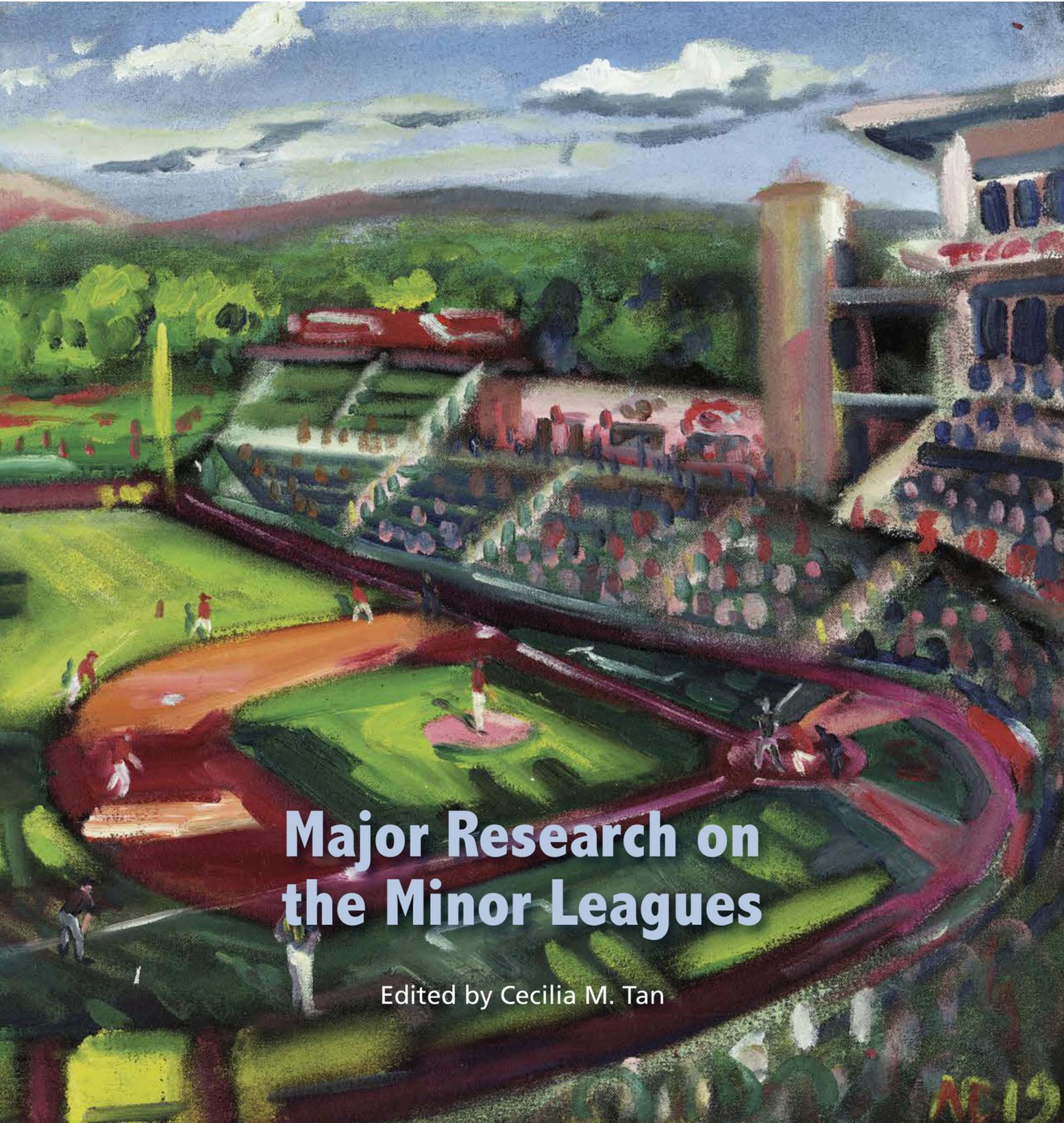


THE
National  Pastime



**Major Research on
the Minor Leagues**

Edited by Cecilia M. Tan

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Published by The Society for American Baseball Research

THE NATIONAL PASTIME: Major Research on the Minor Leagues – 2022 EDITION

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Editor: Cecilia M. Tan

Design and production: Lisa Hochstein

Cover art: Andy Brown, AndyBrownStadiums.com

Fact checker: Clifford Blau

Proofreader: Norman L. Macht

ISBN 978-1-970159-76-9 print edition

ISBN 978-1-970159-75-2 ebook edition

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About the Cover

Isotopes Park—Albuquerque Isotopes

Andy Brown

Oil on canvas, 2019, 27" x 19"

Artist's statement

I painted Isotopes Park about a third of the way through my 2019 tour of capturing all 30 Major League Baseball ballparks live in paint. I also stopped by a few minor and independent league games I passed on my way. With its curious slope in center field and the natural light show and beauty, Isotopes Park is not one to miss! In the heart of New Mexico, the Rio Grande ran by as fluffy clouds skimmed the top of the magnificent Sandia mountains. Shadows quickly crept over the field, marking time passing, before the sky exploded with color.

To see more ballpark paintings, visit www.AndyBrownStadiums.com/product-category/ballparks.

Contents

FROM THE EDITOR	Cecilia M. Tan	5
The Rise and Fall of the 1871 Kekiongas of Fort Wayne <i>Indiana's First Professional Team</i>	Robert Bowling	7
The Eastern Championship Association of 1881 <i>An Early "Minor" Organization in "Major League" Cities</i>	Woody Eckard, PhD	14
Nineteenth-Century Battles Over the Draft	Bob Bailey	18
Billy Holland Comes to Connecticut in 1906	Alan D. Cohen	22
Jamestown, North Dakota, in 1932 <i>Racial Reconciliation and Hall-of-Fame Competition</i>	Thomas Merrick	25
A Depression Ball Game <i>The Buffalo Bisons vs. the Muncy All-Stars, 1934</i>	Howard Henry	30
The Strange, Extremely Brief Days of Minor League Baseball in Roseville, California <i>Missing Score Sheets and Lost Heroics</i>	Dennis Snelling	37
The 1948 Duluth Dukes Bus Crash	Joel Rippel	42
Movies, Mentors, and the Minor Leagues	David Krell	45
My Kingdom for a Pony <i>The Era of "Pony Nights" in Reading (PA) Baseball</i>	Brian C. Engelhardt	49
Triple-A Nicknames When SABR Was Born	Francis Kinlaw	54
Harvard Boy Revisited <i>When Rick Wolff Chronicled the Minors</i>	John Fredland	55
Take Me Out to the (Minor League) Ballpark	Will Christensen	58
Triple Crown Batters in the Minor Leagues (1946–62) <i>What They Did Before and After</i>	Herm Krabbenhoft	68

Remembering Bob	Marshall Adesman	77
The Hidden Potato Trick	Steven M. Glassman	80
Back-to-Back Champions in Different Leagues <i>The 1997–98 Buffalo Bisons</i>	Gordon Gattie	86
Finding Your Voice <i>The Search for the Voice of the Beloit Sky Carp</i>	Matthew R.C. Bosen	90
CONTRIBUTORS		94

FROM THE EDITOR

I follow a photographer on Twitter with the handle “Abandoned America,” whose oeuvre includes many asylums, resort hotels and schools, dotting the landscape of the continental US, mapping the ebbs of communities and commerce. It didn’t occur to me until I sat down to write this, though, that I’ve yet to see a ballpark in the Abandoned America feed.¹

But I’ve seen the ballparks myself, scattered across the landscape. There are many reasons why a baseball diamond and its grandstand might be abandoned. Maybe a bigger, better ballpark was built. But maybe the team folded when they couldn’t make ends meet. Or their entire league did. Maybe a boomtown went bust. Or the team up and moved to another part of the country. Maybe they lost their affiliation with a big-league club. Or maybe the grandstand burned down and sank the entire business endeavor. Throughout the tales from non-major-league history published in this volume of *The National Pastime*, there are examples of every one of those scenarios.

I saw more than one abandoned minor league ballpark when I took a research trip through the American South in 2003. I had been a SABR member about a year, and I had written to SABR members all across the Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida asking them for baseball history landmarks along my route. My first stop, Fayetteville, was the site of Babe Ruth’s first home run as a professional. The ballpark was long gone: it had been located on public land that was eventually given over to government buildings, but there was a commemorative plaque, at least.

The first historic site I visited where the ballpark still stood was the old Durham Athletic Park (DAP), where *Bull Durham* was filmed, which SABR member Cliff Gardner took me to see. At the time, the contemporary Bulls had moved into a brilliant HOK-designed stadium confusingly named Durham *Bulls* Athletic Park (DBAP). As I blogged at the time, DAP was rather run down. “Paint was peeling everywhere we looked, and we kept discovering storage sheds and closets piled with odd old garbage dating back to 1998, when the Durham Dragons women’s professional fastpitch team played there. [We even] discovered the shed known as ‘Baseball Corner,’ a souvenir stand where *Baseball America*’s ‘office’ was housed in its infancy. The floor was rotted through.” DAP is still standing today. The powers that be in Durham keep finding tenants for the place: nowadays the North Carolina Central University baseball team.

I also stopped at Greensboro’s World War Memorial Stadium, which had been the home of a Yankees minor league affiliate, and which once had been the site where hundreds of seats from the old Yankee Stadium had been installed for re-use. The last pro baseball tenant left in 2004, but the team of the land-grant university that owns the site—North Carolina A&T—makes its home there, still.

SABR member Jim Tessmer showed me around Luther Williams Field in Macon, Georgia. The previous season it had been home to the Macon Braves, but they had flown the coop and left the ballpark—and Jim—behind. This was a classic 1929 gem, full of bricks, and quirks, and tin—with a press box built hanging from the roof. The place stood empty until the Macon Peaches played there in 2003, and a collegiate summer league team took up residence in 2007. Since then the classic nature of the place has been well recognized by TV and movie productions that have been filmed there: *Brockmire*, *Trouble with the Curve*, and the Jackie Robinson biopic *42*.

The site of Ponce De Leon Park in Atlanta was my next stop. This was the legendary site on which Babe Ruth hit a home run into a giant magnolia tree on the steep train-track-topped embankment that ran along right and center fields in the park. The magnolia tree is still there. The ballpark is not.

At the time I visited, the tree was behind the loading dock of a Borders bookstore. Nowadays, the entire Borders bookstore chain is gone, too. After visiting the tree, I also went to tour what was then the Braves’ “new” ballpark, the Olympic stadium that was built in the mid-1990s with the plan that it would be

converted to pro baseball after the Games ended. Right outside the new park, in the parking lot, you could see the one vestige of the old Fulton County Stadium that was preserved: the section of the wall where Hank Aaron's 715th home run left the park. The Braves have since abandoned this area of Atlanta for a new, upscale neighborhood in Cobb County, but Georgia State University has taken over the site and has plans to develop the Aaron monument and incorporate it into a new baseball and softball facility.

The last ballpark on my research trip was Tinker Field, built by Joe Tinker in 1923, when he tried his hand at Florida real estate after his ballplaying days. I saw Tinker Field at the end of its life, when it was just part of the Citrus Bowl complex, when even the high school team that had played there was moving to a new home. The outfield wall was dented by decades of use, the vestiges of old painted-on advertisements still legible. My host, Dillon Thomas, showed me Calvin Griffith's private box, located atop a groundskeepers outbuilding with a view of the field. Baseball had been played on the site since 1914. Just over 100 years later, after it had fallen into utter disuse and disrepair, the City of Orlando demolished it. In 2018 they added a Tinker Field History Plaza on the site to commemorate the history of baseball (and civil rights) in Orlando.²

Plenty of ballparks don't receive even that much consideration, nor do the "hometown teams" of non-major-league cities and towns. Sometimes the teams themselves bolt for greener pastures. Other times external forces are at work. In 2020, 42 teams were "contracted" by Major League Baseball, and the fallout from that is still being felt. But despite all the ups and downs that have plagued the minor leagues for more than a hundred years, minor league baseball (including independent, unaffiliated minor leagues) is still a vital part of small-town Americana. It's one of the reasons I wanted to explore the minor leagues as a theme in this issue of *The National Pastime*.

The only thing that stays the same in the minor leagues, it seems, is that things are always changing. This issue includes accounts of some teams that were so short-lived, they didn't even play a full season. We tread some expected ground, with stories of wacky gate attractions, pranks, and traditions, but also some unexpected territory as well: I hadn't necessarily expected that we'd have not one but two articles about Black ballplayers playing on White teams—something that couldn't happen in the American or National Leagues at the time. We have tragedy (in Duluth) and triumph (in Buffalo). We even have a smattering of sabermetrics, with a look at park effects and an examination of minor league Triple Crown winners.

If I learned one thing in my travels, it's that even when a ballpark is gone, sometimes someone puts up some kind of marker so folks will have something to look at to remember what's gone. A plaque, a sign, a section of wall. This edition of *The National Pastime* is my marker.

— Cecilia M. Tan
Cambridge, Massachusetts

1. Matthew Christopher, Abandoned America, accessed July 18, 2022, <https://www.abandonedamerica.us>.
2. Ryan Gillespie, "Tinker Field History Plaza memorializes civil rights and baseball in Orlando," *Orlando Sentinel*, May 2, 2018: <https://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/orange-county/os-orlando-tinker-field-parramore-20180501-story.html>.

The Rise and Fall of the 1871 Kekiongas of Fort Wayne, Indiana's First Professional Team

Robert Bowling

The National Association of Professional Baseball players was formed in 1871 in New York City leading to the first all-professional baseball organization. While many of the founding clubs were no surprise, one addition might raise eyebrows: the Kekiongas of Fort Wayne. Compared to the cities of the other clubs—New York, Washington DC, Philadelphia, and Boston—Fort Wayne was small, only around 17,000 people at the time.¹

FORMATION OF THE TEAM

The Kekiongas were the champion club of Indiana.² George Mayer—a wealthy local businessman and a member of the Kekiongas amateur team—had a vision to bring professional baseball to Fort Wayne. The only thing standing in the way was a lack of players. So it must have been fate when the Maryland Baseball Club was stranded while on a tour through the Midwest. The ballclub ran out of money, leaving them with no way to get back to Baltimore. Mayer, being a savvy businessman, offered the players contracts to play for the Kekiongas and most of them agreed.³

The acquisitions included Baltimore's best player, Bobby Mathews. A short pitcher at 5'5", he won 297 games spanning fifteen years in the NA and major leagues. Mathews and Candy Cummings were credited as the first professionals to master the curveball, and was one of the first to throw the spitball.⁴ Following Mathews to Indiana were William Lennon, Thomas Carey, Frank Sellman, Ed Mincher, and Wally Goldsmith. Mayer also recruited players from other clubs: Jim Foran, James McDermott, Bill Kelly, and Pete Donnelly. Lennon would serve as captain for the club.⁵

OPENING THE SEASON AT HOME

On May 4, 1871, all attention was fixed on Fort Wayne as the Kekiongas hosted the Forest Citys of Cleveland for the first professional baseball game in the new organization. Although professional baseball teams existed prior to 1871, most notably the Cincinnati Red Stockings, there had been no professional baseball league. The predecessor organization, the National

Association of Base Ball Players (baseball was spelled with two words), was an amateur organization that eventually allowed teams to pay players. In response, several teams broke away to form the National Association, consisting of all professional baseball teams, while the amateur teams formed their own organization.⁶

This game was without precedent as it was the first time two professional teams in an all-professional organization faced one another. The threat of bad weather kept the attendance at around 200 people. Truth be told, the citizens of Fort Wayne didn't give the Kekiongas much of a chance. A reporter admitted, "Our citizens had been of the opinion that our boys would be badly beaten." The Kekiongas won the coin toss and elected to have the Forest City's bat first.⁷

Mathews was in the pitcher's box for the Kekiongas and James "Deacon" White, future Hall of Famer, led off for Forest City. After taking a ball on the first pitch, White made good on the next pitch with a standup double. With the next batter, shortstop Carey made a fine defensive play, catching a pop-up and tagging White out at second for an unassisted double play. A strikeout ended the inning for Forest City with no runs. With Al Pratt pitching for the Forest Citys, the Kekiongas answered with a single but couldn't advance the runner.⁸

Kekiongas scored first in the second inning, plating a run by Lennon on McDermott's single to first base. After that, both teams failed to register a base hit until Bill Kelly hit a single in the bottom of the fifth inning. He reached third on passed balls and eventually scored on a fielder's choice getting Williams out at first. The crowd was cheering with excitement as the Kekiongas took a 2-0 lead.⁹

For the rest of the game, neither team could get farther than second base. The Kekiongas were about to start the bottom of the ninth (a full nine innings were played regardless if the home team was winning) when the rain started to come down. After two hours of play, the game was called. The Kekiongas won the first game in the NA. Superb pitching by Mathews and Pratt along with numerous defensive plays contributed

to the low-scoring game. That was highly unusual in an era where scores regularly reached double digits.¹⁰

The Kekiongas were still enjoying their first win when the Chicago White Stockings club came to town a week later on May 13. The Kekiongas struck first, scoring two runs in the first inning. But in the second inning, Chicago scored five runs and never looked back. Chicago walked away with the victory, 14–5, handing the Kekiongas their first loss.¹¹

The Kekiongas didn't have much time to sulk as they hosted the Olympics of Washington two days later. The clubs were considered evenly matched, although the pitching of Mathews was far superior to the Olympics' hitting ability. Although the Olympics scored first, with three runs in the second, they could not match the Kekiongas. The Olympics had two players out with illness but they conceded that even if they'd had their full nine, they couldn't beat Mathews.¹² The Kekiongas notched a win, 12–6, before a crowd of a thousand people.¹³

Before the Kekiongas embarked on their first road trip, they hosted the Forest Citys of Rockford. The game was mired in controversy before it began. One of the members of the Forest Citys, Scott Hastings, was ineligible to play. According to NA rules, a player had to be with the organization for sixty days prior to playing in a game. Hastings had played a game on April 16 with the Lone Star Club in New Orleans before joining the Forest Citys. The Kekiongas played the game under protest.¹⁴

For the first time, the Kekiongas lost the coin toss and had to bat first. They led off the game with three runs, but Forest City answered with four. Kekionga dominated the game, putting up runs in every inning except the third and fifth. As the game entered the eighth inning, Kekionga was up, 13–6. The Forest Citys added five runs in the bottom of the eighth and two more in the ninth to tie the game, making it the first extra-inning game in National Association history. Forest City scored four more runs in the tenth to win the game, 17–13.¹⁵

The *Fort Wayne Daily Gazette* gave a stinging critique of the Kekiongas' losing performance, asserting that their playing was inferior to past games. Although the pitching was good, the batting and fielding were weak, with the play marred by errors and an increase in wild throws. The only way to get better would be through "systematic practice;" the *Gazette* opined that the only way to avoid throwing the ball fifteen feet over the head of another player would be to "go out on the field and spend the whole day throwing."¹⁶

Not only that, Lennon had dislocated his finger in the first inning. The injury was possibly the result of

catching barehanded as catchers did not universally adopt gloves until years later. Although he finished the game, he was not expected to play in the next game, which would be on the road.¹⁷

FIRST ROAD TRIP

The Kekiongas' first road game was a rematch against the Cleveland Forest Citys. Two thousand people turned out to see the showdown between the two clubs. Despite his injury, Lennon did start the game against Forest City but was pulled in the first inning. He was replaced by Sellman. The Forest Citys saw this as a great opportunity, but Sellman rose to the occasion and Forest City was no match for the Kekiongas. Kekionga won the game, 16–7.¹⁸

The Kekiongas were then set to leave for a nearly month-long road trip on June 14. The first scheduled game was June 19 against the Haymakers in Troy, New York. The Kekiongas arrived at the grounds at 2:00 PM for their sixth championship game of the season. This game would end in a most unusual way. At the end of the sixth inning, the Kekiongas were winning, 6–3. But at the start of the seventh inning, the captain for the Haymakers, Bill Carver, objected to the ball being used. He claimed that it was ripped and the Kekiongas were responsible for replacing it. It was common during this time that teams only had one ball to get through a game. (On more than one occasion, the Kekiongas had to fish balls out of the St. Mary's River that flowed beside the ballpark.) The Kekiongas, along with spectators, inspected the ball but could not find any rip. The umpire, who was from Troy, sided with the Haymakers and ordered the Kekiongas to furnish a new ball. They refused, and the game was called in favor of the Haymakers, 9–0.¹⁹

The Kekiongas refused to substitute the ball because they viewed it as an attempt for the Haymakers to gain an advantage. The Haymakers had supplied the ball for the game and since they couldn't hit the ball, they were hoping to change their luck with a new ball. Even the home crowd was embarrassed and believed the Kekiongas were in the right. The *Chicago Tribune* was quick to report on the Kekiongas' misfortune. While they reported that the Kekiongas did not have a reputation for fairness, the "Troy mob" was considered the worst in the country. The Kekiongas' only solution was to take it before the judiciary committee of the association.²⁰

Boston was the next stop. The Red Stockings were the best team in the organization. The team was managed by Harry Wright, who had assembled and managed the first openly all-professional baseball

team, the Cincinnati Red Stockings. When they failed to join the NA, he was invited to manage the Boston Red Stockings. Charles Bierman was starting in his only game for the Kekiongas due to Mincher being injured. Mathews did not pitch with his usual vigor and the Kekiongas suffered their first shut-out loss, 21-0.

