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## Comments from the Chair

Andy McCue

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Please note my new email address (see above).

I'll leave most of the news about The Baseball Index (TBI) to Ted Hathaway's report, but I did want to convey how excited he and I are by the progress that's being made. Various Committee members have been testing the beta version of the search engine on the Web since around Opening Day. Our current plan is to have TBI up and running for all to use by mid-May. Look for an announcement on SABR-L.

Please welcome new Committee member Keith Schuermann (1815 West 45<sup>th</sup>, Cleveland, OH 44102; keithschuermann@hotmail.com).

The Bibliography Committee meeting at the National Convention in Boston is currently scheduled for 8 p.m. on Thursday, June 27. This is from the preliminary schedule, which is subject to change. I'd hope as many of you as possible could be at the Convention, which is one of the highlights of my year. Every year I meet a few more SABR members (and Committee members) and the circle of people to renew friendships with the next year gets even larger.

It's been a very good quarter for indexing. Bruce Roth finished an index for Marc Okkonen's *The Federal League of 1914-1915: Baseball's Third Major League* (1989). And Dick Miller chimed in with three completed indexes: Hal Butler's *Al Kaline and the Detroit Tigers* (1973) and two books by Al Hirshberg--*The Red Sox, the Bean and the Cod* (1947) and *The Braves, the Pick and the Shovel* (1948). That brings our total of indexed baseball books to 73. All are available from the SABR Research Library run by Len Levin.

Speaking of indexes, Southern Illinois University (SIU) Press has produced this spring three more soft-cover reprints of the Putnam team histories series. The Brooklyn Dodgers, New York Yankees, and New York Giants team histories supplement those of the Cubs and the Cardinals that SIU Press published in 2001. All five include indexes prepared by Committee members, which will make the books much more useful: Rick Johnson for the Dodgers, Bob McConnell for the Yankees, and Terry Smith for the Giants. SIU Press gave credit to the individual indexers as well as SABR. Next year, SIU plans to publish the Red Sox and Pirates volumes, as it will be the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first World Series, in which those two teams played. Jack Carlson prepared the indexes for both of those books.

Karl Kageff of SIU tells me the university hasn't committed to production beyond 2003, but the press was happy with the sales of the Cubs (2000 or so) and Cardinals (about 1500) books. He also said they think the books will be consistent

sellers over time. I urged him to consider reprinting some of the rarer volumes in the series, such as those for the Phillies, Senators, and Orioles.

Again, we are always looking for people interested in preparing indexes of important baseball books that were published without them. In addition, the University of Nebraska Press and SIU Press have both used Committee members to produce indexes for new books they are publishing. Skip McAfee has produced an excellent guide for indexing. Please contact me if you have a book you'd like to index or are available to be drafted to index, either an old or a new book.

Jim Lannen, who's had some success turning our old Research Guides into electronic text files for placement on the Internet, is having trouble with *The Index to The Sporting News Baseball Register: 1940-1995* prepared by Frank Phelps (1996). Basically, our typewriter-to-Kinko's production process left the characters in the pamphlet blurry enough that the scanner's mistake rate is rather high. Jim and I have been casting around for solutions, but haven't hit on any. Anyone with knowledge in this area or suggestions, your help would be greatly appreciated. Contact me or Jim (jlannen@attglobal.net).

And, one last reminder. Rich Arpi continues to do an outstanding job compiling *Current Baseball Publications*, which is enclosed. It's fairly easy for Rich to run down books from national publishers and those that come out in Minnesota. But all of us can help him by sending information about books or publications that come from regional publishers in our own areas.

Thanks, and hope to see you all in Boston. Our July 2002 newsletter may be a little late because of the Convention, but should have a complete report of the Committee meeting and other Convention activities.

Please vote in the SABR elections this spring.

