailing his time as head baseball coach at Duke University (1929-1952) and as the author

of *Baseball: Individual Play and Team Strategy*, first published in 1937. Coombs' book proved to be so popular that three editions were published between 1937 and 1951, as well as a Spanish version. Aside from his literary contributions, Coombs' career achievements are eye-catching. He won 158 games against 110 losses, hurled 187 complete games, recorded 35 shutouts, and had an ERA of 3.59. Despite lacking the longevity of Christy Mathewson and Walter Johnson, he never lost to Mathewson and won three of four decisions against Johnson. Overall, he was 21-8 against Hall of Fame pitchers and was held in the highest regard by all-time greats such as Johnson, Joe Jackson, and Nap Lajoie, all of whom placed him on their short lists of all-time pitching greats.

Tierney's superb biography of Coombs is a welcome addition to the Deadball Era literature because it focuses much-needed attention on one of the era's greatest clutch pitchers, and perhaps its foremost gentleman.

Publishers' contacts for books reviewed in this issue:

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221 Ave. of the Americas
New York, NY 10020
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FROM THE BOOK REVIEW EDITOR... *continued from page 4*

the author's documentation, judgment, and prose, and provide readers some appreciation of what the book contributes to the literature—and do all this in few words—is no trifling feat.

A chief vice of current reviews, it seems to me, stems from their amiableness. Understandably, young reviewers hesitate to criticize the work of veteran writers, lest they be thought presumptuous or make enemies. Conversely, older reviewers pull back from savaging the work of young associates out of compassion, or from recollections of their own youthful failings. Long-time colleagues too often are reluctant to write ill of each other or their work. The result too often is reviews that are painfully dull and, in the end, worthless. Informing readers that a book is 'interesting' does not appreciably advance readers' understanding. Pointing out that no other author has treated the subject does not in itself make a case for either the author or the book. The writer who lazily poses the question of whether Pete Rose was hero or bum needs to be reminded that Rose may be neither, or both, or a good many other things.

In the last decade or so, books about baseball and baseball players have proliferated; they have also become more thorough in their documentation, more subtle and complex in their approaches, contexts, and theses. It is imperative that reviews keep apace by becoming more discerning and discriminating. Writers who produce exceptional books deserve perspicacious reviews. Strong reviews do not only evaluate a book and a press, but they can encourage both--and others--down profitable new paths.

Since its tentative beginnings in 1971, SABR has evolved into a large, diverse and increasingly demanding organization. Its standards have risen with the expectations of its membership. Its publications reflect greater editorial care, more sophisticated methodologies and deeper analyses. Baseball's history is now acknowledged as a serious field of inquiry, worthy of the best minds in publishing. Authors and publishers alike deserve rigorous, perceptive, constructive, and balanced reviews. Those of us at *The Inside Game* are working to that end."

BROWN MARKER *continued from page 3*

relative, grand-nephew Fred Massey, was also in attendance with his wife Judy, as was a relative of Sharon Milam, Mordecai's great-grand niece, whose story about saving family snapshots appears in our book.

At both events, Scott and I met people who told us their fathers and grandfathers had known the famous right-hander. Lester Wiggins, whose father went to the same small school in Brown's birthplace of Nyesville (about 30 miles to the northeast of Terre Haute) that Mordecai attended, told us he'd met him at the station in 1944 or '45, about three years before Mordecai's death. He said he was young then and didn't realize the gas station owner was famous. "If I had known, I would have talked to him more."



Brown at his gas station

For more photos and information on Mordecai Brown:

<http://www.facebook.com/album.php?aid=62205&id=1436797551&l=7896b19d27>

<http://www.mordecaibrown.com>

Gas station photos courtesy
Scott Brown.