After Boston, the next stop was Brooklyn to face the Mutuals of New York. The Kekiongas met the Mutuals on the Union Grounds in the Williamsburg neighborhood of Brooklyn. The Kekiongas weren't given much of a chance to win based on their previous games and how well the Mutuals had been playing. The home crowd of 1,200 spectators were in shock from the first inning. Mathews was back to his old form, and the Mutuals were kept scoreless until the eighth inning. When the game was over, the Kekiongas walked away victorious, 5-3. The crowd trolled the team as they chanted "Kikankarogers."²¹ A rematch was scheduled two days hence.

Nearly 4,000 people showed up to the Union Grounds to watch the rematch. The Kekiongas kept the same nine from the first game. This time not only was Mathews's pitching ineffective, but the Kekiongas' batting was worse. They managed only three baserunners and were blanked, 13-0. The only highlight of the game came from Lennon who didn't have a single passed ball.²²

The "City of Brotherly Love" was the next stop. The Athletics of Philadelphia and the Kekiongas met at the Jefferson Street Grounds for their championship game. The Athletics and White Stockings had racked up the second-most wins in championship games, behind the Mutuals. The Kekiongas had only played ten championship games while the other teams had played at least twelve. About 2,000 people came out to watch the game under an overcast sky. Although the Kekiongas scored first in the first inning, they couldn't match the power hitting of the Athletics and lost, 20-3.²³

The Kekiongas stopped in Baltimore to play the amateur club, Pastimes, before going to Washington, DC, to play the Olympics. This was the first time that the Maryland players had returned home, and it was a time to catch up with old friends. But that didn't mean that the Kekiongas were going to take it easy on them, and the Kekiongas picked up the win, 14-6.²⁴ Since they had played an amateur club, this win didn't affect their NA standing.

The Olympics had just returned from a road trip out west. The Kekiongas were not in the best shape when they arrived at Olympic Grounds. Lennon was still suffering from a sore hand and was unable to play. At the beginning of the game, Mincher, who was



A Kekionga Base Ball Club collectible card from 1871.

playing in left field, was injured so badly that he had to leave the game and was replaced with Donnelly. The Kekiongas questioned the calls of the umpire during the sixth inning. The Olympics went on to score 18 runs in the sixth inning en route to a 32-12 win. That was the largest number of runs scored in one inning so far that year.²⁵

The second game between the two clubs moved to Baltimore in hopes of increasing paid attendance. Mathews was still the favorite son of Baltimore and over 1,000 people turned out. The game was held at the Madison Avenue Grounds, Baltimore's first fenced ballpark. Baltimore was still sore at the Kekiongas for what they perceived as the team that was stolen from them.²⁶

The Kekiongas were depleted from injuries and they had to add Bill Barrett from the Pastime Club to replace Mincher. The game was tied at 7 at the end of the sixth, but errors doomed the Kekiongas. Carey had three of the team's twelve errors that helped push across seven runs. The only highlight for the Kekiongas was an unassisted double play by Goldsmith. The Olympics defeated the Kekiongas, 15-7.²⁷

TROUBLE BREWING

The Kekiongas headed back to Indiana after 24 days on the road missing some of their roster. Ed Mincher ended his career with the Kekiongas when he decided to stay in Baltimore. Although Mincher was from Baltimore, the reason given—that he was getting married—didn't seem plausible.²⁸ Some news outlets reported that he had been expelled from the club. Donnelly decided to

stay in Philadelphia. Dissension was brewing within the Kekionga ballclub and the real reason for Mincher's and Donnelly's defections would soon be revealed.

The first home game in almost a month was against the Bostons. Lennon was still not able to play, but he continued to perform his managerial duties. The Kekiongas were unprepared for the dominant Red Stockings and they suffered a 30–9 loss.²⁹

Attendance had hit a season low when the Athletics arrived on July 20 with only 300 people in attendance. The weather was beautiful with cool temperatures, so the Kekiongas' poor performance had to be the cause for the decline. Lennon was selected as umpire and it was unclear if he would ever return to the lineup. The Kekiongas added two new players, Henry Kohler and Harry Deane, from Indianapolis, to play right field.³⁰ During the second inning, Goldsmith, filling in as catcher, dislocated his finger. (He had dislocated the same finger during a previous game.) Sellman filled in behind the bat until the next inning, but the Kekionga nine was being depleted by injuries. Lennon was out, Sellman was also injured, and Goldsmith was banged up. The Kekiongas seemed rattled from the start, while the Athletics played a flawless game en route to a 26–7 win.³¹

That was the Kekiongas' sixth straight loss. Since they started their eastern tour on June 14, they had only managed one win—against the Mutuals. Attendance was waning, injuries were rampant, and there was growing discord between the players and management. Frank Sellman and Bill Lennon then left Fort Wayne unexpectedly, without any notice to the management. It was assumed that they headed back to Baltimore. The club alleged that they left behind unsettled debts and had overdrawn their pay.³²

The Kekiongas were falling apart right when they were due to play a championship game in two days against the Mutuals. Without Lennon, the team lacked a manager. The vice-president of the club, Max Nirdlinger, went to Chicago to recruit Paddy Quinn and Jimmy Hallinan of the amateur Chicago Aetnas.³³ Harry Deane was named the team's new catcher and captain.³⁴

At the same time that Nirdlinger was in Chicago, the rest of the team's management had a meeting to formally expel Ed Mincher and Pete Donnelly, the two players who had bolted during the road trip. Mincher and Donnelly were accused of violating their contracts by leaving the team without permission. They were not allowed to play for any other team that was part of the professional organization.³⁵ They denied the accusations by the team's management and instead claimed that the club still owed them money.³⁶

Quinn and Hallinan's first game with the Kekiongas was against the Mutuals. The game was not very exciting and attendance was sparse. The Kekiongas tied the game in the sixth inning but eventually lost, 12–9. The only drama came in the fourth inning when the umpire had to be replaced. Both teams objected to the calls by J. Stophlet of the Keystone Baseball Club and he was replaced with F. Walker of the Summit City Baseball Club of Fort Wayne.³⁷

The day before the game with the Mutuals, the Kekionga management leveled specific charges against Lennon and Sellman leading to their expulsion. The first charge: Lennon had deserted the team on June 23 when they were playing the Atlantics of Brooklyn. The next day, at the Earl's Hotel in New York City where the team was staying, Lennon violated all rules of decency when he refused to obey orders from team management. He was also accused of being intoxicated on four separate occasions at the beginning of July and for refusing to practice. The final charge was that he violated his contract when he left Fort Wayne without any notice to the club. The same accusations were leveled against Sellman, except for the desertion charge.³⁸

The timing was suspicious. If management knew about these offenses that occurred at the beginning of July, why wait until after Lennon and Sellman left Fort Wayne to charge them? The same was true with Mincher and Donnelly, with management waiting weeks to expel them from the club.³⁹

Bill Lennon responded to the charges because his reputation as a ballplayer and his personal character had been called into question. As to the first accusation, Lennon claimed he had been told by the management that he didn't have to play because of his hand. He still went to the ballpark with Sellman filling in as catcher. After the game started, he went to the Union Grounds to watch the Mutuals play. Upon returning to the hotel, he learned of the Kekiongas' defeat. The management found fault with Lennon for not being there to direct the team. Lennon's defense was that no club would allow the captain of a team who wasn't playing to direct the team. He was just following the rules.⁴⁰

The management was not specific about the orders Lennon refused to obey. On the day in question they played the Eckfords of Brooklyn. The night before, George Mayer had approached Lennon and stated he didn't have to play due to his injured hand. However, an hour before the game, Mayer asked Lennon if he was going to play and was told no. There was no further conversation. Lennon didn't refuse an order because

no order had been given. Lennon refuted the entire charge of being intoxicated in Fort Wayne or in any city that they had traveled through.⁴¹

The Kekiongas management accused Lennon of violating the contract by leaving without permission, but according to Lennon, it was the club that violated the contract. When the players signed with the team, they were to receive \$75 a month (\$1,708 in 2022 dollars). They would receive \$7 a week and the remainder would be paid at the end of the month. Lennon claimed that he was never given his full pay and the club owed him \$70. When the team returned home from their eastern tour, the management still had not paid the players their weekly salary. Failing to pay the players' salaries violated the contract and Lennon felt he was therefore not obligated to abide by it.⁴²

While Lennon took issue with the Kekionga management, he did express his gratitude to the president of the club, Charles Dawson, stating that Dawson always treated the men with kindness and respect. Had the club been managed more closely by him instead of Nirdlinger and Mayer, perhaps they might have been more successful. Even the *Chicago Tribune*, which had always been critical of the Kekiongas, referred to Dawson as a gentleman.⁴³

The *Tribune's* opinion of Nirdlinger and Mayer was far different, feeling that they viewed ballplayers like cattle, "having some of the characteristics of men, but not enough to entitle them to humane treatment." This was evident by the ridiculously low salaries given to the players and further enhanced by the fact that the men still had not been paid.⁴⁴

The club took away the men's dignity; they were not even able to purchase basic necessities. They had no money to buy clothes, but instead had to resort to buying on credit, if the merchant allowed. Instead of giving the men money to pay their rent, they were forced to make the landlord get it from Mayer on credit. The men had to beg Mayer just to get a shave. Their boarding fees were \$6, leaving them with \$1 if they were fortunate enough to get paid. There was a joke that the players couldn't get drunk, because you couldn't buy alcohol on credit.⁴⁵

Mayer accompanied the team on their trip east and more accusations were leveled against him. The men claimed that food was withheld from them from morning until late at night. They didn't have any money or friends to help them. Mayer refused to pay for lodging for two of the players and they were forced to sleep in chairs on the hotel porch. On their return trip to Fort Wayne, Mayer tried to get Lennon and Sellman kicked off the train when he refused to pay their fare.⁴⁶

There was credible evidence to these claims from the players. James McDermott played in two games for the Kekiongas but was so "disgusted" from his time in Fort Wayne that players with his old club, the Eckfords, sent money to get him back home to New York.⁴⁷ Riley, who originally played with the Railway Unions baseball club in Cleveland, played a few non-professional games with the Kekiongas. When the team got to Troy, he was discharged and given only \$2.15 to get back to Cleveland, not nearly enough. Ironically, the Haymakers took up a collection to get him the rest of the money to get back home.⁴⁸ Bonker, who originally played for the Troy Putnams, had been recruited at the beginning of the season. He was named as one of the original nine, but after a couple of weeks in Fort Wayne, couldn't wait to get back to New York.⁴⁹ Charles Bierman played in one game with the Kekiongas against Boston when Mincher was hurt. He received no compensation.⁵⁰ Nealy Phelps played two games for the Kekiongas, but only one at the professional level. He joined the team when they were in Philadelphia and he had the winning run in a non-championship game against the Olympics. When the team headed to Baltimore, he also wasted no time returning to New York.⁵¹

Mincher and Donnelly used the eastern tour to return to their hometowns at the Kekiongas' expense. Sellman borrowed money from a friend to get back to Baltimore. He claimed the club still owed him \$200. Lennon decided that he would rather leave the \$75 he was owed than spend another night in Fort Wayne.⁵²

Lennon's explanations of the charges against him infuriated the management of the Kekionga club. They viewed Lennon's explanations as slanderous statements and condemned the *Tribune* for printing it. They were compelled to get a list of citizens and business leaders who would attest to the character of their club. They even furnished a statement signed by all nine members of the club attesting that they are paid regularly and are treated humanely.⁵³ However, by that point only four members of the original nine remained, with most of the players added just a week before.

Meanwhile, as the players were struggling to get paid, the stock in the Kekionga Base Ball Club had reached \$10,000 and the management had begun planning for next season. Management was benefiting handsomely at the expense of the players.

As the teams entered August, the Athletics had won the most games, followed by Chicago and Boston. There were still a number of legal challenges that the championship committee would have to rule on at the end of the season, mostly stemming from the use of

ineligible players. All the expulsions and desertions from the Kekiongas resulted in players being added to the roster that had not been with the club for sixty days. Any future games the Kekiongas played most certainly would result in a forfeit.⁵⁴

THE FINAL ROAD TRIP

The Kekiongas began August on the road. They traveled to Rockford, Illinois, to take on the Forest Citys. Rockford was the only team worse than the Kekiongas. Even a bad team wasn't enough to change their luck and they were shut out by the worst team in the NA, 4-0.

The next stop was Chicago to take on the White Stockings at Lake Shore Park. The game was poorly played by both teams. The White Stockings had one home run which accounted for the only earned run in the game. All of the other runs by both teams were from errors. Some of the Chicagoans were rooting for the Kekiongas because Hallinan and Quinn were in the game. The Kekiongas committed more errors than Chicago which led to another defeat, 13-10.⁵⁵

The Kekiongas returned to Fort Wayne to take on the Cleveland Forest Citys on August 11. A lot had changed since the Kekiongas beat Cleveland on May 4. But after losing to Chicago, they had the worst record of all the NA teams. The Kekiongas beat Forest City, 15-3, winning their first championship series, sweeping Forest City in all three games played. But Forest City was sure that the win would not count when the teams met at the National Association meeting at the end of the season.⁵⁶

The last game of the season for the Kekiongas was against the Haymakers. Both teams played well, committing ten errors combined, which at that time was considered a great game. Deane was sick and unable to play, being replaced by Henry Kohler. Instead, he was chosen as umpire. The Haymakers tried to argue the calls but were unsuccessful and the Kekiongas ended up victorious, 6-4. Attendance was around 300 people and the weather was blamed, but a team in last place with no chance to win the championship was the more likely explanation for low turnout.⁵⁷

THE END OF THE KEKIONGAS

The next day the Kekiongas' season came to an abrupt end. Their star player and pitcher, Bobby Mathews, along with Tom Carey, left the team with no notice, just like so many previous players.⁵⁸ It was assumed they returned to Baltimore. Management tried desperately to replace the loss, but soon realized that with only two months left in the season, it was impossible. Mathews was not only their pitcher but their best

player. Their season officially came to an end on September 5. The remaining players went to find new teams or returned to their homes.

The Kekiongas' record stood at 6 wins and 13 losses. By the end of the season, that win-loss record wasn't even included in the NA standings since it was assumed that most of their wins would be forfeited when the championship committee met the following month.⁵⁹ This was a sad end for the Fort Wayne Kekiongas.

There didn't seem to be much of a future for the ballclub. By the end of the month, management had taken out ads to sell off the ballpark, the fence, and any and all improvements.⁶⁰ Two days after the end-of-season meeting in Philadelphia, the grandstand burned to the ground. The fire broke out at 8:00 PM and the fire department showed up with everything they had, but it was too late: the fire had consumed it.⁶¹

The Athletics filed a protest against the Rockford Forest Citys because their catcher, Scott Hastings, was not a legal member of the team. A player had to be with the team for sixty days and not have played with another team during that time. The committee found him to be ineligible and all of the games played prior to June 15 were forfeited. That benefited the Kekiongas, whose record improved to 7-12.⁶² But then the break-up of the Kekiongas was brought up. The matter was referred to the championship committee, who ruled that the Kekiongas would forfeit nine games that would have been played, bringing the team's record to 7-21.⁶³

As an underdog in a league of giants, the Kekiongas' season couldn't have started off any better. Management put together a team mostly composed of the best players from Baltimore, but the talent couldn't overcome the liabilities. Their overall record was better than the standing reflected, because of the number of games against amateur clubs they played which didn't count for the championship. But those games caused their players to be fatigued and injured when they played other National Association teams. Ultimately, poor treatment of the players by management contributed to the demise of what could have been a promising season and a long future as a professional club. ■

Notes

1. "Fort Wayne, Indiana Population History," <https://www.biggestuscities.com/city/fort-wayneindiana>.
2. "Complimentary," *Fort Wayne Daily Gazette*, September 6, 1867.
3. "Baltimore's Many Ballparks," *The Baltimore Sun*, April 9, 1981, 52.
4. Brian McKenna, "Bobby Mathews" SABR, <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/bobby-mathews>.
5. "Baseball Notes," *New York Daily Herald*, April 18, 1871, 11. As team

- captain, Lennon was expected to both play and direct the team akin to a field manager today.
6. The National Association lasted until 1875; the National League was formed the following year. In 1968, MLB's Special Records Committee ruled that the NA was not one of the major leagues of baseball. The committee did consider the NA to be the first all-professional baseball organization, the organization that paved the way for the formation of Major League Baseball. The exclusion of the NA as a major league was due to its erratic schedule, procedures, and widespread gambling. Therefore, MLB established the formation of the National League in 1876 as the beginning of the major leagues. While many players competed in both the NA and the NL, only their statistics from the NL are recognized by Major League Baseball. See John Thorn, "Why Is the National Association Not a Major League... and Other Records Issues." <https://ourgame.mlblogs.com/why-is-the-national-association-not-a-major-league-and-other-records-issues-7507e1683b66>.
 7. "Sports and Pastimes," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, May 8, 1871, 2.
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 11. "Games and Pastimes," *Chicago Tribune*, May 16, 1871, 1.
 12. "Championship Base Ball Game," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 16, 1871, 1.
 13. "Games and Pastimes," *Chicago Tribune*, May 16, 1871, 1.
 14. "The Ball and Bat," *Fort Wayne Daily Gazette*, May 24, 1871, 4.
 15. "The Ball and Bat," *Fort Wayne Daily Gazette*, May 24, 1871, 4.
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 17. "Ball and Bat," *Fort Wayne Daily Gazette*, May 27, 1871, 4.
 18. "Ball and Bat," *Fort Wayne Daily Gazette*, May 27, 1871, 4.
 19. "Games and Pastimes," *Chicago Tribune*, June 20, 1871, 4.
 20. "Games and Pastimes," *Chicago Tribune*, June 20, 1871, 4.
 21. "The National Game," *New York Daily Herald*, June 27, 1871, 4.
 22. "Sporting Items," *Times Union*, June 29, 1871, 3.
 23. "Baseball," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 3, 1871, 2.
 24. "The Ball and Bat," *Fort Wayne Daily Gazette*, July 6, 1871, 4.
 25. "Baseball," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 8, 1871, 1.
 26. "That was our Team," *Baltimore Sun*, April 17, 1960, 29.
 27. "Local Matters," *Baltimore Sun*, July 10, 1871, 4.
 28. "Fort Wayne, Ind.," *Pittsburgh Daily Commercial*, July 12, 1871, 1.
 29. "Indiana," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 13, 1871.
 30. "The Kekiongas," *Chicago Tribune*, July 16, 1871, 1.
 31. "The Ball and Bat," *Fort Wayne Daily Gazette*, July 21, 1871, 4.
 32. "Chance for Another Kekionga Reorganization," *Chicago Tribune*, July 23, 1871, 1.
 33. "Personal," *Chicago Tribune*, July 24, 1871.
 34. "Fort Wayne," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, July 25, 1871, 1.
 35. "Two Revolvers Expelled," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 24, 1871, 3.
 36. "Notes," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 28, 1871, 3.
 37. "Baseball," *Chicago Tribune*, July 27, 1871.
 38. "The Ball Club," *Fort Wayne Daily Gazette*, July 26, 1871, 4.
 39. "Card From Mr. Lennon," *Chicago Tribune*, July 28, 1871, 4.
 40. "Card From Mr. Lennon," *Chicago Tribune*, July 28, 1871, 4.
 41. "Card From Mr. Lennon," *Chicago Tribune*, July 28, 1871, 4.
 42. "Card From Mr. Lennon," *Chicago Tribune*, July 28, 1871, 4.
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 47. "Card From Mr. Lennon," *Chicago Tribune*, July 28, 1871, 4.
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 51. "Card From Mr. Lennon," *Chicago Tribune*, July 28, 1871, 4.
 52. "Card From Mr. Lennon," *Chicago Tribune*, July 28, 1871, 4.
 53. "Base Ball," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, July 31, 1871, 1.
 54. "Sporting Matters," *Buffalo Morning Express and Illustrated Buffalo Express*, August 3, 1871, 4.
 55. "The National Game," *Chicago Tribune*, August 7, 1871, 4.
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 57. "Games and Pastimes," *Chicago Tribune*, August 30, 1871, 1.
 58. "Kekionga Complications," *Chicago Tribune*, September 1, 1871, 4.
 59. "Sporting Matters," *Buffalo Morning Express and Illustrated Buffalo Express*, September 28, 1871, 4.
 60. "The City in Brief," *Fort Wayne Daily Gazette*, September 27, 1871, 4.
 61. "Personal," *Fort Wayne Sentinel*, November 6, 1871, 4.
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The Eastern Championship Association of 1881

An Early “Minor” Organization in “Major League” Cities

Woody Eckard, PhD

In 1881 several baseball clubs in major northeastern cities joined together to create the Eastern Championship Association (ECA). It did not claim major league status nor did it attempt to challenge the National League by locating in NL cities. The organizational model was unstable, however, with multiple club failures and mid-season entries, and one relocation. In fact, the ECA did not complete its only season, and apparently failed even to officially determine a champion. Nevertheless, it is interesting for two reasons. First, the ECA failed despite having an average city size more than twice that of the National League. Second, three ECA clubs joined the new major league American Association in 1882 and 1883.