## The Baseball Index (TBI) 1st Quarter 2002 Report

Ted Hathaway

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Final testing of the "Web interface" (i.e., the means by which researchers will be able to search the database directly over the World Wide Web) for **The Baseball Index** has begun and several long-time indexers have been running test searches on it, looking for problems and generally seeing how well it works. Andy McCue and I have been writing "copy" for the various Web pages connected with the TBI site and DMLCo (the firm creating the "Web interface") has been de-

veloping the graphics for these pages. Reactions have been positive and we are pleased with the progress so far. The current time table has us "going public" in late May 2002. That may change, of course, but we *guarantee* it will be up and running before the SABR Convention in June!

Some facts about the database and searching it--things to be aware of before you use it:

- The full database consists of more than 175,000 source references to books, book sections, yearbooks, media guides, programs, annuals, magazine and journal articles, poems, cartoons, advertisements, song sheets, and other documents. You will be able to search all of these.
- The "Web interface" will let you search by *Name*, *Topic*, *Author*, or *Title*. You may search using single terms or a combination of terms (e.g., "DiMaggio, Joe" or "New York Yankees and World Series and 1956").
- When the search is completed, you will be told how many source references there are in the database. The first 50 will be displayed at no cost. The remainder (if any) may be purchased directly from the Web site using a credit card. Formerly, we charged for *all* data from TBI searches, but have decided to make the first 50 "hits" free to increase the attractiveness and usefulness of the database. The pricing structure for all other data remains largely the same as before. SABR members enjoy discounts of roughly 25-30%. One-year subscriptions will also be available. Subscribers will be able to search the TBI database and display unlimited amounts of data as often as they wish.
- The data itself may be displayed either online or as an Adobe Acrobat (pdf) file. The information includes: author, title, document type, graphical and statistical content, names, topics, publication/publisher name, imprint data, copyright & issue date, pagination, bibliographic data, and miscellaneous notes (including cartoon captions, book review information, and first lines of poems). Those of you who have seen "The Ballplayers" directory on James Robinson's "Baseball Library" Web site (<http://www.baseballlibrary.com>) will already be familiar with the format of TBI data.

The database will be searchable from the SABR Web site as well as it's own Web site: <http://www.baseballindex.org>. The opening of the database for searching will be announced on SABR-L, but also be sure to start checking this Web site now and then late in May!

Amid the work on the Web interface, we have also been continuing to add records to the database. **Joe Murphy** continues his work on indexing dozens of issues of *Baseball Magazine* from the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, generously loaned to him by **Bernie Esser**. **Brad Sullivan** continues his work on issues of *The Sporting News* from the 1960s, while **Terry Sloope** added another year (1955) from *Sport* magazine. **Terry Smith** continues to index issues of *Baseball Magazine* (with assistance from Terry Sloope). Starting with the first issues in 1908, Terry has worked his way up to 1917, having indexed thousands of articles from this vital publication.

Thank you to all for your continuing contributions to *The Baseball Index*!

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"Who is this Baby Ruth? And what does she do?" (George Bernard Shaw, to American journalist Tom Meany)

## Letter

[A letter from Henry W. Thomas, author of *Walter Johnson: Baseball's Big Train* (1995) to Terry Smith]

I just came across your review of Jack Kavanagh's 1996 biography, *Walter Johnson: A Life*, in the Oct. 1998 issue of the *SABR Bibliography Committee Newsletter*. You should know that your (and Kavanagh's) cheap shot at Johnson for rushing up to Rochester to collect exhibition money is not merely in error, but as wrongheaded as could possibly be. Rather than "picking up a few extra bucks" (in your words) or "leaving Washington before cheering had stopped to pick up a fee for an exhibition appearance" (to quote Kavanagh), Johnson was hurrying away from the scene of the celebration of his life's dream to fulfill a promise made a month earlier to Al Schacht to make a charity appearance to save an elderly couple's home from foreclosure. Did you even read my book, or just take Kavanagh's opinion of it for your reviews and SABR medal committee duties? Shame on you for parroting Kavanagh's denigration of Johnson's name with his ignorant and misguided judgments. Speaking of which, Johnson's 1930 Senators began falling apart a month before the death of his wife, in complete contradiction of Kavanagh's neat theory tying the two events together. The trade of Garland Braxton, leaving the team without a reliable relief pitcher, doomed their pennant chances much more than anything happening in the manager's personal life. It's in my book, if you want the real story.