Eddie Ainsmith photo
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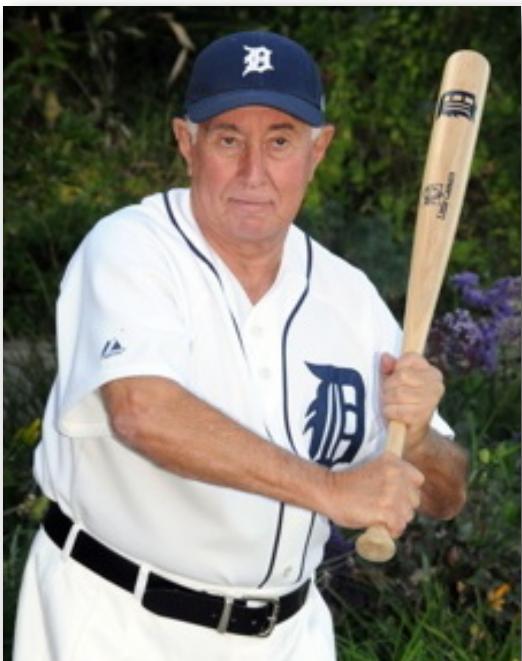
COLEMAN AS COBB

continued from page 1

of years, he had the biggest such show in the San Francisco Bay area.

That's a long way from Brooklyn, where Norm was born 74 years ago. And, though he comes across as a veteran on stage, the challenge of acting came only four years ago. "I saw "*The Laramie Project*" (a controversial play about the reaction to the murder of a gay University of Wyoming student) at a local theatre and decided to audition." He landed a small, twelve-line part in another play, "*Inherit the Wind*." "I was so green. (The lines) took forever to memorize and I didn't even know stage left from stage right."

The idea of doing a show about Cobb came about not much after the acting bug hit--and quite by accident. Being a Dodgers fan from the old neighborhood, "I went to the library looking for a book about Jackie Robinson and saw one about Cobb. I didn't know anything about him. Well, I knew about his stats, but not much else." After reading about Cobb, Norm was enamored by him. "Cobb was a challenge. I was convinced (he) would make a great one-man show."



Coleman or Cobb?
Find out on the Saturday of the convention at 7:30 PM

But bringing Cobb back to life was more than a one-man show. It started with noted Cobb historian Wesley Fricks. In addition to probably having the largest private collection of Cobb memorabilia, including letters and other documents, Fricks was also the guiding force behind the Cobb museum in both he and Cobb's hometown of Royston. With his background, Fricks provided Norm with invaluable information about the baseball legend.

That help was augmented by Lynn April Statten, a veteran Broadway character actress of forty-plus years ago who "gave a lot of good direction" about stage presence and mentioned that Cobb, generally not known as a likable sort, should, nonetheless, be "entertaining, humorous, historical and informative."

Also providing assistance was the Detroit Tigers, Cobb's team of 22 years. Late in 2006, Norm wrote to the organization looking for information about Cobb. Dave Dombrowski, President, CEO and General Manager of the club, wrote back saying, "Our organization is willing to offer assistance if we can be helpful in bringing your play to Lakeland." They still converse regularly today. Additional assistance came from Ron Myers, who's the Director of Operations for the team's spring training and Florida State League complex in Lakeland and who offered this: "Don't tell us that he was a racist, SOB or wife beater. We know all that. Tell us about the man."

Speaking of Myers, Norm's first contact with him came upon Dombrowski's request late in 2007. After some back and forth about the content of the show, Myers finally said he'd call back in a month. Which he did, except he probably forgot about the three-hour time difference, rousing Norm out of bed at 7 AM by saying "We want you." Cobb, even after having played his last game more than eighty years ago and dying nearly fifty years ago, is apparently still a touchy subject within the organization. Though they didn't ask to see the script and nothing was either spoken or put in writing, a message was conveyed. "I don't think they wanted me to bring in all the old garbage," Norm said.

And thus began Norm Coleman playing Ty Cobb on the final day of his life, Cobb's that is.

As a person facing his own demise, at ironically the same age as Norm is now, Cobb reminisces about his past. "I play him as an old man looking for redemption." As far as Cobb being a polarizing sort of figure--he seemed to be able elicit strong feelings, both positive and negative, from fans as well as fellow players, Norm found that "there were a lot of shades of gray. I wanted to show the other side of the man."

Included in that other side was Cobb's philanthropy, which Norm recounted. Thanks to a generous salary, at least for the time, and shrewd investments, one of which was getting in on or near the ground floor of Coca Cola, another Georgia institution, Cobb was baseball's first million-dollar player. He took that money and, later in his life, helped indigent players, all anonymously. He also helped start an educational foundation bearing his name in Royston which provided grants for needy Georgia students of all races to attend college as well as providing the seed funding for a hospital in Royston which still bears his name and has expanded over the years from a twenty-four bed hospital to become the Ty Cobb Healthcare System, providing healthcare for people in that rural area who otherwise wouldn't have had access to it.