An article by Robert Warrington in the Spring 2019 *Baseball Research Journal* also addresses the ECA. As he states, his article “briefly describes the formation of the Association, but focuses on the members from Philadelphia—in particular, the Phillies [emphasis added].”¹ The present article instead focuses on the ECA itself. This article summarizes the brief history of the ECA, from its formation and chaotic membership to its somewhat mysterious demise, and compiles “final” standings based on game results reported in the contemporary media. Some implications can be drawn from the ECA’s experience regarding the efficient design of sports leagues.

FORMATION

The Eastern Championship Association was founded on April 11, 1881, at a meeting of several baseball clubs in New York City, with the National Club of Washington, DC, reportedly taking the lead.² The other clubs represented were the Atlantics of Brooklyn, the New York Club, the Metropolitan Club also of New York, the Jersey City Club, and “a new Boston nine” (unspecified). Reports also mentioned that probable entrants included the Athletic Club of Philadelphia, the Albany Club of Albany, New York, and the Baltimore Club.³

As detailed in the *New York Clipper*, clubs could join the ECA by submitting applications by May 15, although several were admitted later.⁴ Any professional

club—joint stock or cooperative—could enter, and there was no mention of an entry fee. Applications were to include a statement about “the club’s ability to fulfill its agreement,” without further explanation.⁵ The championship season was to run from April 20 to October 1, and National League playing rules were adopted. Clubs were required to play 12 games against each other during the season to qualify for the championship. Not completing this requirement meant exclusion from the championship reckoning. A judiciary committee was created to arrange the schedule of championship games and resolve other issues, but an ensuing membership tumult would dominate organization concerns and centralized scheduling likely fell by the wayside. A uniform 25 cent admission fee was specified, in contrast to the National League’s 50 cent fee.

Table 1 lists ECA and National League cities ranked by population according to the 1880 US Census. No cities were shared between the two organizations. The ECA claimed the three largest cities and four of the top ten: New York, Philadelphia, Brooklyn, and Baltimore. In contrast, the National League claimed only two of the top ten: Chicago and Boston. The seven ECA cities

Table 1. Top 30 1880 City Population and League Membership

Rank	City	1880 Population	League
1	New York, NY	1,206,299	ECA
2	Philadelphia, PA	847,170	ECA
3	Brooklyn, NY	566,663	ECA
4	Chicago, IL	503,185	NL
5	Boston, MA	362,839	NL
7	Baltimore, MD	332,313	ECA
11	Cleveland, OH	160,146	NL
13	Buffalo, NY	155,134	NL
14	Washington, DC	147,293	ECA
15	Newark, NJ	136,508	ECA
18	Detroit, MI	116,340	NL
20	Providence, RI	104,857	NL
21	Albany, NY	90,758	ECA
28	Worcester, MA	58,291	NL
29	Troy, NY	56,747	NL

had an average population of about 475,000, well over twice the NL average of about 190,000. Even without the small cities of Worcester and Troy, the NL average was only about 234,000, still less than half of the ECA average.

MEMBERSHIP

Newspaper reports around the May 15 application “deadline” indicate that the initial ECA membership consisted of the Athletics, Atlantics, Metropolitans, New Yorks, and the Washington Club—the Nationals having changed their name.⁶ The Albany and Baltimore clubs joined later; the Jersey Citys did not join; and the “new Boston nine” mentioned above apparently never materialized.

The membership picture, however, quickly became muddled. First, a June 3 report of ECA standings in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* includes only the Athletics, Atlantics, Metropolitans, and Washingtons, excluding the New York Club without explanation (See Table 2).⁷ Newspaper searches indicate that the New Yorks played no games between May 9 and June 14, an entire month. This suggests the club may have disbanded. However, on June 11 the *Eagle* reported standings that included the New Yorks, stating that “The New York Club has re-entered the arena.”⁸ A June 25 *New York Clipper* game report confirms this, stating that on “June 15...the reorganized team of the New York Club put in a first appearance,” losing to the Metropolitans.⁹ But the reorganization was apparently short-lived: after July 5 no more games could be found for the New Yorks and they are excluded from ECA standings thereafter. A July 28 newspaper report indicated that they had disbanded.

The Washington Club also disbanded. On June 18 the *National Republican* newspaper (Washington, DC) ran an article entitled “The Death of the National [i.e., Washington] Base-Ball Club.”¹⁰ After this date no games are reported and they no longer appear in ECA standings.

During June and July, four new clubs joined the ECA: the Albanys, the Philadelphia Club (the “Phillies”), the Quicksteps of New York City, and the Domestic Club of Newark, New Jersey. A June 5 report in *The Times* (Philadelphia) indicated that “To-morrow...the new Philadelphia Base Ball Club will play their first match game” against the Washingtons.¹¹ A June 19 article also in *The Times* stated that “the new Philadelphia Club will join the Eastern League [sic].”¹² ECA membership is corroborated by a *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* article of June 23 stating that the Philadelphias had just joined.¹³ This same article also stated that the Quicksteps were

now members, and they are included as members in reported standings through July 31.

A July 28 article in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* summarizes ECA membership as of that date: “...the Eastern Championship League [sic]...now has seven members, as follows: Athletics, of this city; Albany, Atlantic, Quickstep and Metropolitan Clubs...; Domestic, of Newark, N.J.; and the newly-organized Baltimore Club. The New York, Philadelphia and National [i.e., Washington] clubs...have disbanded. The Philadelphia Club is now playing in Baltimore, under the management of H.C. Myers...”¹⁴

The last sentence indicates that the Philadelphia Club had in fact relocated to Baltimore as the Baltimore Club. The *Evening Star* (Washington, DC) of July 13 reports that “The ‘New Baltimore Base Ball Club’ has lately been organized under the management of Mr. H.C. Myers.”¹⁵

THE ECA FADES AWAY

The next published standings for the Eastern Championship Association that we could find appeared in the *Times* (Philadelphia) on July 31, shown in Table 3.¹⁶ It includes the same seven clubs identified as members

Table 2. Standings of the Eastern Championship Association as Reported in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* on June 3, 1881

	Metropolitan	Washington	Athletic	Atlantic	Games played	Games drawn	Games won
Metropolitan	8	1	5	10	1	15	
Washington	2	2	2	6	0	14	
Athletic	0	1	1	2	0	9	
Athletic	0	1	1	2	0	9	
Games lost	4	8	4	8	22		

Table 3. Standings of the Eastern Championship Association as Reported in *The Times* of Philadelphia on July 31, 1881

CLUBS.	Metropolitan.	Athletic.	Atlantic.	Albany.	Quickstep.	Domestic.	Baltimore.	Games won.
Metropolitan	5	5	6	2	3	1	1	18
Athletic	5	4	5	1	2	2	2	11
Atlantic	1	3	2	0	0	0	0	9
Albany	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	8
Quickstep	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
Domestic	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Baltimore	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Games lost	9	12	13	3	8	4	3	52

in the above-mentioned July 28 *Philadelphia Inquirer* article.

The last published standings we found appeared three weeks later in the August 22 *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*.¹⁷ It included only four clubs, with the Metropolitans in first place, followed in order by the Albanys, Athletics, and Atlantics. The Baltimore, Domestic, and Quickstep clubs had apparently withdrawn and/or disbanded.

The last *mention* of the ECA we found was also in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, on September 1.¹⁸ It indicated that the Albany Club was disbanding, and that the remaining clubs were the Athletics, Atlantics, and Metropolitans. All three played well into October. Each met the initial ECA requirement of playing 12 games against the other two, qualifying them for the championship (see below). But no report could be found that the ECA actually declared a champion and no final standings could be located. One suspects that the complex and confusing membership changes over the summer, which confounded the championship competition, caused the media to lose interest. (In 1880, the National Association, in its fourth and final year of operation, met a similar fate. Starting its championship competition with only three clubs, a fourth joined and then two disbanded leaving but two contenders by early August. After that point, media reports disappeared.)

THE "FINAL" STANDINGS

As noted above, no standings for the Eastern Championship Association could be found after August 22. Newspapers apparently had lost interest. Table 4 shows final standings based on the author's analysis of reported game results among all nine ECA members, including those that disbanded. (Note that the Philadelphia and Baltimore clubs have been combined as a single relocated franchise.)

Table 4. Final 1881 Standings of the Eastern Championship Association as Determined by the Author

Club	G	W	L	T	AVG
Metropolitan	74	51	21	2	.689
Albany	28	19	9	0	.679
Athletic	50	28	22	0	.560
Washington	17	8	9	0	.471
Phil-Balt	16	6	10	0	.375
Atlantic	53	19	33	1	.358
New York	12	2	10	0	.167
Quickstep	15	2	13	0	.133
Domestic	9	0	8	1	.000
Total	274	135	135	4	

The Metropolitans led with a .708 winning average and the Albanys were close behind at .679. At the other end, the bottom three clubs had a combined 4-31-1 record with a 0.114 winning average. The variation in ECA games played was large, caused by the several mid-season failures and late entrants. The Mets played the most at 74, followed by the Atlantic and Athletic clubs at 53 and 50, respectively. In contrast, five clubs played 17 or fewer games.

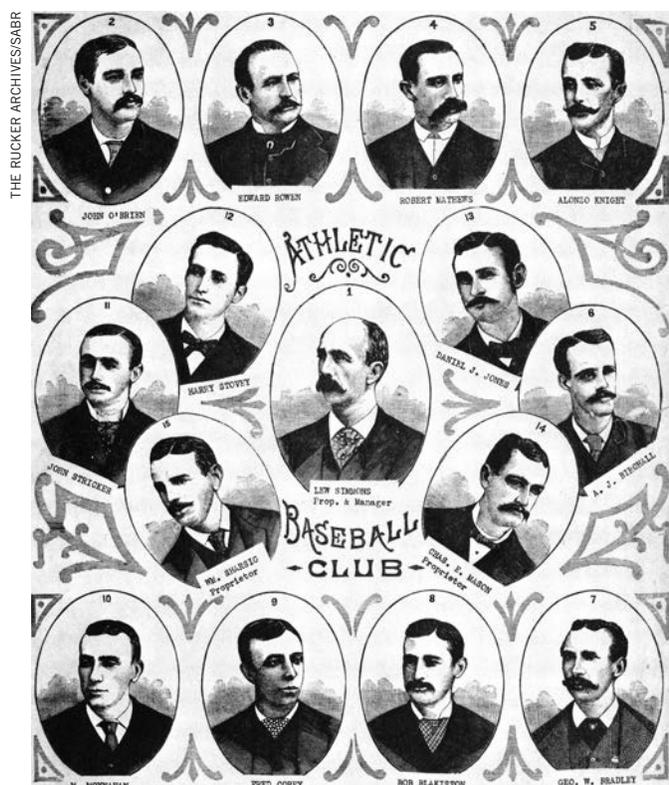
As noted above, the three clubs meeting the ECA 12-league game requirement were the Metropolitans, Athletics, and Atlantics. Their records among themselves for those games were 15-8-1, 11-13-0 and 9-14-1, respectively. Thus, the Mets appear to have won the championship. The Albanys did not meet the requirement, but were 12-9-0 against this group, and 4-6-0 against the Mets.

The relative strength of the ECA and National League is of interest and can be gauged by interleague play. The Metropolitans and the Athletics played a significant number of such games, 59 and 27 respectively. The Mets won 18 of theirs for a 0.305 winning average. This is somewhat better than the League's mean 8th place winning average of .272 during 1876 to 1891, the last year before the American Association merger.¹⁹ However, the Athletics managed to win only four of their 27 games for a .148 winning average. The three other ECA clubs with National League games had a combined 2-13-0 record and a similar .133 winning average. Thus, overall, the ECA did not approach the NL in terms of team strength.

DISCUSSION

It would seem that a league of first class clubs in the several major eastern cities not occupied by the National League could have been successful. But by any objective standard, the Eastern Championship Association was a failure. After August it was basically ignored by the media, likely because of the confusion regarding the championship competition created by membership instability. If the ECA declared an official champion at season's end, that was not reported in the newspapers. If it officially was dissolved before the season's end, that also was not reported. Oddly, a detailed statistical review of the Metropolitan's season, published by the *New York Clipper* on November 26, made no mention of the ECA even though the Mets likely would have been the champion.²⁰

Nevertheless, the ECA can be said to have spawned three major league teams: the Athletics, Baltimores, and Metropolitans. In 1882 the Athletic and Baltimore clubs became charter members of the new major



The ECA's Athletic club was not a direct antecedent to today's Athletics.

league American Association, finishing second and sixth, respectively, among six teams.²¹ And after a year operating as an independent, the Metropolitan joined the American Association in 1883 and finished fourth in an expanded eight club circuit.²² (It should be noted that none of these clubs are direct antecedents of their modern namesakes.)

The failure of the ECA cannot be attributed to insufficient populations in member cities. This plagued the National Association of 1871–75, the first all-professional organization, and the professional non-major International/National Association of 1877–80. As noted above, the ECA's average city population was over twice that of the National League.

A more likely explanation is that the ECA eschewed the National League's tight centrally controlled organizational model. Instead it adopted a looser, more haphazard structure similar to that of the two other significant pre-1882 professional organizations. Entry was open and there were no standards regarding club financing, management, or playing grounds. Also, the

ECA allowed multiple clubs in the same city. New York City had three, two of which failed by mid-August, and Philadelphia had two, one of which re-located to Baltimore in July. Also, the Atlantics and Domestics were actually within the greater New York metro area. Last, game scheduling was likely left to individual clubs given the membership turnover, although this is not clear.

The founders of the American Association that began play in 1882 no doubt were observing the decline of the Eastern Championship Association over the summer of 1881. This might have influenced their decision to adopt the National League's more efficacious organizational model. ■

Notes

1. Robert D. Warrington, "Philadelphia in the 1881 Eastern Championship Association," *Baseball Research Journal* 48, no. 1 (Spring 2019): 78, SABR.
2. "Base-Ball: Special Dispatch to The Chicago Tribune," *Chicago Tribune*, April 12, 1881, 3.
3. "An Eastern Championship Ball (sic) Association," *Boston Globe*, April 12, 1881, 2.
4. "An Eastern Championship," *New York Clipper*, April 16, 1881, 58.
5. "An Eastern Championship," *New York Clipper*.
6. "Base Ball Notes," *The Boston Globe*, May 17, 1881, 1.
7. "Sports and Pastimes: Base Ball," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 3, 1881, 1.
8. "Sports and Pastimes: Base Ball," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 11, 1881, 2.
9. "Metropolitan vs. New York," *New York Clipper*, June 25, 1881, 220.
10. "The Death of the National Base-Ball Club," *National Republican* (Washington DC), June 18, 1881, 3.
11. "A New Base Ball Club," *Times* (Philadelphia), June 5, 1881, 2.
12. "Base Ball Matters," *Times* (Philadelphia), June 19, 1881, 2.
13. "The Local Professional Season," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 23, 1881, 1.
14. "Base Ball: Eastern League Championship," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 28, 1881, 2.
15. "Out-of-Door Sports," *Evening Star* (Washington DC), July 13, 1881, 4. See also Warrington, "Philadelphia," 82.
16. "The Base Ball Season," *Times* (Philadelphia), July 31, 1881, 2.
17. "The Eastern Championship," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, August 22, 1881, 3.
18. "Sports and Pastimes: Base Ball," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, September 1, 1881, 3.
19. The years with six League members, 1877 and 1878, are excluded from the 8th place winning average calculation.
20. "The Metropolitan Club Season," *New York Clipper*, November 26, 1881, 588.
21. Regarding the Athletics, see Warrington, "Philadelphia," 83. Regarding Baltimore, the 1881 ECA club was an antecedent of the 1882 AA club. By the authors research, Henry C. Myers managed both clubs and represented the AA Club at pre-season AA meetings, and four of the top six AA club players, by games-played, were also on the ECA club. See also the March 29, 1882, *Baltimore Sun* on the reorganization of the Baltimore Base Ball Club.
22. Peter Mancuso, "Jim Mutrie," SABR Biography Project, February 2022, unpaginated, <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/jim-mutrie>. Mutrie managed the Mets from 1880 to 1884.

Nineteenth-Century Battles Over the Draft

Bob Bailey

There was once a time when Major League Baseball did not completely control all the players in the minor leagues. It was a time before farm systems and a time before the major leagues could pull players from a minor-league pennant race to supplement a major-league bench at will. It was a time before the major league teams could draft minor league players during the Winter Meetings.

But that was a long time ago.

The initial adoption of player draft language appears well over 130 years ago, in the 1891 National Agreement. The National Agreement was a contract between various baseball leagues, detailing their cooperation regarding contracts, territories, and rules, among other things.

With the demise of the Players League after the 1890 season, a new National Agreement was developed. Included in the document was Article 7 (I), "Purchasing Players' Releases." It said that if your league signed the National Agreement and agreed to the draft, any other signatory to the agreement in a higher classification could approach any of your team's players, negotiate a contract (while the playing season was in progress), and snatch them off your roster for a set fee.¹

When the 1891 season started, whenever a National League club would seek to grab a player, the sporting press would label it a *draft*.² Denoting it a "draft" made it out as exactly what it appeared to be: a way for major league teams to fill in-season roster holes without the bothersome task of negotiating a market price with a given player's team.

We don't know who proposed this idea, although it is not hard to imagine a major-league owner looking for a way to lower the purchase price of a minor-league player. We also don't know what the majors were paying for minor-league players, but based on very limited data, it appears that a rate of \$1,500 was common. And with the majors looking for a bargain, the fee set by the National Board was \$1,000 for a player from a Class A league.

Tracing the idea of a draft yields the first mention of the concept in 1887. This was a proposal by Francis

Richter, editor of the *Sporting Life*, called the Millennium Plan.³

Richter was, in the main, a man who sought to make baseball a permanent part of the American sporting scene. As initially described by Richter, the plan was designed to help stabilize the minor leagues and stanch major league practices that caused leagues to lose clubs and ultimately to shut down.⁴ The details of the plan were published in December 1887.

In his preamble to the completed plan, Richter analyzes the financial situation of the majors and concludes that only about three clubs consistently earn a profit each season, with the rest struggling to cover expenses except for a rare competitive season. His view of the minors was more dire in that he saw very few clubs earning enough to generate any return on their investment. This caused ownership to frequently change in the minors and in non-competitive major league aggregations. This in turn, in Richter's view, caused the quality of ownership to decline. On this point Richter saw profitable clubs as the path to owners who were not "speculators, gamblers, fly-by-night managers, and irresponsible people..."⁵

The Millennium Plan had many provisions and included a major-league draft of minor-league players. Richter's draft proposal would have allowed the majors to claim minor leaguers for a set fee after the close of the season. This would be the only method to bring a player to the majors. The specific fee does not appear in the document but Richter sees it as "a small expense." The trade-off for the reduced draft monies would be the minor leagues gaining a seat on the Board of Arbitration, the executive decisionmakers under the National Agreement. This proposal would clearly be a non-starter for minor league clubs as offseason sales of players at market rates was one of the few ways clubs had to balance the books most seasons.⁶

While the Millennium Plan went nowhere, the idea of the draft showed up in the 1891 National Agreement. There is no certain candidate for fatherhood at the major-league level but one candidate is Brooklyn owner Charles Byrne. Back in 1887, Byrne had floated



Francis Richter introduced the concept of the draft in 1887.

an idea of reassigning players to new teams each year to create a more competitive pennant race. Byrne was an innovative owner for the period and was always involved with league management.⁷ Richter's candidates were Chicago magnates Albert Spalding and A.G. Mills, who drafted the 1891 document along with Byrne.⁸

When the draft went into effect in 1891, it was a bit of a bust. We can identify eight draft attempts during the 1891 season with only four of them being successful. Often the draft foundered on the requirement that the player agree to switch teams and several did not wish to move.⁹

The minor leagues were bothered by the draft process (they were always bothered by the draft process). In particular they disliked the idea of losing a player during the season, and they also wanted more money. The majors, having not reaped much advantage from the current draft system, agreed to move the draft to the October-to-January period but left the fees the same.

The draft grew slowly from that point, totaling 14 picks in 1892 and 13 picks in 1893, many of which were never completed. The majors finally figured out how to use the draft to their advantage, and the counts double in 1894 and 1895 to 32 and 70 respectively.¹⁰ The trick was to not draft for the current year's roster needs alone but to also draft to control as many promising players as you could afford. Since there were limitations on the size of major league rosters, the majors would retain contracts of excess players for use on reserve squads. By the mid-1890s someone developed the idea of lending players to the minor leagues. This evolved into the practice of option agreements. The major league club would agree to assign the contract of an excess player to the minor league club for one season. Within this agreement the major league club retained the right to recall the player to the big-league club with minimal notice, while passing along all other obligations (including salary payment) to the minor league club.

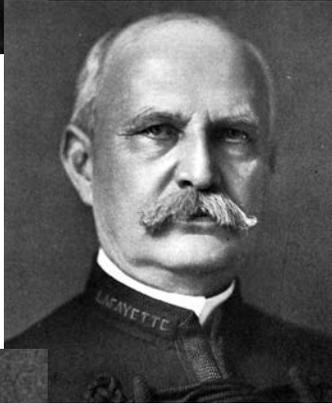
The minors, unsurprisingly, came to resent option contracts. Since the minors also had roster limitations, they were essentially turning over roster slots to the majors, thus limiting the minor league club's flexibility to use their roster for their own benefit, since the rights to the optioned player reverted to the big-league club at the end of the season. Although many in the minors, and some of the press, abhorred option agreements, many minor league clubs did like filling roster holes with players provided by the majors. Such an arrangement with a big-league club lessened the need for the hiring of scouts or paying for a bird dog to dig up new talent or purchasing players from other clubs. This differing attitude toward optioned players would arise again after World War I.