[Terry Smith, who chose not to respond, reviewed Thomas' book in the *International Journal of the History of Sport* in March 1999.]

## Book Reviews

**Leverett T. (Terry) Smith**

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### THE HIGH HARD ONE

Kirby Higbe, with Martin Quigley. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998.

### I NEVER HAD IT MADE

Jackie Robinson, with Alfred Duckett. Hopewell (N.J.): The Ecco Press, 1995

*The High Hard One* was first published in 1967; *I Never Had It Made* in 1972. The paperback reissue of *The High Hard One* contains a new afterword by Quigley. The reprint of *I Never Had It Made* has a foreword by Cornel West and an introduction by Hank Aaron. Robinson's book also has 16 pages of photographs. Neither is indexed. These two books have interesting things to say to one another.

Higbe makes the connection when he begins his chapter on Robinson (Robinson's book has a single mention of Higbe) with these words (p.100): "After the war, two things that hit baseball were education and breaking the color line. I think that opening up opportunities for education had more effect on baseball than opening the game up to Negroes". I'm not sure what Higbe means by "opening up opportunities for education", but it's clear that education and race are paired in his mind. Robinson himself quotes Branch Rickey's son as de-

scribing him as "a fine type of young man, intelligent and college bred" (p.35).

A high-school dropout during the Depression, Higbe has a lot to say about education, something he finds he could have used and something he resents others having. He himself has difficulty finding work, particularly after his baseball career, because of his lack of education. He remembers jobs in the past available to the uneducated, one particularly vividly (p.5): "Dad used to buy broken glass from bottlers all over the state for shipment back to the glassworks. He kept a crew of ten to twenty men busy cleaning the bottle tops and other trash out of it."

Having spent time in jail, both as a prisoner and trustee, Higbe is aware that jail time is in part a function of social and economic class, remarking that "money and education are as good as keys to the jail" and wishing he could help those who leave jail "with two strikes against them—no job and no education" (p.170, 184). He also laments (p.173) not being hired as "athletic officer" at a state prison "because of no education".

Higbe, though, feels that education has not been good for ballplayers, and he prefers the kind of ballplayer he sees as characteristic of the game before the emergence of Jackie Robinson: "a college boy Rickey had hand-picked" (p.103). "Today's ballplayers are sure different from the rough-and-ready guys whose only training was on the diamond and whose only education was what they picked up traveling around" (p.101). Education seems to have reduced the toughness of the modern ballplayer. Higbe would probably have agreed with the stereotype Quigley articulates in his afterword, quoting a letter from a Viking Press editor. Speaking of Higbe's manuscript, the editor praises (p.188) its "Ring Lardner *You Know Me Al* quality. ... It is refreshing to read when one considers today's college graduate business man ball players".

That is the stereotype—exciting, rough-and-tumble ballplayers vs. boring mechanical ballplayers, a stereotype "college boy" Jackie Robinson, for one, doesn't fit. But then he never did graduate. Paradoxically, but also logically, Higbe praises the mellower Roy Campanella as having done more for his race (p.108): "Roy showed baseball ... that you could be a competitor and a gentleman at the same time."

Higbe's post-baseball troubles are covered in the last four chapters, about one-sixth of his book. Robinson's post-baseball "troubles" (he had *plenty*) take up more than half his book. This alone makes Robinson's an unusual ballplayer's memoir, and in this respect it is the prototype of Arnold Rampersad's 1997 biography, *Jackie Robinson*. Like Higbe's, Robinson's story features a stance of alienation from modern America, though for very different reasons. Robinson's wonderful response to the Army bus driver who ordered him to the rear of the bus is emblematic of his whole life (p.18): "He shouted that if I didn't move to the rear of the bus he would cause me plenty of trouble. I told him hotly that I couldn't care less about his causing me trouble. I'd been in trouble all my life, but I knew what my rights were."