Other surprising tidbits include Cobb "getting religion" late in life, augmenting his Baptist upbringing by becoming what's commonly known today as "Christian," as well as his friendship with Joe DiMaggio, facilitated by his relationship with another famous major leaguer from San Francisco and a contemporary of Cobb by the name of Lefty O'Doul.

Among the accolades Norm has received for his portrayal came after a performance at the Cobb museum in front of a couple hundred people, including some members of the Cobb and Chitwood (Cobb's mother's side) families. As he recalled, "Mr. Coleman, you did a great job of bringing great-grandpa to life." Hey, if you can please the relatives...

That should translate well to his show at the upcoming convention. Norm waxed philosophical: "There's nothing you could tell the SABR folks. They know everything about Cobb." Well, then they probably know that, while Norm is playing Cobb on stage, Cobb, like a number of players of the era, did some off-season work on the boards himself. For many it was monologue-type stuff or some campy vaudeville shtick with a baseball angle. For the players, it was the extra money. For the audience, it was a chance to see their favorite players in the flesh, in something other than a baseball uniform while possibly hearing some pearls of wisdom as well. In Cobb's case, however, he played in the so-called "legitimate" theatre, appearing in *"The College Widow"* in 1911. But then that information came from Robert Schaefer's *"Anson in Greasepaint"* article in the 2008 issue of SABR's *"The National Pastime."* Cobb was also the first player to star in a movie, starring in Grantland Rice's *"Somewhere in Georgia"* (1917). So, maybe there's not much that can be slipped by the SABR audience after all.

Occasionally, Norm adds a press conference after the show, taking questions as Cobb. When I asked him about the biggest curve ball he ever had to handle, he mentioned that someone asked him what he thought of Barry Bonds. It was the noted baseball historian and SABR member, the late Jules Tygiel, who told Norm that he didn't have to answer those sorts of questions saying, "You're already dead." But Norm came up with the perfect squelch which starts, "I watch baseball on my HDTV in heaven..." Many people don't think that was Cobb's final destination.

The convention show is scheduled for Saturday at 7:30 PM.

Norm also writes for BaseballDigest.com and resides in Half Moon Bay, California. His son, Mark, is a fireman who resides in El Granada, California.



HUSTING MEMORIAL continued from page 2

staff, Pete excelled and went 14-5 as the Athletics won the league championship. They wouldn't get a chance to test their mettle against their cross-state rivals, the Pirates, as the World Series wouldn't begin until the next year.

Pete walked away from baseball to be with his family and practice law, eventually being appointed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt as the U. S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Wisconsin. His friendship with Mack lasted throughout his life. In her dedication speech, great-granddaughter Sandra Perpich said that Pete named his child Connie, after Mr. Mack. Through the years,

Husting family members at the dedication

the years, Pete took many train rides into Chicago when the Athletics visited the city. On Monday, October 8, 1929, Husting took his 11 year-old nephew Tom Erickson to the first ever World Series game held at Wrigley Field, as the Athletics faced the Cubs (the Cubs played their 1918 World Series games at Comiskey Park). They received their tickets from Mr. Mack while having lunch with him prior to the game. Almost twenty years later, Connie Mack sent 70 roses to the funeral of Husting, representing one for each year of Husting's life.

Museum president Don Bauer was the master of ceremonies for the dedication. Mayville mayor Tracy Heron, followed by town Historian Bill Lee and Sandra Perpich spoke at the ceremony.

Family members traveled from as far as California to attend the dedication. Bauer and Stalker premiered what will be an ongoing exhibit for Husting in the museum's Rock River Baseball League Hall of Fame room.