We can see here the ancient beginning of a farm club relationship as the majors flirted with the concept in the 1890s. The first major practitioner was John T. Brush, owner of the NL Cincinnati team in the 1890s. In 1894 Brush acquired the Western League's Indianapolis franchise in addition to his Cincinnati ownership. Over the course of the next three drafts, Brush selected 13 players for his Cincinnati club. All 13 were from Western League clubs; four from his Indianapolis club to prevent other major league clubs from raiding his minor league club and the rest from other Western League clubs. In the next several seasons, he also moved these players between the Cincinnati and Indianapolis rosters as injuries occurred or improving minor league players earned a spot on the major league roster.¹¹

Brush's confreres in the Western League were not happy to lose players to an in-league rival. They were particularly rankled when Indianapolis rose from sixth place in 1894 to pennant-winner in 1895. Particularly exercised was Western League President Ban Johnson. The enmity between the two that started in Cincinnati when Johnson was a reporter for the Cincinnati *Commercial-Gazette* continued in the Western League and

John T. Brush owned both a National League team and a Western League team, and drafted four of his own players.





Brooklyn's Charles Byrne (top), Chicago's A.G. Mills (middle), and Al Spalding (bottom) created the 1891 draft rules, but the draft was a bit of a flop.

Ban Johnson was not enamored of the way the Western League was treated by the National League, but his solution was to turn the Western League into a major league—the American League.



certainly contributed to Brush's hostile attitude toward the American League and his ultimate refusal to play Johnson's AL champs in a 1904 World Series.

Brush's actions did not go unnoticed by other major league owners. Various clubs developed arrangements, generally under the table, to use specific minor league clubs to stash unneeded players in the minors as a strategy to develop untested players.¹²

The minor leagues would denounce option agreements loudly and continually into the 1930s. But options worked for the National League, the only major league at the time. They held onto control of an increasing number of players, thus avoiding paying more substantial prices for players who were ready for a place on a major league roster. Such players could also be a revenue source as the majors could sell players they determined had little major league potential back to the growing number of minor league clubs.

By 1896 the draft had run enough years that the various entities involved knew what they liked and didn't like about the process. As you would expect, virtually all the issues, at their core, were economic ones. The major league liked that they had a source of new players at a price less than what an open market might command. They were also well-pleased with the ability to retain control of players beyond the initial draft year through option agreements. The minors had several things that disturbed them about the draft. They didn't mind that the draft allowed them to pluck players from lower minor league classifications for a set price. But they called for several changes to the way the majors could claim players from the minors.

Changes were made in the 1896 National Agreement. The major added an explicit rule allowing big-league clubs to option players in the 1896 National Agreement. They called it Assignment of Undeveloped Players. The new language did not usher in the use of option agreements, but merely ratified an existing practice.¹³

In 1896, the major also cut the draft prices in half. In a move claiming to offset this change, they also cut the price for protection of contracts in half. This meant that each Class A minor league club would save \$75 for the coming season while the majors saved \$500 for every draft pick. In 1896 this translated to a \$600 savings for the Western League teams and a reduction in draft payments by the major to the Western League of \$4,000. This was the major league's definition of "equity." Other changes included allowing drafting clubs to cancel the draft of a player within 30 days and restructuring the draft periods to give the major exclusive right to draft from October 1 to December 31

and setting the minor league draft period to the ensuing January. Each of these changes was set to give the major more flexibility in drafting minor league players.

From the close of the 1899 season to the following spring, the baseball world was in a constant uproar with new issues exploding on the scene seemingly every month. The NL's difficulties with the 12-team league came to a head and the league was ready to ditch four teams, wishing to do so as cheaply as possible. At the same time Ban Johnson and his Western League saw the NL's troubles as an opportunity to gain major league status. In October of 1899, the Western League changed its name to the American League and made no secret of its ultimate goal. As the NL wrestled with eliminating Washington, Baltimore, Cleveland, and Louisville, Johnson forced the NL to accept his move into Chicago. Johnson saw some of the newly abandoned markets as prime territory for his group to invade the east coast. But the American League remained a signatory to the National Agreement, which meant that their players remained subject to the draft by major league clubs, losing seven players in the 1900 draft. When the AL declared themselves an equal to the NL for the 1901 season, a full-fledged shooting war broke out.¹⁴

In 1900 the minors had won a small battle regarding the draft. They were upset with the major taking first-year players off their rosters before they could be developed into marketable commodities. With the fear of the American League challenging the NL for major league status, the NL was trying to keep the minor leagues content enough not to bolt from the National Agreement. So they allowed Class A Leagues to retain players until they had been on a League's reserve list twice. They also upped the draft price for Class A players to \$1,000.¹⁵

But it was to no avail. After the 1900 season, the AL withdrew from the National Agreement and the NL was not willing to handicap themselves in the open recruitment of players so they abrogated the National Agreement after the 1901 season. The remaining minor leagues had to figure out how to survive in the cross-fire of the AL-NL War. To protect themselves, the minor leagues formed the National Association of Professional Base Ball Leagues on September 30, 1901, the day before the National Agreement of 1891 terminated. The National Association set up their own draft procedure, thus when the AL-NL War ended with a new National Agreement in 1903, we had two draft procedures on the books.

The majors' draft language in the 1903 rewritten National Agreement had a process not unlike the earlier

draft, but the prices were now even lower; apparently the American League had no objections to claiming a bargain.¹⁶ The partial payment at draft time was implemented and the majors could return the player the following June and not pay the rest of the fee. So the majors got a half-season to look at draftees for half the price. The minors' win of 1900 was gone and now the majors could claim up to any two players from any specific team regardless of reserve status.

These early years of the draft had moved from in-season roster fill-ins to what we would recognize today as a full-fledged draft, with periodic changes in the rules to accommodate political necessities of the moment. However, it continued as a method for the major leagues to acquire talent from the minor leagues at prices set by the major leagues.

The practice of the draft ("Rule 5 Draft") continues in today's game. But the battles over the draft with the minor leagues that popped up periodically throughout the twentieth century are a thing of the past, replaced today with internal determinations among the major league clubs. ■

Notes

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16. Draft prices for major league selections in 1903 National Agreement were: Selections from Class A—\$750; from Class B—\$500; from Class C—\$300; from Class D—\$200.

Billy Holland Comes to Connecticut in 1906

Alan D. Cohen

“I cannot see why they should object to playing with me in the game as they have played nine of us in Rockville, and I have pitched against them.”¹

— Billy Holland after not being allowed to pitch for Manchester against Rockville on September 1, 1906

Barnstorming independent teams and semipro leagues were common in the early twentieth century, often successfully competing with the major leagues for coverage in the newspapers of the day. According to the Black baseball statistics compiled on Seamheads.com, one such independent team, the Brooklyn Royal Giants, put together a 15–1–1 record in 1906. Although not in a formal league, the Brooklyn Royal Giants played both Black and White opponents throughout the northeastern United States.

On August 8 and 9, the Royal Giants played against two Connecticut teams, Rockville and Manchester. In 1906 they had been scheduled to be part of the “Big Four,” a four-team independent league (including Willimantic and Bristol) organized in April.² Play was to begin on June 23. However, the Bristol team withdrew on June 10, prompting the league to cease operations before a single game had been played.³ The remaining three teams operated independently, scheduling games against a variety of opponents. By August, only Rockville and Manchester were still operating. Indeed, on August 14, Rockville played against a team from the Connecticut Hospital for the Insane at Middletown, winning 5–1.⁴

Among the players on the Royal Giants squad that faced Rockville on August 9 was Billy Holland. In his first of two seasons with the team, Holland split his time between the mound, third base, and the outfield. His four mound wins were the second most on the team, and he batted .200 (13-for-65). On August 8, he played left field, and had one of his team’s four hits, a double.⁵ Bill Merritt pitched for the Royal Giants and limited Rockville to two runs, but unfortunately took the 2–1 loss.

The following day, they played at nearby Manchester, and Holland pitched and batted leadoff. Through seven innings, he allowed only one hit and

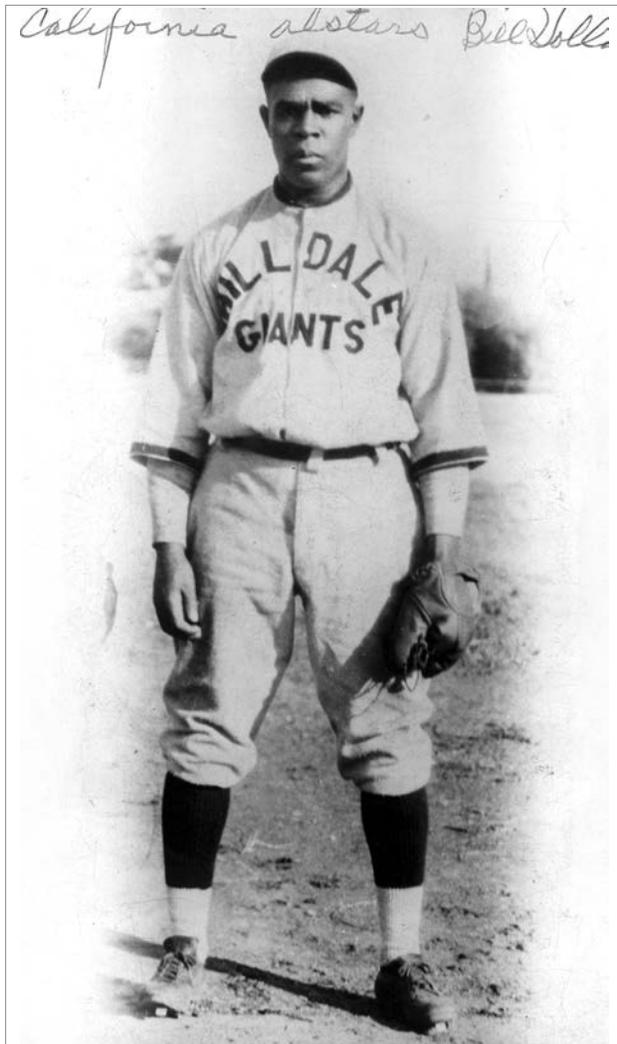
struck out 10, and his team was leading, 3–0. He had contributed to his own cause with a double and a run scored. But Manchester tied the score in the eighth inning on one hit and some very sloppy fielding by the Royal Giants. The game went into extra innings. The Royal Giants scored in the top of the 11th inning to take a 4–3 lead, but with two out in the bottom of the inning, after Manchester had tied the game on a double by Kelley, Joe Casey singled home the winning run. Holland was tagged with the loss, striking out 16 and walking only one in the process. He had yielded only five hits, three coming in the final inning.⁶

By the time the Royal Giants next played Rockville, manager Billy Lush of Rockville had acquired three new players to beef up his lineup. They had been playing in the Northern League for Rutland, Vermont. They were identified as pitcher Lou Wiltse, a shortstop named Collins from the University of Vermont, and a third baseman named Sheehan.⁷

On August 22, Holland took to the mound in relief against Rockville and held the lead as the Royal Giants won, 4–2.⁸ Merritt had started the game for the Royal Giants and Holland entered the game in the fifth inning with the score tied, 2–2. The Royal Giants’ offense, bolstered by two squeeze plays, generated two seventh inning runs and garnered the win for Holland.⁹

Holland then returned to Connecticut in September, but not with the Royal Giants. Manager Breckinridge of the Manchester team had obtained his services.

Black players had been barred from teams affiliated with the American and National Leagues since late in the nineteenth century, and it had been 15 years since a team of any kind had been integrated in Connecticut. On two occasions, Manchester sought to use Holland in a game, and on both occasions, the Rockville team thwarted them. The first came on September 1 in a game at Manchester. Rockville objected to taking the



A photo of Billy Holland in the uniform of what appears to be a California Winter League team, the Hilldale Giants (not related to the Pennsylvania-based Hilldale club.)

field against Holland and elected not to play, prepared to forfeit the game. After about an hour delay, the Manchester management, so as not to disappoint the fans expecting to see a game, let Rockville have its way. Local favorite Eddie Collins (not the Hall of Famer) pitched in lieu of Holland and Rockville defeated Manchester, 11-2.¹⁰

Ironically, the other Eddie Collins also played for Rockville. This Eddie Collins, a shortstop, acquired less than two weeks earlier, would join the Philadelphia Athletics less than two weeks later (playing under an assumed name), and would ultimately be inducted into the Hall of Fame. At the time, he was about to enter his senior year at Columbia University. When it was discovered that he had played with Rockville, and before that in Vermont, he was suspended from the school's baseball team. (They did not know, at the time, that he had played for the Athletics.¹¹) Shortly

after graduation in 1907, he once again joined the Athletics, this time playing under his own name, and played in the major leagues through 1930.¹²

Two days later, Holland was set to enter a game against Rockville on Monday, September 3. It was the second game of a doubleheader and Manchester was leading, 3-2, after five innings. Rockville refused to put up a batter to face Holland and the game did not continue.¹³ The ruling by umpire Maro Keeney was that Rockville had forfeited the game, and the contest was ruled a 9-0 win for Manchester. The *Hartford Daily Times* reported that "Rockville people say it (the insertion of Holland) was a deliberate attempt on the part of Manchester to break up the game, while Manchester asserts that Rockville has not a leg to stand on."¹⁴

The reaction to Rockville's reluctance to play in a game with a Black man was one of disappointment. A fan calling himself "Hartford Baseball Rooter" wrote, in a letter to the *Hartford Times*:

In justice to the managers, it would be only fair to say that the Rockville manager should not have been allowed to again designate what pitcher Manchester should use. As Rockville has played against colored players all the season, also in view of the fact that the games in question were no[t] league games, and not for a pennant of any kind, it is hard to understand by the disinterested spectator why they, the Rockvilles, should draw the color line at this time.¹⁵

The letter writer's point that Rockville had not objected to playing against Black teams was bolstered not only by games between Rockville and the Royal Giants, but against the Cuban Giants as well. Rockville had defeated the Cuban Giants, 8-2, on August 16.¹⁶ Games between all-Black teams and all-White teams were common. However, the *integration* of teams, even at the semipro level, was rare, and would remain so as the twentieth century wore on.

We have one other example of a Black player integrating a team in Connecticut. The Hartford Twilight League included a Black player in its ranks as early as 1933: Schoolboy Johnny Taylor, pitching for the Savitt Gems. Taylor, like Holland, was barred from playing in affiliated baseball, and played in the Negro Leagues with the New York Cubans beginning in 1935.

In 1945, Taylor once again broke a barrier. He spent the season with the New York Cubans, but late in September returned to Connecticut to play on an integrated team: the Waterbury Brasscos. One game proved

notable. On September 28, the Brasscos hosted the New York Yankees in an exhibition game. Taylor pitched the last three innings, earning a save in a 1–0 Waterbury win.¹⁷ It may have been the first time that the Yankees had played against an integrated team.

The fielding of a team containing both Black and White players in affiliated baseball didn't happen until 1946. By the time integration arrived, Taylor had lost some of the zip in his fastball, but he did join the Hartford Chiefs of the Eastern League in 1949, becoming the first Black player to play on a Hartford-based team affiliated with Major League Baseball—43 years after Billy Holland visited Connecticut. ■

Acknowledgment

The author wishes to express gratitude to the Connecticut Historical Society for allowing access to the *Hartford Times*.

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Jamestown, North Dakota, in 1932

Racial reconciliation, and Hall-of-Fame competition

Thomas Merrick

Jamestown, North Dakota, fielded Class D minor-league teams in 1922 and 1923, and again in 1936 and 1937.¹ But between those two excursions into affiliated baseball, the game flourished in the city. The Jamestown Baseball Association (JBA) turned the prairie town of 8,000 into a baseball hotbed, treating its patrons to integrated semipro baseball against top-flight competition.² The JBA succeeded by hiring three or four well-known players each year to lure fans from a 50-mile radius, and then adding the best local players to “keep good baseball alive in the community.”³

Among Jamestown’s semipro teams, the 1932 club deserves recognition for its stellar record, famous opponents, and a star player who would later be enshrined in the National Baseball Hall of Fame. Beyond that, the team merits honor for reversing an unjust racial policy.

Semipro baseball of the 1930s may have equaled top minor league classifications. Minor-league pay was often low, so a ballplayer who could pocket more money with an independent team like Jamestown might jump.⁴ Another source of talent—Black players—became available even before the 1929 stock

market crash because “the fragile structure of the Negro leagues had already collapsed.”⁵

While the major leagues and all baseball teams affiliated with them remained firmly segregated until after World War II, many small-town, independent teams in the Upper Midwest—starting with Bertha, Minnesota, in 1924⁶—were integrated. Black teams had been touring the area for years, so the talent and character of Black players was widely known. Then as now, strength up the middle was important to winning, so Black players—usually a pitcher and catcher—were recruited for those positions to gain competitive advantage. A winning team gave the citizenry bragging rights over nearby towns, and drew more people to the games—people who bought tickets and concessions, but who also filled-up at a local service station, or purchased something from a local merchant.

Jamestown’s on-field success in 1932 owes much to the pitching and hitting of Wilbur Rogan, who had both pitched and played outfield for the Kansas City Monarchs since 1920, when Kansas City became an original member of the Negro National League (NNL).

THE RUCKER ARCHIVE/SABR



Wilbur Rogan, pictured here second from left in the front row, compiled a 20–3 pitching record for Jamestown in 1932, batting .315 and leading the team in RBIs.

Rogan—who won more league games than any other NNL pitcher—compiled a 20–3 record with Jamestown. When he was not on the mound for Jamestown, Rogan played the outfield or first base, and in 39 games he hit .315 with 11 home runs, and a team-leading 51 runs batted in.

Jamestown first integrated its team in 1929, when manager O.K. Butts obtained the services of catcher Roosevelt “Chappie” Gray and pitcher Fred Sims. One reason Jamestown could integrate its team—and host Black traveling teams—was that the Central Hotel, located near Jamestown’s train depot, was integrated. Over the years, the Central Hotel housed Black ballplayers and musicians, the Harlem Globetrotters, and other Black travelers.⁷

Gray, who had played one game in the NNL in 1920, soon moved on, but Sims played the entire 1929 season, sharing pitching duties with Swede Risberg of Black Sox infamy. Sims, Risberg, and Joe Johnson, another Black pitcher, were all on Jamestown’s roster in 1930 when it finished 31–16 against a tough schedule.

But on April 9, 1931, the JBA made a stunning announcement. The *Jamestown Sun* notified the public that Jamestown would have an all-white team, with the notice: “The Jamestown Baseball Association announces that because of the many requests from the fans Jamestown will have an all-white team this year and have secured the services of a white battery....”⁸

The new players, the paper continued, “have been recommended to the management as being clean cut young men of good habits and exceptional playing ability.”⁹ That statement implies the “all-white policy” was a response to problems caused by Sims or Johnson. Not so.

There is no evidence of mischief by Sims or Johnson, and Sims was greeted warmly when he returned to Jamestown in 1932 with the Corwith (Iowa) Nighthawks.¹⁰ Further, when the “all-white policy” was reversed, Rogan was favorably compared to Johnson—a comparison that surely would not have been made if Johnson had left Jamestown under a cloud.

The JBA’s decision cannot be excused by the depressed economy. The integrated 1929 team turned a \$522.14 profit.¹¹ No financial information is available for the 1930 team—playing after the Stock Market Crash—but newspaper reports make no mention of waning attendance. The JBA hired White semipro from Canada, Seattle, and Minneapolis for 1931, and must have incurred similar expenses no matter the players’ skin color.

The *Sun* announcement reveals the absurdity of race relations in 1930s America. Could baseball fans

really veto common sense and liberty? The *Kansas City Call*, a Black-owned newspaper, decried “the damnable outrage of prejudice” in sports.¹² The JBA’s action can bear no other label.

On March 16, 1932, the JBA held its first stockholders’ meeting of the new year to elect a board of directors. E.A. Moline and George Staples were elected to replace two men who had moved away, and they joined eight holdovers as directors. The board scheduled another meeting for March 18 to elect officers, and plan for the upcoming season.¹³

No report of the March 18 board meeting is available, but the “all-white policy” was presumably reversed, and the team re-integrated. The next *Sun* article details an April 20 JBA meeting at which Butts was retained as manager, Opening Day was set for May 8 against St. Paul Northern Pacific, and the hiring of Rogan to pitch, Charles Hancock to catch, and Marty O’Neil to play shortstop was approved.

The *Sun* reporter noted Rogan’s Monarchs pedigree, but saved his praise for Hancock and O’Neil. Hancock was described as a “big colored catcher,” familiar to Jamestown fans from his visits with Gilkerson’s Union Giants, and Lone Rock, Illinois. “With him and Rogan there will be a good colored battery that will draw crowds.”¹⁴ O’Neil, from Minneapolis, returned from the 1931 team, and readers were reminded that he could “cover short as fast as lightning and everyone will be glad to see him come back.”¹⁵

The *Sun* again listed the JBA board of directors, and some names had changed since March. Three new members—Floyd Mooney, Butts, and W.C. McColloch—replaced previously listed directors, meaning five of the 10 directors from 1931 were gone. Moline was elected president, McColloch vice-president, Staples treasurer, and Mooney Secretary. All the JBA officers for 1932 came from the five new members. Did differences over the “all-white policy” trigger re-organization of the board?