Robinson's troubles were racial, political (he allied himself with the Republican Party), economic (his association with the Freedom Bank), and personal (his relation to his son Jack Jr. and his son's addiction and death). In *I Never Had It Made* Robinson deals with the last most vividly. His straightforward acknowledgment of his culpability and the extraordinary image of Rachel and David Robinson "running off into the woods, running together like a couple of children, running off grief" make this a particularly memorable part of the book.

On a much lighter, but still memorable, note, both Robinson and Higbe tell the story of Robinson and Fritz Ostermueller. Higbe's version (p.108) is an example of African-Americans establishing themselves as major-league ballplayers. "Jackie proved himself a big-league ballplayer, and there is no politics that can help a man on the field. ... Fritz had a real sweeping motion in his wind-up, but he swore that Robinson wouldn't steal home on him. He went into that motion with Jackie on third, and before he could look up Jackie was sliding across home plate." Robinson, too, remembers the event as part of his establishing himself as a major leaguer (p.68). "The pressure eased when I began stealing [bases] again. Late in June, in a night game in Pittsburgh [Higbe remembers Brooklyn], with the score tied 2-2 I kept a careful eye on pitcher Fritz Ostermueller. I noticed he had become a little careless and relaxed. I began dancing off third base. Ostermueller paid me the insult of winding up, ignoring my movements as antics. ... Easing open my lead off third, I made a bold dash for home plate and slid in safe. ... It was the winning run of the game. As I ran I heard the exhilarating noise that is the best reward a player can get. The roar of the crowd."

Higbe's and Robinson's memories of Pee Wee Reese are a bit less harmonious. Robinson tells the story I'm familiar with. There's a conspiracy among some Dodger players to keep Robinson off the team. Robinson names the ringleaders (p.57): "Hugh Casey, a good relief pitcher from Georgia; Southerner Bobby Bragan, a respected catcher; Dixie Walker of Alabama; and Carl Furillo." Robinson identifies Higbe as the person who revealed the plot, having had too many beers and "feeling uncomfortable about the conspiracy" (p.56). Reese's name doesn't come up, but Robinson does later mention his "tolerant attitude" and tells the story of the game in Boston when Reese lent him public support. Boston players were riding Reese "about being a Southerner and playing ball with a black man."

Robinson continues (p.65): "Pee Wee didn't answer them. Without a glance in their direction, he left his position and walked over to me. He put his hand on my shoulder and began talking to me. His words weren't important. I don't even remember what he said. It was the gesture of comradeship and support that counted. As he stood talking with me with a friendly arm around my shoulder, he was saying loud and clear, 'Yell. Heckle. Do anything you want. We came here to play baseball'." This has always been one of the great moments of Robinson's story.

Higbe doesn't tell it. And he does tell the story of the conspiracy rather differently. His list of conspirators includes Reese among a group who said to Rickey "we don't want to play ball with a Negro" (p.103). Later (p.105), Higbe says, "Just as we were leaving Havana, Pee Wee swung over to Jackie's side." I had not realized, and Robinson does not say, that Reese was ever among those who asked not "to play ball with a Negro." So I checked around in Jules Tygiel's *Baseball's Great Experiment* (1983) and Rampersad's biography of Robinson to see what they said about it. Tygiel cites (p.171) Reese's refusal to sign a petition as crucial to turning back the conspirators. Rampersad lists (p.164) the same group of conspirators Robinson does, then parenthetically Higbe's list of those who went to Rickey, including Reese, without comment. What to make of this? Probably not a whole lot. What meeting is Higbe remembering, I wonder. I do think now, though, that Pee Wee Reese's journey to the moment he put his arm around Jackie Robinson's shoulder in Boston was a whole lot longer and more difficult for him than just from his shortstop position.