1898 University of Wisconsin baseball team photo courtesy of Mayville (HS) Cardinal Football website.
<http://www.angelfire.com/ma4/cardinals/footballhome.html>

PETE HUSTING STATS

	W-L	ERA	G	GS	CG	IP	H	R	ER	K	BB	HBP	WP	BFP
1900 PIT NL	0-0	5.63	2	0	0	8	10	5	5	7	5	1	0	39
1901 MIL AL	9-15	4.27	34	26	19	217 1/3	234	151	103	67	95	13	3	969
1902 Tot	14-6	3.99	33	28	18	212	255	141	94	48	99	9	3	964
BOS AL	0-1	9.00	1	1	1	8	15	15	8	4	8	0	0	46
PHI AL	14-5	3.79	32	27	17	204	240	126	86	44	91	9	3	918
CAREER	23-21	4.16	69	54	37	437 1/3	499	297	202	122	199	23	6	1972

THE LAST WORD

by Mark Ruckhaus
Editor, *The Inside Game*

I'm in a bit of a quandary here for two simple reasons that, though I have my opinions on the subject, I'm not sure if (a) I should use my bully pulpit to state them and (b) my opinions are conflicting.

I'll preface the following by saying that, in my very short tenure as *The Inside Game* editor, I learned my lesson on book reviewing. And that is: Don't do it. That's for two reasons. The first is that I'm no damn good at it. Comp lit was never my strong point and Gail, and rightly so, wants that in our reviews. The era in which we report has been dead for 90 years. Any new material is somehow rehashing stuff that's already been out there for as much as those 90 years, maybe longer. So, even if someone is taking a fresh approach toward something, chances are the subject matter has already been written about in another form and how does this new presentation compare to what's already been written? The second is that I already have a position as editor. And as objective as I may try to be, I feel that the line between editor and objective reviewer would be a blurry one in such a case and it might be difficult for at least some people to tell when the "editor" hat comes off and the "reviewer" hat gets put on. As a *mea culpa*, I never should have written a review for the *Black Sox* newsletter. Maybe nobody made the association between my duties here, as I haven't been doing them for too long, and the review there. Maybe it's a bit too late, but I did.

That's my experience. I also understand that others may not find this line to be so blurry.

The example I'm going to bring up involves two recent books on the same subject, that being the one of the more popular songs ever written, "*Take Me Out to the Ballgame*." The first, "*Baseball's Greatest Hit*," was written by, among three gentlemen, Tim Wiles, who also happens to be the Director of Research at the Hall of Fame and was published in conjunction with the hundred year anniversary of the song in 2008. If you have to ask which Hall of Fame, please resign your SABR membership now. The second, "*Take Me Out to the Ballgame*," was written by Amy Whorf McGuigan and was published a year later. Tim's

book paints the subject with a broad brush, including other baseball-related music as well as giving a history of the famous song sung at most seventh-inning stretches, while Amy's book focuses more on the song and its composers. And, while there's commonality among the pages of both, they are two different books.

Amy's book was reviewed by Tim for the publication *NINE*.

For the purposes of this column, I'm not going to get into whether the review was positive or negative as it's not germane. Let's put it another way... If his review were unflinchingly positive, some would say that the review was favorable, there's nothing to discuss and let's move on. But that's not the point. The point, as I see it was, who reviewed it? Was it someone truly objective or was it someone who is at least perceived as having ulterior motives, in this case a competing book? Was it also someone who has a position of prominence in our little sport and could that prominence play a part in how people judge the review and, therefore, the book? The question is, then, should Tim have reviewed the book?

Before I go further, those who know me know that I'm not a "style over substance" type of guy; I deal in reality, not perceptions. Yet this involves an issue of perception and I find myself coming down on that side of the issue. Needless to say, I'm confused and conflicted by this.

I conversed with Amy in emails and spoke with Tim on the phone. I could tell you of Amy's opinion of Tim's review and her thoughts as to whether or not Tim should have undertaken it. But, bottom line, it doesn't matter. I could tell you of Tim's comments. Other than saying that he wouldn't get involved in reviewing something in which he had little or no interest and, considering his involvement in the subject, "*Take Me Out to the Ballgame*" (both the song and book) were right up his alley, again, it doesn't matter.

What matters are two things: Can a person who wears two hats know at exactly which point one hat comes off and the other goes on? And, can the reader of a review or article tell clearly which hat the reviewer or author was wearing at the time he penned his thoughts? To avoid such conflicts, might it just be best for those multi-hatted people to take a step back and let others do the reviewing?

The following comes courtesy of SABR member Dennis Pajot, who came across this ad in the November 29, 1902 *Sporting Life* (digitized on LA84 Foundation web site). If you were curious as to what people were reading back then and how you could get 50 books for under \$20...

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II

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