Butts recruited Ray Mock from St. Paul for second base, and completed the roster with local players after tryouts. Many of those selected had played with the team in past years. Twenty-year-old Al Schauer made the team, and later joined the Northern League’s Wausau (Wisconsin) Lumberjacks from 1936 through 1938.

While the door in Jamestown had swung open for Rogan, he would not have spent the summer in North Dakota except for developments in Kansas City. It was unclear if Monarchs’ owner J. Leslie Wilkinson would muster a team in 1932. He had withdrawn Kansas City from the NNL after losing money during the 1930

season.¹⁶ In 1931 Wilkinson had launched the Monarchs on a barnstorming tour, using an ingenious portable lighting system to play rare, and lucrative, night games. Now, Wilkinson had leased the lights to the House of David.¹⁷ He was attempting to organize a new league, and toying with the idea of moving the Monarchs to Chicago.¹⁸

Wilkinson's indecision left Rogan in the lurch. Rogan had missed most of 1931 with an illness, and was approaching age 39.¹⁹ He knew he could still play baseball, but he lacked a team. Hancock, who wintered in Missouri, offered him one.

Hancock informed Rogan of his agreement to catch for Jamestown, and invited Rogan to join him there to pitch.²⁰ Hancock must have been convincing, and the JBA must have met Rogan's financial demands, because Rogan signed on, and his hiring was announced. He accompanied Hancock to Jamestown in time for a May 1 scrimmage.

Rain canceled Jamestown's May 8 Opening Day, but the season got underway against Fargo-Moorhead on May 15 with pomp and ceremony. Both teams paraded in uniform down Fifth Avenue to Jamestown's City Ballpark, led by Jamestown's City Band. Players from both squads were introduced to the crowd, and JBA president Moline threw out the ceremonial first ball.

Rogan started on the mound, and surrendered an unearned run in the first, and two more unearned runs

in the third, when Hancock threw a bunted-ball into right field. But Rogan sailed through the final six innings to win, 5-3, on a six-hitter. He struck out seven, walked no one, and charmed Jamestown's baseball faithful.

Jamestown won its first seven games before losing, 7-6, to Northern Pacific in a make-up of the rained-out opener. Jamestown's winning streak included two wins over the House of David during Memorial Day weekend. A big crowd cheered as Rogan homered and pitched Jamestown to victory on Sunday, and a full house on Monday witnessed him stroke two home runs while playing right field. House of David had mauled Jamestown, 20-1, under the lights in 1931.²¹ So the two wins impressed the *Sun*, which declared, "Jamestown beat probably the strongest team that the boys will meet this season."²²

By the end of July, Jamestown had a flattering 28-4 record, but was about to face a formidable foe with an even better record: the Kansas City Monarchs. While Rogan had been endearing himself to Jamestown, Wilkinson used the rental income from his portable lights to finally assemble the Monarchs in early July. Wilkinson found quality ballplayers in mid-summer because the Homestead Grays fell a month behind on payroll, causing eight Grays—including future Hall of Fame inductees "Cool Papa" Bell and Willie Wells—to jump to the Monarchs.²³ Despite starting late, the Monarchs played over 150 games in 1932, including an August 1 stop in Jamestown.

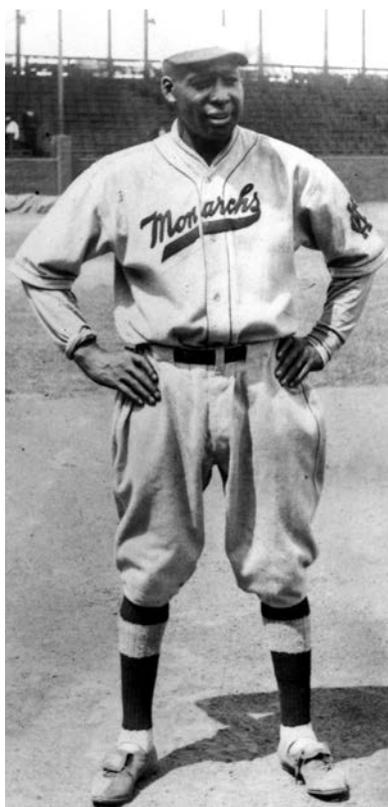
Posters around town promoted the game, and the *Sun* did its part by informing readers of the Monarchs' championships, and Rogan's long connection to Kansas City as player and manager. The *Sun* recognized that several Monarchs would be major-leaguers if eligible, and compared the Monarchs to the New York Yankees for their dominance of the Colored League²⁴

The Monarchs had just swept three games in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and brought a 20-game winning streak to town.²⁵ Rogan had pitched Jamestown past Duluth on Thursday (his 39th birthday), and on Sunday he topped Northern Pacific before a large crowd. For this Monday evening game Rogan—facing the Monarchs for the only time in his long career²⁶—guarded first base.

Jamestown started back-up pitcher Al Cassell, a Jamestown College coach. Butts borrowed Thomas Gallivan, a 20-year-old Northern Pacific hurler, to come to Cassell's rescue if needed. Birthum Hunter threw for Kansas City.²⁷

Neither team scored until the third, when, with two down, consecutive hits by Bell, Newt Allen, Wells, and

THE RUCKER ARCHIVES/ABR



Uncertainty about the season with the Kansas City Monarchs led Rogan to sign with Jamestown.

Tom Young tallied three Monarchs' runs. In the fifth, Bell stole home, and Allen scored on a hit by Young, to build the lead to 5–0. In the sixth, the Monarchs scored on a Jamestown throwing error, making it 6–0. Gallivan blanked Kansas City in its final two at-bats.

Jamestown collected only four hits. Schauer and George Deeds both singled in the fourth, but did not score. In the seventh, Hancock singled, and, with one out, and a 2-and-1 count, Rogan slugged one over the fence, cutting the margin to 6–2. That was the final score. Hunter struck out 10 and walked one. In the vernacular of the day, the Monarchs were acclaimed as “One of the fastest teams ever to step on [the] local diamond.”²⁸

On August 14, in the final game on Jamestown's schedule, Rogan hit a grand slam, drove in six runs, and pitched a six-hitter, defeating the Huron (South Dakota) Boosters, 9–3. It was Rogan's 20th win, and raised Jamestown's record to 32–7, including 25–6 at home. Jamestown had won 11 of 12 from intrastate foes, prompting the *Sun* to crown Jamestown as the 1932 North Dakota champion.²⁹ After the Huron game, JBA director William Hall thanked patrons, and expressed his hope that next year's team would be as good or better.

As it turned out, the team had one more appointment on the year. Manager Butts announced in September that Jamestown would entertain the Philadelphia Athletics, who would arrive on October 2, do some hunting, and play Jamestown on October 4. Since Rogan had returned to Kansas City immediately after Jamestown's last game (and would be touring Mexico with the Monarchs³⁰) Butts recruited “Lefty” Brown of the Cuban Stars to pitch. Gilkerson's Red Haley replaced Mock at second base; the rest of the team was intact.

It was not the Philadelphia Athletics, but the Earle Mack All-Stars—fresh from drubbing Sioux Falls, South Dakota, 16–1—that arrived in town. A crowd of 1,800—paying \$1 for reserved seats, and 75¢ for general admission—was entertained by the clowning of Nick Altrock and Al Schacht, and “one of the best exhibitions³¹ of baseball ever witnessed in the northwest.”

Neither Jamestown's Brown nor Detroit's Earle Whitehill allowed a run in the first three innings, but both teams scored in the fourth. Red Kress of the White Sox singled sharply to left, and when the ball rolled through Lloyd Withnell's fingers, Kress raced to third. The A's Bing Miller lofted a fly to left, and Kress beat Withnell's throw home for a short-lived 1–0 lead.

Cleveland's Clint Brown coaxed two groundouts in Jamestown's half of the fourth before Hancock singled.

Hancock scored ahead of Haley, who shot a liner between Kress and third base, and sped around the basepaths for an inside-the-park home run.

Jamestown lost its 2–1 lead in the seventh. After Washington's Joe Judge walked, Detroit's Charlie Gehringer slammed a liner to left field, and Withnell made a spectacular catch, sending Judge scrambling back to first. Heinie Manush's grounder forced Judge at second, and Cincinnati's left-handed Babe Herman (who went 4-for-4) rocketed a ball over the right-field fence, over the street, and into the James River, putting Mack's team ahead, 3–2. In the ninth, Philadelphia's 25-game-winner Lefty Grove preserved the win, using 11 pitches to strike out Jamestown's three batters. Mack's four pitchers totaled 13 strikeouts.

Mack's team visited a hospitalized teenager the morning of the game, and after the contest posed for pictures and signed autographs. Both teams, along with a champion American Legion team, were feted that evening at a banquet attended by 150.³² The season was complete.

All summer Jamestown's fans witnessed great baseball, and great baseball players. Rogan was posthumously inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1998, and five other Hall of Fame inductees: Bell, Gehringer, Grove, Manush, and Wells—all in their prime—took the field for the opposition. Years later, Hancock remembered, “Rogan was a grand old man. [Jamestown fans] just fell in love with him. He could really pitch and hit.”³³ What a glorious time to come to the ballpark. ■

Notes

1. The Jamestown Jimkotans were part of the Dakota League in 1922 and the North Dakota League in 1923, and the Jamestown Jimmies were a Northern League Franchise in 1936–37. The semipro teams did not have a nickname, although after purchasing grey uniforms with red trim, caps, and socks in 1931, some fans referred to them as the Red Sox.
2. The population from the 1930 census was 8,187; the 2020 census 15,849.
3. “Baseball Getting into Full Swing for Season's Work,” *Jamestown Sun*, April 19, 1930: 6.
4. Kyle P. McNary, “Double Duty” Radcliffe: 36 Years of Pitching & Catching in Baseball's Negro Leagues (St. Louis Park, MN: McNary Publishing, 1994).
5. Janet Bruce, *The Kansas City Monarchs: Champions of Black Baseball* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1985).
6. Peter Gorton and Steven R. Hoffbeck, “John Donaldson and Black Baseball in Minnesota,” *The National Pastime: Baseball in the North Star State* (SABR 2012).
7. Bruce Berg and Reggie Aligada, *Common Ground: McElroy Park's Jack Brown Stadium* (Jamestown, ND: Common Ground Press, 1996).
8. “Jamestown to Have All White Team this Year,” *Jamestown Sun*, April 9, 1931: 6.
9. “Jamestown to Have All White Team this Year.”
10. “Jamestown and Corwith Nighthawks Will Play Tie Off Here on Sunday,” *Jamestown Sun*, July 9, 1932: 6.
11. “Baseball Getting into Full Swing for Season's Work.” General admission was 50¢ and grandstand seating 10¢.

12. Bruce, 130, citing the *Kansas City Call*, October 27, 1922.
13. "Jamestown Ball Club Getting Ready for Season's Work," *Jamestown Sun*, March 17, 1932: 6.
14. "Jamestown Baseball Club Will Open Season May 8," *Jamestown Sun*, April 21, 1932: 6.
15. "Jamestown Baseball Club Will Open Season May 8."
16. Bruce, 68.
17. A religious colony from Michigan which sponsored a talented, bearded, traveling team.
18. Bruce, 84. Plans failed due to stadium lease problems.
19. Dixon, 157–8.
20. Dixon, 160.
21. Thomas Merrick, "June 20, 1931: Old Pete brings night baseball to Jamestown," SABR Games Project, Society for American Baseball Research, <https://sabr.org/gamesproj/game/june-20-1931-old-pete-brings-nightbaseball-to-jamestown>.
22. "Jamestown Club Plays Good Ball to Beat Visitors," *Jamestown Sun*, May 31, 1932: 5.
23. Dixon, 161.
24. "Jamestown Took Both Games in Series From Duluth Team: Northern Pacific on Sunday," *Jamestown Sun*, July 30, 1932: 6.
25. Dixon, 163.
26. Dixon, 163.
27. Gallivan pitched in the minors for Montgomery (Southeastern League) and Indianapolis (American Association) from 1935–38. His older brother Phil Gallivan was pitching with the Chicago White Sox in 1932.
28. "Monarchs Put Up Very Fine Ball Exhibition," *Jamestown Sun*, August 2, 1932: 6.
29. "Team Defeated Only 7 Times in 1932 Season," *Jamestown Sun*, August 15, 1932: 6.
30. Bruce, 78.
31. "Jamestown Puts Up Fine Game Here Tuesday," *Jamestown Sun*, October 5, 1932: 6.
32. "Jamestown Puts Up Fine Game Here Tuesday."
33. Dixon, 164.

A Depression Ball Game

The Buffalo Bisons vs. the Muny All-Stars, 1934

Howard Henry

Summertime 1934. Buffalo. Depression. Unemployment rate: 21.7%.¹ Mood: troubled, despairing. Social services and a New Deal were responding as best they could, helping people manage from day to day, but two big local newspapers were looking ahead to the winter. The *Buffalo Courier-Express* sponsored the Christmas Toy Fund and publisher and editor Burrows Matthews was determined that he would not fail the little ones who would otherwise go without. Equally determined was his counterpart at the *Buffalo Evening News*, Edward H. Butler, Jr., whose publication aided the “50 Neediest” families at Christmastime. Where was the money to come from this year?

THE IDEA

In answer, someone came up with the idea of a Charity Baseball Game Writ Large. Perhaps it came from Matthews or Butler, or might it have been Billy Kelly, Sports Editor of the *Courier-Express*? Or maybe Dick Young, he who commandeered sports at the *Evening News*? Here was an American idea: Americans loved helping the underdog; Americans loved baseball. Let’s put these two together and raise some necessary money for a good cause. All the ticket revenue would go to the newspaper funds.²

The next step was determining who would play whom and where and when, but this was a no-brainer. Publishers Butler and Matthews could turn to a fellow publisher; Kelly and Young could turn to a man who loved baseball. All of them targeted the same individual—Frank J. Offermann, president of the Buffalo Bisons Baseball Club and newly elected (1933) Sheriff of Erie County.³

Offermann had made his fortune in Buffalo as the owner of F.J. Offermann Art Works, publishing advertisements and calendars. In 1928 he assumed the presidency of the baseball club. A true lover of the game and the people, Offermann enthusiastically donated the use of Bison Stadium at Michigan and E. Ferry Streets, the wages of staff required to manage the event, and the baseballs and any other required equipment. He even pledged to take out advertising space in

the newspapers.⁴ Ray Schalk, his ballclub’s manager, would pitch the idea to the players. August 22 was found as an open date in the Bisons’ schedule and dedicated to the charity game.

The Bisons had represented the city in formal professional leagues since 1879.⁵ The team felt they owed something to the people who had supported them over the years. The ballplayers had a long, grueling season to play but they were aware they were lucky. They had jobs. They would give up a free day without too much grumbling.

Bisons fans could probably be counted on to attend, but the team would need a staunch opponent in order to make it worth their while to pay to see a non-league game. Who else in the area had an established fan base? And who could mount a worthy opposition?

The city’s Municipal League (Muny) baseball association was suggested. Non-professional baseball was big in Buffalo. The city and region boasted numerous “amateur” ball clubs sponsored by local companies, but even the best of these individual nines would never be strong enough to make it a contest against the pros. Look at what had happened back in 1914. The Federal League Buf-Feds had taken on the Simon Pures in an exhibition and had whopped them, 15–3.⁶

But what about a Muny All-Star team? A number of men playing in the Munys had already played pro ball. Others certainly looked like they were headed that way. The Municipal League directorship, the club managers, and especially the players bought into the idea. For the seasoned athletes, here was the opportunity to show up the baseball people who had dismissed them. For the younger men it was a chance to see what it was like to compete at the professional level. Dreams would drive the “amateurs,” while professional pride would motivate the Bisons.

To drum up excitement, it was decided that the fans themselves would choose the Muny combatants.⁷ Newspaper Voting Ballots for the Charity Baseball Game featuring the Bisons and their semipro All-Star opponents started to appear.⁸ Fans were encouraged to “select three pitchers, two catchers and one player for

the other positions [infield and outfield].” Completed ballots were to be mailed to the Baseball Vote Editors at the newspapers with a submission deadline of midnight Sunday, August 19.

The 24 highest vote getters, based on the positions allocated, were chosen:⁹

PITCHERS (6)

- Emerson Dickman (Simon Pures, top overall vote getter with 18,992 nominations)
- Bill Pryor (Blue Coals)
- Eddie Majkowski (St. John Kanty)
- Art Weiss (Zoladz)
- Nick DiGiacomo (Wells)
- Eddie Retzer (Huff-Haskins)

CATCHERS (4):

- Tom Kenney (St. Casimir)*
- Lou DePoe (Blue Coals)
- Randolph “Murph” Mineo (GLF)
- Johnny Kull (Simon Pures)

FIRST BASEMEN (2):

- Ray Egner (Simon Pures)
- Lou Benzin (Blue Coals)

SECOND BASEMEN (2):

- Jerry Cristina (Simon Pures)
- Ted Prorok (St. John Kanty)*

SHORTSTOPS (2):

- Jack Collins (Simon Pures)
- Gene Geary (Leonards)

THIRD BASEMEN (2):

- Augie Mecca (Simon Pures)
- Mike Youra (Zoladz)

OUTFIELDERS (6):

- Eddie Crowe (Simon Pures)
- Joe Gallagher (Blue Coals)
- Adam Pasierb (St. John Kanty)
- Mike Shedler (Kronsons)
- Reg Bliss (Union Printers)
- Wilbur Bergstrom (Huff-Haskins)

* Tom Kenney topped all catchers in the fan voting but did not play and the game accounts do not say why. Tom Prorok (second base) did not play either due to a spike wound he had suffered on the Sunday before, August 19.

Managing the Munys was ex-Bison (and Boston Red Sox and Chicago White Sox) pitcher Dick McCabe,

VOTING BALLOT
Charity Baseball Game
BUFFALO BIONS
vs.
ALL-STAR MUNY TEAM
Bison Stadium, Wednesday Night, Aug. 22
For Benefit of Courier-Express Christmas Toy Fund and
Evening News "50 Neediest" Fund

I hereby vote for the following players:
(Select three pitchers, two catchers and one player for the other positions)

P. Team

P. Team

P. Team

C. Team

C. Team

1B Team

2B Team

3B Team

S.S. Team

R.F. Team

L.F. Team

C.P. Team

Signature

Address

Fill in and send to Baseball Vote Editor, Buffalo Courier-Express,
Main and Goodell Streets, Buffalo.
Voting closes Sunday, Aug. 19, at midnight.

COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

A newspaper voting ballot for fans to submit their favorites.

who that same year had led the Simon Pures to the Class AA pennant. His coaches would be Chester Tomczak, manager of the pennant-winning St. John Kanty club in the Jefferson League, and Frank Wagner Sr., who had kept his Zoladz club in the thick of the pennant race. Chief of Umpires for the Municipal League Thomas Mercer, Jr. selected four of his veterans to work the game: Millard Jeffrey behind the plate, Walter Talskey at first base, Edwin Harlow at second, and William Stutz at third.¹⁰

Bison regulars would suit up for the August 22 game, but not the pitchers. Schalk insisted that his hurlers needed a day off. The team was shooting for a fourth place finish and a spot in the postseason Shaughnessy Playoffs. Playoffs meant money. A local prospect the team had been considering would pitch for the Herd.

THE GAME

Game time was set for 9:00 PM, allowing fans to put in a day of work and still make their way to the ballpark. The Bions would have the day to recover from their International League contest the night before. Muny players, who would take the diamond following the August 21 night contest so they could get a feel for playing under the lights, would also have the day to rest.



The 1890 Buffalo Bisons. Buffalo had been home to professional baseball since at least 1879.

Tickets went on sale at the Matthias Cigar Store at 331 Main Street and the Bison stadium ticket office: a seat in the left field bleachers cost 25 cents, unreserved grandstand seats could be had for 50 cents, reserved grandstand went for 75 cents, and boxes cost \$1.00. Women and children were admitted to unreserved grandstand seats for 25 cents.¹¹

On Wednesday, August 22, a crowd of 9,543 turned out to watch an exciting come-from-behind victory by the Bisons over the determined Munys.¹² Parks Commissioner Frank Coon threw out the first ball to Link Wasem, the Bisons' catcher for the evening. Schalk had decided that the Herd's regular receiver, Roy Spencer, also needed time off to rest his weary legs.

On Tuesday night the Bisons had lost, 7-1, to Albany, managing only two base hits and striking out 13 times.¹³ Against the Munys they jumped out to a two-run lead in the bottom of the first inning. Marve Olson led off by working a base on balls from Muny starter Emmy Dickman. Number two hitter Greg Mulleavy's sharp ground ball to short took a freak hop over the glove of Jack Collins and Olson sped on to third base. On center fielder Eddie Crowe's throw to third, Mulleavy took second. Dickman fanned Beauty McGowan for the first out, but Bison slugger Ollie Carnegie choked off the cheers from the stands with a sharp single to center to score both runners. Crowe's fumble of the ball in center sent Carnegie to second base, whereupon second baseman Jerry Cristina misplayed the throw from the outfield and Carnegie scrambled over to third. A base hit, two runs scored,

two errors and a new man on third, all in one play, all in the first inning. Dickman struck out the next two Bisons on wide-sweeping curves.

The two runs were the total offense for the first four innings. Dickman retired the Bisons hitters in order in the second. Bud Clancy's bunt was neatly fielded by Muny third baseman Augie Mecca, whose throw to Ray Egner at first caught the runner by a step. University of Buffalo graduate Bill (Monk) Pryor replaced Emerson and kept the Bisons scoreless in his two innings.

John Wilson, Herd righthander, started the game for the Bisons, trying to work himself back into effectiveness. He had been out several games and on Monday he had lasted only two thirds of an inning against Albany, giving up four runs and taking the loss. This evening he was sharp through four frames, allowing only a single and a double, both to Muny right fielder Adam (Chief) Pasierb.

The amateurs broke through against Wilson in the fifth. Jack Collins rifled a single over second base leading off. With one out Murph Mineo drew Wilson's first walk of the night to put two runners aboard. Wilson fanned Pryor for the second out but couldn't fool Cristina. The second baseman's Texas-Leaguer just over Gyselman's head at third put the Munys on the scoreboard. They took the lead in the sixth in dramatic fashion.

Lou Benzin ripped a double down the third base line, but then got caught in a rundown on Mike Shedler's ground ball to short. Benzin was eventually tagged out but Shedler hustled into second. A Wilbur

Bergstrom groundout moved him to third. Huck Geary made it two on the basepaths after drawing a walk from a disgruntled Wilson. He was not happy with the calls he was getting from umpire Jeffrey.

Mike Youra, Augie Mecca's replacement at third base, stepped in against Wilson for his first at-bat of the night. The former Muny home-run king cracked a high line drive that carried over the left field fence for a three-run home run and suddenly the amateurs had jumped out in front. The stands erupted. Wilson erupted.¹⁴ The pros answered back immediately.

Ed Majkowski had taken the mound for the Munys in the fifth and had held the Bisons scoreless. Such was not to be the case in the sixth. Wasem drew a walk. Ollie Tucker, pinch hitting for Wilson, was retired only after his slicing drive to right was speared by Reg Bliss on a fine running catch. Marve Olson, the next batter, slammed a Majkowski offering to the base of the scoreboard for a triple, scoring Wasem. Greg Mulleavy's smash carried to almost the same spot as Olson's. Olson scored and Mulleavy was windmilled home by Schalk from the third base coaching box. Muny catcher Johnny Kull's sweeping tag was late by only inches and the Herd had retaken the lead, 5 to 4, on a two-run, inside-the-park homer.

Williamsville's Eddie Honeck, the pitching prospect Schalk was so keen to look at, replaced Wilson. He shut down the Munys in order over the last three innings, fanning three. Schalk was elated.¹⁵

The Bisons scored no more. Muny pitcher Art Weiss was reached for a walk and a single in his two innings of work but the threats were easily handled. Carnegie, who had walked, was doubled up when Youra speared Fitzgerald's sharp liner to third and whipped the ball over to first baseman Benzin. Catcher Kull made a difficult grab at the screen on Wasem's foul pop. The pro-Muny crowd appreciated every outstanding play.¹⁶

The event had gone well; the contest was close, as the box score revealed.¹⁷ The Bisons had come out on top as was expected. However, the All-Stars had shown mettle and the game had accomplished its goal by raising more than \$3,300 of needed charitable dollars.¹⁸ Fans helped the cause by throwing foul balls back onto the field for later use.

THE AFTERMATH

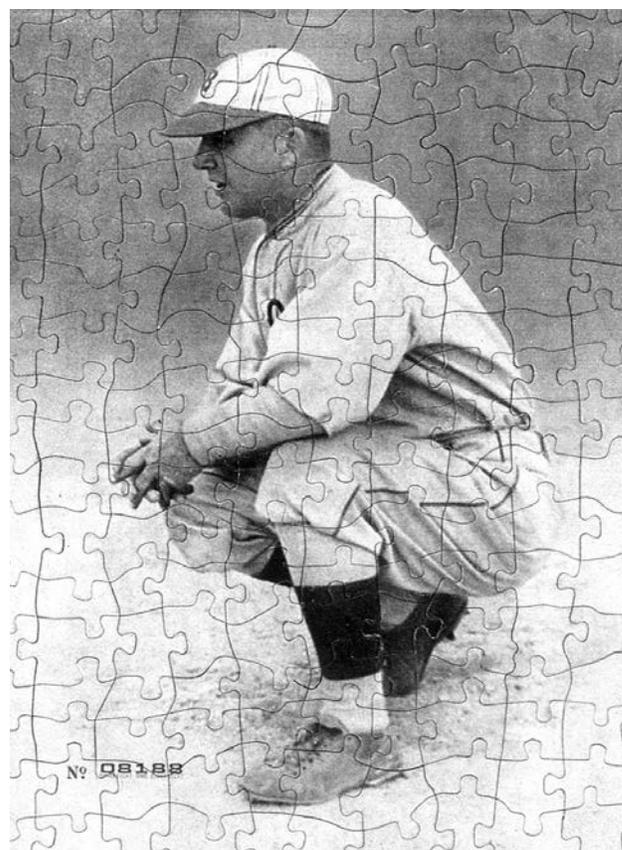
The Bisons missed the 1934 playoffs but manager Schalk guided them to a third place finish in 1935 and to the pennant in 1936. They lost to the Milwaukee Brewers in the Little World Series.¹⁹

Eddie Honeck pitched one exceedingly difficult inning for the Herd on September 2, 1934. His professional career ended after four appearances in 1935 with the Elmira Pioneers of the New York-Pennsylvania League.²⁰ He continued his mound work thereafter in semipro ball in the Buffalo area.

Link Wasem, called up from the New York-Pennsylvania League Wilkes-Barre Barons, batted .323 in 12 games and earned a Buffalo roster spot for 1935. He was back with the Barons again in 1936 but that year he fashioned a .322 batting average and earned a quick look by the National League Boston Bees in 1937. He was hitless in one at-bat. He finished his career with Scranton in 1937.²¹

John Wilson finished his 1934 season with an 11-11 record. He won 3 and lost 1 in 1935 for Buffalo and then contributed a 14-7 mark for the 1936 pennant winners.²²

Parks Commissioner Coon and Bison President Offermann were lavish in their postgame praise of the event and vowed it would become an annual affair.²³ Tragically, Offermann died unexpectedly in February 1935. The Bisons-Muny game was played only once more, on August 23, 1935, before a crowd of



THE RUCKER ARCHIVES/SABR

Ray Schalk with the Bisons.

3,500. The Bisons were victorious by a score of 10–7 and receipts again went to the newspaper Christmas funds, but without the promotional zeal of Frank J. Of-fermann to support it the series faded away.²⁴

The Muny All-Star lineup boasted considerably tal-ented athletes:

Lou Benzin (first base), a South Park and Syracuse Uni-versity batting star, continued in Muny ball into the mid-1950s as player and manager. He later coached the Hamburg Juniors baseball club in the Lake Shore Junior League and was a notable bowler.²⁵

Wilbur Bergstrom (center field), a member of the Cortland State Hall of Fame, taught and coached football in the Buffalo Public School system, winning a number of city championships including four in a row, 1947–50.²⁶

Reg Bliss (right field), a three-sport star at St. Joseph’s Collegiate Institute, tried out with the St. Louis Cardi-nals in 1935 at Greensboro, North Carolina. He was a fearsome softball hurler.²⁷

Jack Collins (shortstop) quarterbacked and was team captain for his Canisius College football squad. He was an assistant coach at Canisius in the 1930s and is a member of the college’s Hall of Fame.²⁸

Jerry Cristina (second base) was a slick second baseman as well as captain of the 1929 Canisius Prep basket-ball squad. The St. Bonaventure University graduate’s glove work found praise from Schalk after the game.²⁹

Ed Crowe (center field), an outstanding football halfback and baseball outfielder, was signed out of Canisius High School by the St. Louis Browns. He played part of two seasons with the professional Elmira ballclub. A feared cleanup hitter, he is a member of the Western New York Baseball Hall of Fame.³⁰

Lou DePoe (catcher) played for and managed the Simon Pures ball club, served as chief of Western New York Umpires Associated and served as president of the Muny League. The “Lou DePoe Muny Catcher of the Year” award was named in his honor. He is a member of the Western New York Baseball Hall of Fame.³¹

Emmy Dickman (pitcher), also praised by Schalk, compiled a 22–15 record as a member of the Boston Red Sox from 1936 to 1941. He then coached at Princeton University for three years. He is a member of the Washington & Lee University Athletic Hall of Fame.³²

Ray Egner (first base) was named East High School Most Valuable Player on the baseball squad in 1930. The

All-Stars vs. Bisons – August 22, 1934

All-Stars	AB	R	H	RBI	Bisons	AB	R	H	RBI
Cristina 2b	4	0	1	1	Olson 2b	3	2	2	1
Pasierb rf	3	0	2	0	Mulleavy ss	5	2	2	2
Bliss rf	1	0	0	0	McGowan cf	4	0	1	0
Egner 1b	2	0	0	0	Carnegie lf	2	0	1	2
Benzin 1b	2	0	1	0	Fitzgerald rf	3	0	0	0
Gallagher lf	2	0	0	0	Gyselman 3b	4	0	1	0
Shedler lf	2	1	0	0	Clancy 1b	4	0	0	0
Crowe cf	1	0	0	0	Wasem c	3	1	1	0
Bergstrom cf	2	0	0	0	Micelotta ss	4	0	0	0
Collins ss	2	1	1	0	Wilson p	2	0	0	0
Geary ss	1	1	0	0	Tucker ph	1	0	0	0
Mecca 3b	2	0	0	0	Honeck p	1	0	0	0
Youra 3b	2	1	1	3					
DePoe c	1	0	0	0					
Mineo c	1	0	0	0					
Kull c	1	0	0	0					
Dickman p	1	0	0	0					
Pryor p	1	0	0	0					
Majkowski p	1	0	0	0					
Weiss p	1	0	0	0					
Totals	32	4	6	4	Totals	32	5	8	5

Muny All-Stars 000 013 000 – 4 6 2
 Bisons 200 003 00x – 5 8 0

PITCHERS—MUNY: HO—Dickman 2 in 2, Pryor 2 in 2, Majkowski 3 in 2, Weiss 1 in 2; SO—Dickman 3, Pryor 1, Majkowski 1; BB—Dickman 1, Pryor 1, Majkowski 2, Weiss 1; Runs/ER—Dickman 2–2, Majkowski 3–3.

PITCHERS—BUFFALO: HO—Wilson 6 in 6, Honeck 0 in 3; SO—Wilson 5, Honeck 3; BB—Wilson 3.
 Winner—Wilson Loser—Majkowski

Tucker flew out for Wilson in the 6th.
 E—Cristina, Crowe, Geary. SB—Olson
 DP—Mulleavy to Olson to Clancy, Youra to Benzin.
 2B—Pasierb, Wasem, Benzin, Geyselman.
 3B—Olson.
 HR—Youra, Mulleavy.
 Left on base—All-Stars 4, Bisons 9.
 Attendance—9,543. Time of game—1:59
 Umpires—Millard Jeffrey, plate; Walter Talskey, first base; Edwin Harlow, second base; William Stutz, third base.

lefty swinger had a solid career in the Munys playing for the Simon Pures, Houde, Zoladz and the Seven-Ups, as well as for the Curtiss Aircraft club.³³

Joe Gallagher (left field), a South Park ace and Manhattan College football star, played with the New York Yankees and St. Louis Browns in 1939 and with the Browns and Brooklyn Dodgers in 1940. A military veteran (1941–45), he became head baseball coach for Stephen F. Austin State College and Rice University.³⁴

“Huck” Geary (shortstop) began a 10-year professional baseball career by getting into two games with the 1935 Buffalo Bisons. By 1942 he was wearing a Pittsburgh uniform. In 1943 he stole home in the bottom of the 14th inning to win a game for the Pirates.³⁵

John Kull (catcher) was competitive both behind the plate and as a winning basketball guard and forward for the YMCA Downtown League championship 101’s, the Tru-Penn’s and other local squads.³⁶

Ed Majkowski (pitcher) played professionally for Elmira and Hazelton in the New York-Penn League and hurled two no-hitters in Muny League ball, the second a perfect game in 1934. A member of the Western New York Baseball Hall of Fame, he also played for the 1939 Polish Union national basketball champions.³⁷

Augie Mecca (third base) was a football star and captain of his Bennett High School baseball team. On July 29, 1934, he homered over the newly elevated 22-foot, left field fence at the Bison ballpark. In 1931 he had signed to play with the Terre Haute (Three-I League) club.³⁸

Randolph (Murph) Mineo (catcher), caught one game for the Bisons in 1933. He was a World War II Navy veteran, a high school and American Legion coach, a legislator (three term member of the Erie County Board of Supervisors) and an administrator (Director of War Memorial Stadium and Memorial Auditorium).³⁹

Adam (Chief) Pasierb (right field) was awarded the Muny League MVP medal by the *Buffalo Evening News* in 1932 and was the last player cut by the Bisons in spring training 1933. The powerful 5-foot 6-inch left-hander belongs to the Western New York Baseball Hall of Fame and also the Softball Hall of Fame.⁴⁰

Bill (Monk) Pryor (pitcher) threw a number of nasty knuckle balls to the Bisons that called for Schalk’s admiration in his postgame remarks. A 1931 University of Buffalo



Dick McCabe managed the “Munys” in the charity game.

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME AND LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, NY

graduate, Pryor’s basketball ability was his ticket into the University’s Athletic Hall of Fame.⁴¹

Mike Shedler (outfield) was a 1929 *Buffalo Evening News* second team All-High outfielder for Tech High School. He was inducted into the Western New York Softball Hall of Fame on October 19, 1972.⁴²

Art Weiss (pitcher) hurled his Corpus Christi team to the senior title in the Muny Class AA league in 1932. On August 4, 1933, he threw a no-hitter for the Houdes in an Electric Twilight victory over Crystal Beach, fanning 21 men in the 13-0 shutout.⁴³

Mike Youra (third base) was Buffalo’s “Babe Ruth.” In 1926 he hit 14 home runs in 17 games for the Muny champion Gibas’ Dairy and, as of 1937, had accumulated the most home runs in Muny history. A .308 batter for the 1932 Dayton (OH) Ducks, he is a member of the Western New York Baseball Hall of Fame.⁴⁴ ■

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In addition to those sources listed in the Notes, the author spoke with Vic Baron, a member of the Western New York Baseball Hall of Fame at his home. Old Fulton New York Post Cards was also a resource used for this research.

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The Strange, Extremely Brief Days of Minor League Baseball in Roseville, California

Missing Scoresheets and Lost Heroics

Dennis Snelling

On August 4, 1948, the *Roseville Press-Tribune* trumpeted the arrival of a new professional baseball team. The Far West League's financially failing Pittsburg Diamonds were moving ninety miles northeast along what was then US Highway 40 to Roseville, just outside Sacramento.¹ The late-season move was bold; although Roseville today ranks among California's fastest growing cities with a population nearing 150,000, a mere eight thousand called Roseville home in 1948.

Among the players headed to the Sacramento suburb was Sal Fucile, Pittsburg's eighteen-year-old catcher. During Roseville's brief stint in minor league baseball, Fucile would slam five home runs in a six-game stretch, yet at the end of the year his official record would show zero home runs for the season. Why? Well, it's not too long a story—and the title of this article provides a clue.

To understand the genesis of Roseville's blink in time as a minor league baseball town, we have to go back one year, to a tryout staged there by the Pittsburgh Pirates in July 1947. The five-day camp for prospective players ages sixteen to twenty-two held the promise of contract offers to the most promising prospects, and featured among its instructors the colorful Babe Herman, a former big-league hitting star who had been Gary Cooper's stunt double in *Pride of the Yankees*.² Two months after the camp, Herman popped into the *Press-Tribune* office and casually dropped a bomb, asking sports editor Chic Courter, "Do you think a Class D club would go in Roseville?"³

A couple of weeks after that, Cleveland Indians scout Tony Governor arrived in town to evaluate Roseville as a potential site for a farm club.⁴ Governor addressed the local Lions Club about the possibility, but warned that the high school stadium would be adequate to host a team for only a year, at which point further improvements would have to be made.⁵ This ignited a debate among local fans, but before any real action could be taken, Roseville lost out to Vallejo, which was willing to commit \$25,000 to upgrading its ballpark.⁶

The lost opportunity roused civic leaders, who met at the Roseville Athletic Club and agreed to formulate a plan for a new baseball plant in time for the 1948 season.⁷ Art Hadler, who had recently sponsored a team in the Sacramento Winter League, addressed the Roseville Exchange Club and vowed to pursue a Far West League franchise if the city committed to a new stadium⁸.

In December 1947, there was a glimmer of hope—the Boston Red Sox had secured the league's final franchise, with the choice of location narrowed to either Oroville or Roseville.⁹ But Oroville already boasted a finished facility, and at a league meeting held three days before Christmas, Roseville fell short again.¹⁰

Eight months later—thanks to Art Hadler's purchasing Pittsburg's franchise and fulfilling his earlier promise by relocating the team—Roseville had its chance. The arrival of professional baseball was hailed by the business community as a sign of progress, although a lack of hotels resulted in a plea for residents to open their homes in order to avoid the embarrassment of players being forced to bivouac in the park.¹¹ While Hadler commissioned plans for a more permanent facility, the newly minted Roseville Diamonds took up residence at Roseville High School's all-dirt playing field, which had been constructed in 1934 as a Works Progress Administration project on land donated by rancher William Kaseberg.¹² Local contractor John Piches was hired to expand seating at the facility, which was spruced up as best as could be expected given the four days available for renovations.¹³ Hadler even rolled up his sleeves and pitched in.¹⁴

Despite the venue being considered inferior to the one just vacated, the high school ballpark had its selling points, including outfield dimensions equivalent to other teams in the league and, most important, lighting adequate for night baseball, a vital feature the Pittsburg ballpark had lacked. Hadler, who had accumulated his "fortune" through his Sacramento-based wholesale egg business, hoped to draw fans from the state capital twenty miles to neighboring Placer County, since Sacramento's Pacific Coast League franchise had

become a full-time road team for the remainder of the 1948 season after its home, Edmonds Field, burned to the ground on July 12 in spectacular fashion.¹⁵

Chic Courter was unsure whether pro baseball would succeed in Roseville, coming out of the blue as it were. While acknowledging local excitement over the prospect, the *Press-Tribune* editor alluded to the local tradition of semipro baseball and warned, "It is, at least, like serving English wild boar to people who have been raised on common everyday pork. Maybe they will like it, maybe they won't."¹⁶

The newly-minted Far West League was attempting to capitalize on a post-war sports boom, minor league baseball having entertained more than forty million spectators in 1947. The circuit was in the first season of its eventual four-year existence and fielded eight teams; Klamath Falls and Medford in Oregon, plus Redding, Willows, Santa Rosa, Oroville, Marysville, and now Roseville, in California. Classified as "D" level, the lowest rung on the baseball ladder, most players were either professional neophytes or marginal talents, although rosters were dotted with interesting names. Future Cy Young Award winner Vernon Law pitched for Santa Rosa, former San Francisco Seals star Ray Perry was player-manager for Redding, and future major league pitching coach and manager Larry Shepard was player-manager for Medford. The father of future Texas Rangers slugger Pete Incaviglia was Medford's shortstop.

The league's newest team had actually debuted the previous week with ex-Sacramento Solons outfielder Bill Shewey as manager.¹⁷ On July 31, the Roseville Diamonds played their first contest, in Oroville, and lost. Then lost again. They went to Redding and lost three more. Thankfully, the day before arriving at their new home, Roseville swept a doubleheader.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the Diamonds were in last place with a record of 33–53, including a 2–5 mark during the first week representing their new city. The team was to play eleven games over the next nine days in Roseville, beginning August 5 against the Santa Rosa Pirates.

Despite Hadler's boast of his "five thousand dollars per month payroll," the Diamonds roster was weak—unlike the circuit's other seven members, they were independent, having no connection to a major league club. A few of Roseville's players were property of other organizations—overflow from more talented rosters. The remainder were generally those who had failed to catch on elsewhere. One of them, a pitcher, was Hadler's son, Art Jr. Another was outfielder Vincent DiMaggio—said to be a nineteen-year-old cousin of the famous baseball brothers, not one of them.¹⁹

In order to juice local interest, Art Hadler signed popular local semipro star Sammy Piches, a promising infielder who had been released late in spring training by the California League's Bakersfield Indians, managed by Harry Griswold. Hadler also signed Gene McNulty, whose brother Ray was playing in the Western International League, and whose nephew, Bill McNulty, would star for Sacramento in the minor leagues during the 1970s and appear briefly in the majors.²⁰ Added to the pitching staff were recent Roseville High graduates Jack Hartman and Moe Martin who, like Piches and McNulty, had been playing for the Roseville Athletic Club in the semipro Sacramento County League.

A booster club was formed, with dues of one dollar and the motto, "Win, Lose, or Draw, We're For the Diamonds."²¹ Sammy Piches's brother John, the contractor who had helped ready the ballpark for game use, was named Boosters president.²²

One thousand enthusiastic fans lined up three hours before game time for the Diamonds' home debut, and they were rewarded with something historic—a no-hitter *against* their new heroes thrown by Santa Rosa's Bill LaThorpe. Not only that, LaThorpe allowed only two balls hit out of the infield and struck out seventeen batters—all in the final seven innings—defeating Jack Hartman, who was making his professional debut.²³

LaThorpe, a close friend and classmate of Olympic gold medalist Bob Mathias, was no veteran himself, having appeared in his first pro game six weeks earlier after finishing his college season at Fresno State—the win was already LaThorpe's tenth.²⁴ It was the second time the Diamonds had been no-hit that season; Marysville right-hander Herb Hamilt had done it first when the team was in Pittsburg, an inartistic 14–1 win in which Hamilt walked nine batters and allowed the Diamonds' only run on a wild pitch that scored a runner from *second* base.²⁵

The new team's second home date proved little better than its first, with Roseville scoring six runs while allowing 16 in a game the Diamonds trailed, 9–2, by the bottom of the third inning.²⁶

Roseville finally won its first home contest in five tries, a 12–0 victory in the nightcap of a doubleheader on August 8. But losing quickly resumed, despite catcher Sal Fucile's home-run streak, encompassing a half-dozen games, all of them defeats. Fucile's first home run, against the Oroville Red Sox, was controversial—the Red Sox claimed the ball had cleared the fence on a bounce. But when Roseville lost, Oroville dropped the protest and the home run stood.²⁷



Former big-leaguer Babe Herman suggested to *Press-Tribune* sports editor Chic Courter that Roseville could have a baseball team.

Fucile—who had spent spring training with his hometown San Francisco Seals, managed by the legendary Lefty O’Doul—punished Oroville the next day, hitting three home runs in a doubleheader.²⁸ Two of them were off Jules Verne Hudson, arguably the league’s liveliest arm (he struck out 237 batters in 167 innings). Fucile then added another circuit blast to close out the home stand, against Redding.²⁹ These home runs were not the result of friendly home-field dimensions; only one other Diamonds player, Alvin Kruk, hit more than one at the high school ballpark. (He hit two.) Curiously, those five home runs represented Sal Fucile’s entire output for the season in that category, in more than three hundred at bats. It was an unusual power display for a young ballplayer best-known to that point for his spot-on imitations of popular singers.³⁰

As Roseville languished in the Far West League cellar, Art Hadler began looking to the future. He was determined to negotiate a working agreement with the Cleveland Indians or New York Yankees and vowed, “...the fans can look for and expect the kind of a ball club they are entitled to come 1949.”³¹ Other measures included construction of a new home for the Diamonds on a far corner of the Placer County Fairgrounds, including a grandstand, which Roseville High lacked.³²

Unfortunately for Hadler, the 1948 schedule was not yet complete. Complaints multiplied. Beer could not be sold on the high school grounds.³³ The local newspaper published only twice a week, hampering promotional efforts. The dirt playing surface was far from ideal, especially when the wind kicked up. Not only that, Hadler had to pay a fine to the league for utilizing a field lacking sod.³⁴

Attendance dropped precipitously after the opener. Even a night saluting Sammy Piches, who had played well as the team’s lead-off hitter and second baseman, failed to check the decline.³⁵ At one point Hadler announced he was going to move a home game to

Dixieanne Field in North Sacramento, concerned that competition from the Placer County Fair would prove too stiff.³⁶

After losing to Medford, 5–3, on August 19—exactly two weeks after the team’s debut in Roseville—Art Hadler abandoned the remainder of the home schedule and the Diamonds hit the road for the final three weeks of the season, winning only four of their final twenty-one games.³⁷ One particularly painful loss was to the Medford Dodgers, 15–14, after having led by nine runs in the seventh inning. The winning tally was the result of Roseville’s third baseman protesting a close play and then arguing with the umpire without calling time out. Seeing an opening, the Medford runner took off for home and scored the clinching run while the dispute continued unabated.³⁸

Roseville’s season ended with a six-game sweep at the hands of the Willows Cardinals, leaving the team with a final record of 42–84, including an 11–36 mark as the Roseville Diamonds³⁹. Overall attendance for Pittsburg/Roseville was a league-worst 11,054—less than two hundred per game—and less than one-third that of the Far West League’s top draw, Klamath Falls.⁴⁰

To add to the indignity, none of the Diamonds’ home games made it into the official record. Apparently the box scores were never forwarded to the league office.⁴¹ As a result, there is a notation in the 1949 *Sporting News Baseball Guide* that twenty games of the Far West League’s 1948 season were not reflected in the final statistics or standings because the official scoresheets were lost.⁴² Sal Fucile’s impressive home stand is among those missing records. In the nine games he played at Roseville High, Fucile hit two doubles, two triples, and five home runs, compiling a batting average of .382 and a slugging average of 1.000. Meanwhile, his official record shows him with zero home runs in 1948, and zero triples as well. Bob LaThorpe’s no-hitter also went unrecorded.

The only career home run for Sammy Piches, against Redding on August 13, is also missing, and roughly half of his at bats for the Diamonds are not included in his final statistics—games during which he batted a solid .275, on top of the .268 average he carried in the nineteen games which were recorded.⁴³

The Roseville Diamonds did not return in 1949. A plan to combine a War Memorial with a baseball stadium at the fairgrounds collapsed, as some locals did not want a ballpark there and others did not want a memorial.⁴⁴ No one wanted both.

Hadler first announced he was moving the team to Santa Rosa, that city having lost its franchise. Then, citing health issues, he decided to divest instead.⁴⁵ He

THE SANTA ROSA PRESS DEMOCRAT



IT'S PLAY BALL TODAY for Jack Haley, Cat's hard-hitting outfielder. Haley comes here from Kansas City and will be one of the regulars meeting the Gaels at Doyle Park today. Catching is Sal Fucile, one of the Far West league's top receivers. (Photo by John LeBaron.)

offered the team to groups in both Santa Rosa and Roseburg, Oregon, ultimately selling to the Santa Rosa interests.⁴⁶ Sal Fucile and Alvin Kruk were the only Roseville players making significant contributions to the team—christened the Santa Rosa Cats—before that franchise folded during the 1949 season.⁴⁷

Hadler returned to the Far West League in 1950, establishing a new franchise in Eugene, Oregon. He built a ballpark there and operated the team for two seasons until the league went out of business, a victim of the military draft, television's rapid rise in popularity, and cities ultimately too small to support minor league baseball.⁴⁸ Hadler ran a supermarket chain in Sacramento before moving an hour away to Grass Valley in 1962, where he operated a newspaper distributorship for nearly two decades prior to his death in 1986, at the age of 85.⁴⁹

Vincent DiMaggio, whose strong arm—eleven assists in forty-four games as an outfielder in 1948—led to him taking the mound on occasion for Roseville, became a full-time pitcher. Interestingly enough, he faced his namesake in 1949 and 1950 when the more famous Vince DiMaggio became a player-manager in the Far West League for Pittsburg which, after finally agreeing to install lights, had received another team after losing its first to Roseville.

As noted, Sal Fucile stayed with the Roseville franchise when it moved to Santa Rosa, and was considered one of the league's best prospects. He hit three home

runs in 1949, all of which were properly recorded in the official statistics, and was then purchased by the New York Giants, who assigned him to Idaho Falls and then Erie in 1950.⁵⁰ The Giants tried to send him to Knoxville the next year, but National Guard commitments prevented his leaving California. As a result, Fucile played semipro ball on weekends in San Francisco for the Bartenders Union team.⁵¹ He then laced up his spikes for Sioux City in 1952 before being drafted into the Army.⁵² Stationed at the Presidio in San Francisco, Fucile managed the baseball team there but lost nearly two years of his athletic career.⁵³ Before his days in baseball came to an end, he was briefly a member of the San Francisco Seals in 1954, although he never appeared in a game for them.⁵⁴ Fucile then followed in his father's footsteps as a bartender in San Francisco before retiring to Concord, where he died in 2003.⁵⁵ His family had no knowledge of his playing for Roseville, or his impressive home run streak in August 1948.

Sammy Piches was sent a contract to play for Santa Rosa in 1949, but the military draft intervened and he instead joined the Air Force.⁵⁶ Later, Art Hadler wanted to bring Piches to Eugene, but by the time of Sammy's military discharge, the Far West League was defunct. Therefore, Piches's only (incomplete) record in professional baseball came during his month as the starting second baseman for the Roseville Diamonds. He starred for years with Roseville in the amateur Placer Valley League, remaining one of the city's most popular athletes. Although he never had children of his own, he never missed his niece's softball games and usually helped her during warm-ups.⁵⁷ Like Sal Fucile, he became a popular bartender, working in the family businesses in Roseville, including the Rose Room, before his death in 1999.⁵⁸

After that two-week sojourn in August 1948, minor league baseball never returned to Roseville. None of the Roseville Diamonds ever made it to the major leagues, and the team was forgotten (until now). ■

Notes

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4. *Roseville Press-Tribune*, September 24, 1947, 6.
5. *Roseville Press-Tribune*, October 1, 1947, 6.
6. *Roseville Press-Tribune*, October 17, 1947, 6. Vallejo ultimately lost out as well. In order to bring their facility up to standard, land adjacent to the

- stadium had to be purchased in order to expand, and the parties could not reach agreement. The franchise was then awarded to Pittsburg. (*Sacramento Bee*, January 9, 1948, 24; *Santa Rosa Press-Democrat*, February 10, 1948, 10.)
7. *Roseville Press-Tribune*, October 24, 1947, 1.
 8. *Roseville Press-Tribune*, November 7, 1947, 1.
 9. *Roseville Press-Tribune*, December 3, 1947, 1.
 10. *Roseville Press-Tribune*, December 26, 1947, 1.
 11. *Roseville Press-Tribune*, August 4, 1948, 1.
 12. *Roseville Press-Tribune*, February 28, 1934, 1.
 13. *Roseville Press-Tribune*, July 28, 1948, 1.
 14. *Roseville Press-Tribune*, August 6, 1948, 4 and August 27, 1948, 6.
 15. *Sacramento Bee*, July 12, 1948, 1.
 16. *Roseville Press-Tribune*, August 4, 1948, 6.
 17. *Santa Rosa Press-Democrat*, July 30, 1948, 10.
 18. *Santa Rosa Press-Democrat*, August 5, 1948, 6.
 19. *Roseville Press-Tribune*, August 4, 1948, 6. This Vincent DiMaggio's middle name was Salvatore, while the more famous Vince DiMaggio had the middle name Paul.
 20. *Bakersfield Californian*, April 9, 1948, 18; Piches, along with another local star, Leo Clark, was originally signed by Governor for Bakersfield and spent spring training there. (*Roseville Press-Tribune*, November 12, 1947, 6; *Bakersfield Californian*, February 14, 1948, 11.)
 21. *Roseville Press-Tribune*, August 6, 1948, 4.
 22. *Roseville Press-Tribune*, August 13, 1948, 6. John Piches became a prominent residential developer in Roseville, designed the city's storm drains, established its first savings and loan, and later founded or led nearly every civic committee in Roseville at one time or another. A city park in Roseville is named in his honor.
 23. *Santa Rosa Press Democrat*, August 6, 1948, 6; *Roseville Press-Tribune*, August 11, 1948, 6.
 24. *Fresno Bee*, June 19, 1948, 6; *Santa Rosa Press Democrat*, June 22, 1948, 8. Santa Rosa shortstop Vic Solari went five for five. Two nights later, LaThorpe entered in relief in the ninth inning and struck out the side, giving him twenty strikeouts in an eight-inning stretch against Roseville.
 25. *Yuba City Independent-Herald*, May 6, 1948, 7. Hamilt struck out 11.
 26. *Santa Rosa Press Democrat*, August 7, 1948, 6.
 27. *Roseville Press-Tribune*, August 11, 1948, 6.
 28. *San Francisco Examiner*, March 1, 1948, 22.
 29. *Roseville Press-Tribune*, August 13, 1948, 6.
 30. *Idaho Post Register*, April 26, 1950, 13.
 31. *Roseville Press-Tribune*, August 11, 1948, 6.
 32. *Roseville Press-Tribune*, September 15, 1948, 6.
 33. *Roseville Press-Tribune*, August 25, 1948, 6.
 34. *Roseville Press-Tribune*, August 13, 1948, 6.
 35. *Roseville Press-Tribune*, August 18, 1948, 6.
 36. *Roseville Press-Tribune*, August 18, 1948, 6. The game was ultimately played in Roseville.
 37. *Roseville Press-Tribune*, August 27, 1948, 6.
 38. *Medford Mail Tribune*, August 25, 1948, 6.
 39. Minus the missing box scores, Pittsburg/Roseville's official record is listed as 38–71. (*Sporting News Official Baseball Guide, 1949*, 408.)
 40. *The Sporting News*, November 10, 1948, 13.
 41. *Roseville Press-Tribune*, September 15, 1948, 6.
 42. *Sporting News Official Baseball Guide, 1949*, 408.
 43. *Roseville Press-Tribune*, August 18, 1948, 6. In the eleven missing home games in which he appeared, Piches collected eleven hits in forty at bats with two doubles, a triple, a home run and three stolen bases.
 44. *Roseville Press-Tribune*, October 20, 1948, 1.
 45. *Santa Rosa Press Democrat*, January 2, 1949, 14; *Roseville Press-Tribune*, February 23, 1949, 6.
 46. *Santa Rosa Press Democrat*, February 19, 1949, 1.
 47. *Santa Rosa Press Democrat*, August 4, 1949, 1. Santa Rosa folded on August 4 with a record of 43–49, four days after Vallejo went out of business.
 48. *Eugene Leader*, May 11, 1950, 10C, 11C.
 49. *Sacramento Bee*, October 22, 1986, B2.
 50. *Idaho Post Register*, March 21, 1950, 13.
 51. *San Francisco Examiner*, July 3, 1951, 24. Sal's brother Louis also played for the Bartenders over the years.
 52. *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, April 3, 1951, 17.
 53. Correspondence with Nina Fucile, June 27, 2020.
 54. *San Francisco Examiner*, August 11, 1954, 35.
 55. *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 26, 2003, A20.
 56. *Santa Rosa Press Democrat*, February 27, 1949, 1; *Roseville Press-Tribune*, December 21, 1949, 5.
 57. Interview with Patti Kostakis, August 22, 2020.
 58. *Roseville Press-Tribune*, January 24, 1999, A5.

The 1948 Duluth Dukes Bus Crash

Joel Rippel

In 1948, the St. Louis Cardinals farm system was a model for other big-league teams. When one of the Cardinals' 21 farm teams was struck by tragedy in July 1948, organized baseball rallied around the organization. On July 24, 1948, a bus carrying the Duluth Dukes, a Cardinals' affiliate in the Class C Northern League, was involved in a deadly crash. Five members of the team—manager George Treadwell and four players—were killed and 13 injured in the crash.

The crash—the second involving a minor-league team in two years—stunned minor-league baseball and the communities of Duluth, Minnesota, and St. Louis. Two of the fatalities had ties to Duluth while two of the fatalities and two injured survivors had connections to St. Louis. *The Sporting News* described the crash as “...next to the worst tragedy in the history of the game.”¹

THE CRASH

On the morning of July 24, following a Friday night doubleheader in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, the Dukes' 18-passenger bus, driven by Treadwell, left Eau Claire on the approximate 150-mile trip to St. Cloud, Minnesota, for a night game against the Rox.

Around midday, the bus was traveling westbound just north of St. Paul on Highway 36 between Dale Street and Western Avenue. A truck loaded with dry ice was eastbound. Witnesses told the Associated Press that the truck hit a rough spot in the road, bounced out of control, and crossed the center line to collide head-on with bus, which was smashed onto its side and went into the ditch. Both the truck and bus burst into flames from ruptured gas tanks.²

Witnesses working in a field next to the highway and passing motorists pulled all but three of the players from the bus.

All five of the fatalities included close ties to either Duluth or St. Louis: Treadwell, who lived in Duluth's neighboring city of Superior, Wisconsin; Gerald Peterson, who lived in the Duluth suburb of Proctor; Don Schuchman and Gil Krirdla (who played under the name of Gil Tribble), both of St. Louis, and the driver of

the truck, James Grealish, of St. Paul. Dukes infielder Steve Lazar, of Olyphant, Pennsylvania, died two days later.

The injured were taken to two St. Paul hospitals—Ancker Hospital and Bethesda Hospital. Among the survivors were Joe Becker of St. Louis, future major league manager Mel McGaha, and Elmer Schoendienst, from Germantown, Missouri—the brother of St. Louis Cardinals second baseman (and future manager) Red Schoendienst. It was Elmer Schoendienst who pulled critically injured Don Vanderwier from the burning bus.

SUPPORT

In the wake of the tragedy, *The Sporting News* quoted Duluth Dukes owner Frank Wade: “It is best that we go on.”³

“I can't tell you what a shock this accident is to my father and myself,” Dick Wade told the *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*. “They were the finest bunch of kids—ranged in ages from 19 to 25—I have seen in baseball. We hope to rebuild our team immediately so that we can finish the schedule. We already have had offers from all Northern League teams. The St. Louis Cardinals have promised to get replacements here immediately.”⁴

Offers of assistance poured in from the other seven Northern League clubs and the Cardinals. George Sisler, Jr., assistant to the president of the Cardinals, was sent to St. Paul, “to see the boys get the best possible medical treatment.”⁵

Within four days, Sisler and Joe Mathes, the Cardinals farm director, and the Northern League had a plan for the team to resume its schedule. The seven Northern League teams loaned a dozen players to Duluth and the Cardinals sent nine players. The Minneapolis Millers of the Triple-A American Association also loaned a player. Ted Madjeski, who was catching for Houston in the Texas League and had served as the interim player/manager of Fort Lauderdale of the Class C Florida International League earlier in the season, was named manager.

Minor-league teams around the country played benefit games to raise money for the injured players



George Sisler, Jr. was dispatched from the Cardinals to convey condolences.

and the families of the players who died in the accident. By September 1948, contributions from around the country to the families of those involved in the crash reached \$64,090 (\$709,166 in 2022 dollars).

JOINING THE DUKES

One of the Cardinal farmhands assigned to Duluth was 20-year old Lou Branca. “I had just signed with the Cardinals,” said Branca, who had spent two years in the Navy after graduating from South St. Paul High School. “I was playing amateur baseball for South St. Paul and threw a no-hitter against Cannon Falls.

“The next day, the Cardinals, New York Giants, and Brooklyn Dodgers all called. I talked to all three teams and the Cardinals sounded the best. After I signed, I had a train ticket for Johnson City, Tennessee (home of the Cardinals farm team in the Class D Appalachian League). I got a call from the Cardinals and they said, ‘Hold on. Go to Duluth.’ When I got to Duluth, we worked out. Nobody knew anybody. Everyone was still in shock. I roomed with a kid (Harley Beavers) from St. Louis.”

On July 31, one week after the crash, the Dukes resumed play. They lost to their neighbor, the Superior (Wisconsin) Blues, 5–3. The next night, the teams played again in Superior, with the Dukes scoring three runs in the ninth inning to rally for a 6–5 victory.

Proceeds from the two games contributed \$10,000 to a fund to benefit the crash victims and their families.

“That first game in Superior was something,” said Branca. “I’ll never forget it. The stands were completely full.”

After that game, the Dukes embarked on a road trip.

“When we took our first road trip we went through St. Paul [en route to Sioux Falls, South Dakota],” said Branca. “We stopped at Ancker Hospital and visited the guys.”

The Dukes, who were 40–34 before the crash, went 13–27 over the rest of the season. Despite falling out of contention for a playoff spot, the Dukes led the Northern League in attendance (97,527).

AFTERMATH

Only one player under contract to the Dukes was not injured in the crash. Sam Hunter, who had been signed by the team the week before accident, intended to join the team in Eau Claire for the trip to St. Cloud. But by the time Hunter’s train from Chicago arrived in Eau Claire, the Dukes had already departed.

The Ramsey County Attorney’s office announced a week after the crash that no criminal action would be brought as a result of the crash. Assistant Ramsey County Attorney Robert Flynn said the county would meet with the Minnesota Highway Department, “to correlate conflicting reports as to the cause of the accident.”⁶ The initial investigation of the Dukes crash, conducted by the state highway department, indicated “the condition of the road was not a factor. A wavy or ‘washboard section,’ blamed by some observers, was 100 feet from the point of impact.”⁷

According to a news report, “The highway department contends that the truck’s steering apparatus may have been faulty. Investigation of the wreckage shows the apparatus was worn, according to a highway official.”⁸

Branca played for the Dukes again in 1949, but shoulder problems forced him to retire after the season. He went on to become a high school baseball coach, including 20 years as the head coach at Rochester (Minnesota) John Marshall High School. He was elected to the Minnesota High School Baseball Coaches Association Hall of Fame in 2007.

Dukes owner Frank Wade, who resurrected the Northern League name through his involvement in a new league in 1933—there was no Northern League 1918–32—sold the Dukes in 1951. He died in January of 1953 at the age of 80. An Associated Press story said, “Wade’s health began to fail after the accident.”⁹

A relative of Wade’s told a newspaper columnist, “He never was the same after that highway accident in 1948.”¹⁰

McGaha, who had been a three-sport letterman at the University of Arkansas, recovered from his injuries to resume his career in 1949. In 1954, he began his managing career at the age of 27 as the player-manager of Shreveport of the Class AA Texas League. He stopped playing in 1958 and managed two more seasons in the minors before becoming the Cleveland Indians manager in 1962. He also managed the Kansas City Athletics in

YOU'LL FIND . . .
 RADIO LOG—Page 4, Women's
 Edition
 ENTERTAINMENT—Page 16, General
 News Section
 MINNESOTA PULL—Page 11,
 General News Section
 BUSINESS—Upper Midwest
 Edition

Minneapolis Sunday Tribune

MINNESOTA: Clevel., Ahrens.
 WISCONSIN: Warren, Ish.
 IOWA: Clevel., Warren.
 NORTH DAKOTA: Clevel.,
 SOUTH DAKOTA: Ahrens.
 THE DUNDIE: Ahrens.

MINNEAPOLIS, MINN., SUNDAY, JULY 25, 1948
 Price 15 Cents

5 DIE, 14 HURT IN BUS-TRUCK CRASH

Aqua Parade Zip, Girls, Noise Step Up City's Pulse
 By IRAN JAMES
 Minneapolis Times Staff Writer

The glitter and sparkle of eight past Minneapolis Aquatennial parades faded Saturday in the face of the longest, brightest, gayest, noisiest parade of them all.

Yesterday's spectacle—the kind of a show that had a few ruffled Minnesotans watching on sidewalks at 11 a.m. for the parade due to start at 2 p.m.—today, July 24, shined clear and bright in white, but yesterday nobody went home early. Thousands and thousands of spectators still pressed on

AQUA PICTURES
 Pages One and Two, Upper Midwest Section

THE WEATHER
 WEATHER MAP, Page 16, Upper Midwest Edition.

FOUR DULUTH BALLPLAYERS AMONG DEAD
 MINNESOTA LEADER in Continuation. Touchdown Fingers Suggest No Doubt—Page One, Fourth Edition.

A rough spot in the road was blamed Saturday night for the head-on bus-truck collision that killed the truck driver, four members of the Duluth baseball team and injured 14 other players.

The accident occurred shortly before noon on highway 26, a mile north of St. Paul, between Third street and Western avenue.

Witnesses in a car following the truck said the truck hit a rough spot in the road, bounced out of control and spread across the lane the bus. The bus burst into flames.

UNDERSIDE OF BUS IN BACKGROUND, CRUMBED TRUCK, CAR AT RIGHT*
 Road on impact hurled both vehicles in same direction



The crash dominated the front page of the *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*.

1964 and 1965. He retired from baseball after the 1970 season. After baseball he worked as director of Parks and Recreation in Shreveport and Bossier City, Louisiana. He died in 2002.

Bernie Gerl, who was pulled out of the burning bus by a passerby, recovered from his injuries to resume his career in 1950. Gerl, who along with teammates Schoendienst and Bob Vogeltanz, was named to the Northern League All-Star team in 1948, then sat out the 1951 season before playing for the Dukes in 1952 and 1953. Gerl died on November 7, 2020, at the age of 94. He was the last living survivor of the crash.

Joe Svetlick was the second-longest survivor of the crash. Svetlick, who was 18 in 1948, returned to the Dukes in 1949. After the 1949 season, he joined the Air Force. He died in 2009 at the age of 80.

Just over two years earlier—on June 24, 1946—a chartered bus carrying the Spokane team of the Class B Western International League had crashed on a mountain pass east of Seattle. Nine players died in the accident. One survivor of the crash was former major-leaguer Ben Geraghty. The injuries Geraghty suffered in the crash may have hastened the end of his playing career. He began his managing career by taking on duties as player-manager in 1946 after the crash. He spent the following season with Spokane and then finished his playing career in 1948 with the Meridian Peps of the Southeastern League. He eventually managed Jacksonville in the Class A South Atlantic League. In 1953, Jacksonville—with Henry Aaron—won the league's regular-season title with a 93-44 record before losing to Columbia in the league's playoff finals.

After the Dukes accident, one national sports writer wrote that minor league baseball teams needed to consider hiring full-time drivers. "It is about time...that all minor league teams using buses be forced to hire full-time drivers instead of using players as chauffeurs. On many minor-league teams expenses are held down by getting players with drivers licenses to pilot the buses. ...[This] is an invitation to accident. That's why there should be a full-time chauffeur."¹¹ ■

Sources

In addition to the sources cited in the Notes, the author conducted a phone interview with Lou Branca in January 2022, and also consulted Baseball-Reference.com, Newspapers.com, and Retrosheet.org.

Notes

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2. Associated Press, "5 Duluth Ball Players Perish in Crash," *St. Cloud Times*, July 24, 1948: 1.
3. Peterson.
4. Frank Diamond, "Duluth Fans Grief Stricken over Tragedy," *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, July 25, 1948: 32.
5. Associated Press, "Duluth Crash Toll at 5; Many Offer Aid," *Winona (Minnesota) Daily News*, July 26, 1948: 13.
6. "State to Take No Court Action in Truck-Bus Crash," *Minneapolis Star*, July 30, 1948: 10.
7. Associated Press, "Duluth Dukes Bus Crash is Under Inquiry," *Winona (Minnesota) Daily News*, July 27, 1948: 1.
8. Ibid.
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11. Oscar Fraley, "Full time Drivers urged for Baseball," *St. Louis Star and Times*, July 27, 1948: 21.

Movies, Mentors, and the Minor Leagues

David Krell

The mentor-mentee relationship is a bedrock of Hollywood storytelling: Dr. David Zorba and Dr. Ben Casey. Obi-Wan Kenobi and Luke Skywalker. Mr. Miyagi and Daniel LaRusso. Mickey Goldmill and Rocky Balboa. Three movies and one TV-movie set in baseball's minor leagues exemplify the dynamic.

LONG GONE—STUD CANTRELL AND JAMIE DON WEEKS

"I never made it, kid. But I would've. Goddammit, I would've."

So says the Tampico Stogies' player-manager Cecil "Stud" Cantrell in the 1987 HBO TV-movie *Long Gone*, set in the Alabama-Florida League during the 1957 season.¹ Cantrell's revelation of mourning and confidence to milk-drinking, church-going rookie Jamie Don Weeks punctuates his tale about competing with Stan Musial for the left fielder position on the St. Louis Cardinals roster. After four years of success in the minor leagues, Stud anticipated challenging Musial upon reaching the majors. "He had a prettier swing than me," explained Stud. "But I hit the ball harder. And batted both ways."

But America's entry into World War II led to Stud joining the Marines, getting wounded at Guadalcanal, and failing to be at the physical peak required to compete in the major leagues. A Class-D league team in Tampico, Florida, will apparently be his last stop in his baseball career, and he takes young Jamie under his wing.

Stud's mentoring of Jamie goes beyond the foul lines. He teaches Jamie that women are useful only for their service to men: women should satiate their cravings, bind their wounds, and support their dreams. Enter Dixie Lee Boxx, a blonde bombshell and beauty queen—Miss Strawberry Blossom—who falls for Stud but has equal amounts of affection and grit. Jamie begins to date Esther Wrenn, a religious sort; their encounters end in the backseat of a car.²

The depth of Stud's influence on Jamie is visible. At the local diner where the team congregates for breakfast, Stud is recounting the recent exploits of the Tampico nine when Jamie—to Stud's surprise—enters

as a carbon copy of his idol in clothing, swagger, and a fast-talking manner. But it goes further than looking and sounding like Stud. When Jamie finds out that Esther is pregnant, he takes a page out of the Stud Cantrell Playbook and ignores her feelings. She runs away to have the baby at an aunt's in Mobile so no one in Tampico will know the truth.

It's not the only moral dilemma. Stud also gets bribed. A plum job awaits him—managing the Dothan Cardinals next season—if he sits out the season-ending Dothan-Tampico game in order to hand the pennant to his future employer. Joe Louis Brown (a Black player whom Stud labels José Brown from Venezuela to try to avoid the violence and prejudice against Blacks in the Deep South) is seduced by the promise of wealth; Dothan's ball club gives him a Cadillac.

When Dixie Lee reveals the plot to Jamie, feelings of betrayal, anger, and alienation erupt. He confronts Stud, to no avail. In the locker room before the game, Jamie steps into the leadership void to decide the



Stud Cantrell (William Petersen) and Dixie Lee Boxx (Virginia Madsen) from *Long Gone*.

HBO PICTURES

lineup, covering for the backstabbing skipper by saying that Stud is “sick as a dog.” Brown is also nowhere to be found, but Jamie reminds his teammates that they can beat Dothan without their star players, emphasizing that they won games when Stud and Joe went oh-for-four.

In the middle of the game, however, the duo shrug off their craven decision and appear at Henley Field. Stud, of course, comes to bat in the bottom of the ninth, with the game tied and the bases loaded. Stud is 2-for-68 against the pitcher, Dusty Hoolihan. He purposely taunts Hoolihan with disgusting comments about Dusty’s sister. It’s a last resort, but it works. Stud gets beamed in the head—and the game-winning RBI.

But there’s more than a “W” for the veteran and his underling—they have undergone a catharsis.

Stud asks Dixie to marry him; Jamie heads to Mobile to find Esther; and their double wedding takes place on the baseball diamond. It’s a logical site given the importance of the Stogies to Stud’s and Jamie’s character arcs, each laced with immaturity at the beginning and concluding with self-realization.

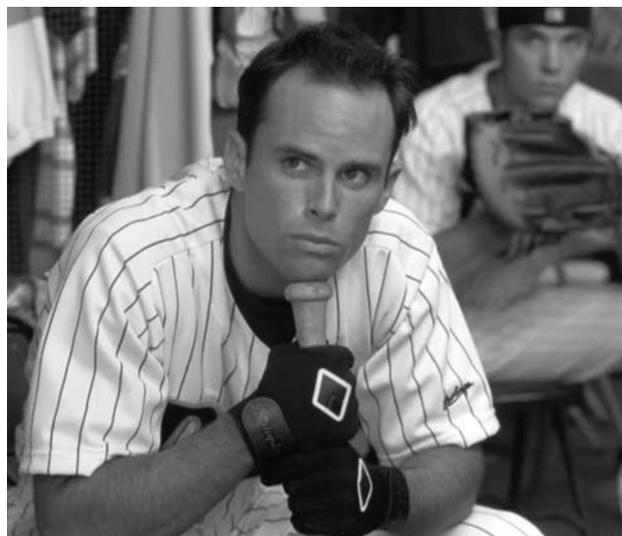
William Petersen plays Stud. “He’s found himself a nice, safe place,” explains the actor, who later starred in the long-running CBS show *CSI*. “He’s found a way to cope without the heartbreak, the feeling of failure. Why I think he’s a great character is that he doesn’t dwell on it, but he doesn’t want to share it and be vulnerable. Dixie sees that in him and allows him to become a success. I think the movie’s very much about a man growing up.”³

MAJOR LEAGUE: BACK TO THE MINORS—GUS CANTRELL AND DOWNTOWN ANDERSON

Major League: Back to the Minors begins with Gus Cantrell—no relation to Stud—an aging pitcher trying to eke out a win for the Fort Myers Miracle. After the game, his old friend Roger Dorn approaches him with a challenging task. Dorn owns the Minnesota Twins and needs a seasoned pro to manage the Buzz, a Triple-A team in the Twins farm system.

There’s one standout player on the ballclub in this 1998 film, the third in the *Major League* franchise. Billy “Downtown” Anderson can crush the ball, and his ego is just as powerful as his swing. Downtown believes that being a pull hitter is sufficient, but Gus knows better. He watches a Buzz game from the stands while mulling over the offer.

Downtown has a splendid afternoon. When they meet, Downtown teases that he had triples of Gus’s rookie card and traded them for a player to be named later. It stings. Gus takes the Buzz job and warns him



MORGAN CREEK

Walton Goggins plays Billy “Downtown” Anderson in *Major League: Back to the Minors*.

that major league pitchers will quickly learn to pitch around his strength. The rookie fares none too well upon his call-up—his struggles are noted on a Twins broadcast as going 3-for-15 before he’s sent back to the Buzz.

Humbled, he apologizes to Gus for his attitude and admits that the manager’s forecast came true. Gus tutors Downtown on batting strategy and hitting mechanics to maximize taking the ball to the opposite field. The proof that Downtown has become a well-rounded threat is shown when he wins an exhibition game against the Twins with a two-run homer.

As with *Long Gone*, the rookie is not the only one to learn something about himself in *Major League: Back to the Minors*. Although when the Buzz beat the Twins, Gus also won a bet with Twins manager Leonard Huff, Gus refuses to accept his bounty—Huff’s job—because he realizes that his happiness in baseball is helping younger players develop their skills.

“He was really a combination of coaches I had growing up and the kind of a coach that you always would like to have and I create that ideal coach,” said Scott Bakula, about playing the role of Gus.⁴

PASTIME—ROY DEAN BREAM AND TYRONE DEBRAY

Pastime revolves around Roy Dean Bream, a 41-year-old pitcher for the Tri-City Steamers. (The California cities of Clinton, York, and Vidalia are the setting for this 1957 period piece.) Played by William Russ—who had a breakout role as fictional government operative Roger LoCoco on a 1988 story arc in *Wiseguy* on CBS—Bream has an exuberance that is not always shared by his teammates. “On a spiritual level he is very advanced,” explained Russ. “He has a nice karmic code.



Roy Dean Bream (William Russ) tutors Tyrone Debray (Glenn Plummer) about pitching in *Pastime*.

It's like a certain kind of guru; he understood life through baseball."⁵

Tyrone Debray is the shy rookie whom Roy Dean takes under his wing. Among the lessons imparted: how to throw the curveball nicknamed "Bream Dream" and the importance of looking a man in the eye while talking. Roy Dean's badge of baseball honor is a cup of coffee with the Chicago Cubs—a single appearance resulting in a Stan Musial grand slam. His other revelation: he is only six games behind third place for most lifetime pitching appearances in baseball; Cy Young and Walter Johnson occupy the first two slots.

After learning at a team party that he will soon be released, Roy Dean goes to Tri-City Stadium to exorcise his sadness. He suits up and takes out his frustration by throwing at a tarp hung on the backstop fence with a strike zone painted on it. Emotional and physical pain soon give way to elation.

Tyrone searches for Roy Dean and finds him prone on the mound—dead. He had high blood pressure, which Tyrone learns when he finds medication in Roy Dean's home. Except for Tyrone and Steamers manager Clyde Bigby, nobody from the team attends the funeral because there's a game at the same time. Tyrone and his skipper arrive late to the ballpark after paying their respects.

Conflict arises, but it has nothing to do with tardiness. Steamers hurler Randy Keever has been a thorn in Tyrone's side, presumably because the rookie is Black. Clyde sends Tyrone to relieve Randy in the second inning of a 4-4 game; Randy mocks the rookie and says with sarcasm that he should win the game for Roy Dean. No longer shy and withdrawn, Tyrone finds his strength and looks Randy in the eye just like his tutor taught him. Then, they fight; Tyrone dominates. Clyde prevents the players from interfering until the umpire tells him to break it up, then fires Keever.

When Tyrone faces his first batter, he grips the ball the way Roy Dean taught him. The camera pans to a clear, blue sky and slowly drops to reveal Comiskey Park and Tyrone pitching for the White Sox with a stare indicating a serious competitor. He has grown into a major leaguer thanks to his mentor.

BULL DURHAM—CRASH DAVIS AND NUKE LALOOSH

Ebby Calvin "Nuke" LaLoosh has a thunderbolt for a right arm. So says perennial minor-league catcher Crash Davis, who earns admiration from fellow members of the Class-A Durham Bulls upon revealing that he once spent three weeks in the major leagues. "Twenty-one greatest days of my life," says the veteran in the 1988 movie *Bull Durham*.

Crash gets a mandate from the Bulls' unnamed parent club—which has bought Crash's Triple-A contract—to tutor Nuke, who has tremendous speed but lacks control. In his professional debut, Nuke racks up 18 walks and 18 strikeouts—both league records. Endurance is evident; Nuke's last five pitches of the game were faster than his first five. It's a battle between the seasoned veteran and the cocky newcomer.

However, there's another mentor for the fireballer. Annie Savoy, a youthful woman belying her age (seemingly around 40), has an annual tradition: take a younger player under her wing and instruct him on the finer points of romance and lovemaking *and* improving his baseball skills. "There's never been a ballplayer slept with me that didn't have the best year of his career," declares Annie in a voiceover at the beginning of the film.⁶ The dual nature of Nuke's two mentors in the film emphasizes the way in which all of the baseball-playing lessons serve as analogies for the personal growth experienced by the characters.

Nuke's brashness fades when he realizes Crash's value during a winning streak. Once dismissive, he grows eager for lessons. But Crash doesn't just give pitching tips. He underscores the importance of being modest and vague during interviews because he sees that Nuke has terrific potential, but a brazen persona can be just as destructive as a fastball that lacks control. Self-discipline is the key to success. Crash schools Nuke on the clichés; we hear Nuke repeat them to a reporter after he gets promoted at the end of the movie.

But while the rookie's growth is predestined, what about his mentors? Crash has a noteworthy achievement that he wishes not to highlight—career minor-league home-run record. He sees it as proof he never had a sustained career in the show and doesn't wish to see it highlighted in the press.

Indeed, the inability to reach the "promised land"



Tim Robbins as “Nuke” LaLoosh and Kevin Costner as “Crash” Davis in *Bull Durham*.

is a solemn undercurrent to *Bull Durham*. Thousands of minor leaguers never cross the threshold to the majors; it’s a paradigm exemplifying Henry David Thoreau’s observation that quiet desperation is the lot of most men. During the film’s 30th anniversary, Costner said that Mickey Mantle called the story “sad” when the Hall of Famer appeared on a talk show coinciding with the original release.⁷ But Crash neither devalues his station nor degrades himself. “What’s important to my character is that it wasn’t beneath him to play down there in Durham,” explained Costner.⁸

After Nuke’s promotion, the parent club releases Crash. Annie and he had a growing mutual attraction throughout the film; they consummate their carnal feelings in a passionate night. Crash sneaks out in the morning, heading for a new opportunity with the Asheville Tourists, where he breaks the home-run record.

To Annie’s surprise, though, Crash returns with a declaration. He’s quitting playing and thinking about being a manager. She responds that she’s quitting young men. They’re both ready to move on to the next stage of their lives—not the major leagues, but something better—and they dance together in Annie’s living room as the credits roll.

Ron Shelton wrote and directed *Bull Durham*. A former minor leaguer, he started in the Appalachian League and reached Triple-A before starting a screenwriting career. “Crash Davis loves something more than it loves him back,” said Shelton in 2020. “It happens to be a game and he’s really good at it. He’s just not in the right place at the right time. And everybody loves something, a job, a woman, a man, something, more than it loves them back. And that’s why I think the movie’s hung around.”⁹

CONCLUSION

The somewhat claustrophobic nature of the minor leagues adds weight to the character portrayals in these films. Players are often stuck, never getting beyond the confines of smaller cities. We never know if Jamie Don Weeks can go past Tampico for greater glory. It’s likely that Downtown Anderson does after additional tutoring from Gus. Nuke LaLoosh and Tyrone Debray make it to the Show. But their emotional journeys are equally strong. The minor leagues make the perfect milieu to explore this type of character development, and an apt metaphor for it.

The Hollywood trope of mentor-mentee plays out well against the backdrop of the minor leagues in all of the films discussed here. The minor leagues as a setting already provide a backdrop rich with metaphors about advancement or upward mobility in life (or lack thereof), coaching and instruction, and the juxtaposition of those graced with talent and others surviving on pure grit. Professional baseball is a largely masculine milieu, and the small-town locales and period-piece settings create ample opportunities for the filmmakers to comment on topics ranging from love and women to race relations and fairness: all good topics for real-life mentors, not just Hollywood ones. ■

Notes

1. Based on the 1979 novel by Paul Hemphill. A montage of the team’s epic winning streak shows a sign saying that Tampico is the home of La Madera Cigars, logically the inspiration for the team’s name. Window signs in Buchman Department Store spell the name without the apostrophe. The team is owned by the store’s owners, Hale Buchman and Hale Buchman, Jr. played by Henry Gibson of NBC’s iconic sketch comedy show *Rowan & Martin’s Laugh-In* (1967–73) and Teller of the magician duo Penn & Teller. A signature of their act is Teller’s silence. *Long Gone* is a rare speaking role for him.
2. Virginia Madsen plays Dixie and Katy Boyer plays Esther.
3. Jerry Buck, “Baseball arrives on HBO with ‘Long Gone,’” Associated Press, *Desert Sun* (Palm Springs, CA), May 23, 1987: F6.
4. Scott Bakula, interview with Bobbie Wygant, 1998 (date unknown), The Bobbie Wygant Archive, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCTFiazn2Ms> (last accessed January 21, 2022). Walton Goggins plays Downtown. Corbin Bernsen reprises his role of Roger Dorn from the first two movies in the *Major League* franchise.
5. Melina Gerosa, “Pastime”’s William Russ,” *Entertainment Weekly*, <https://ew.com/article/1991/09/06/pastimes-william-russ> (last accessed January 28, 2022).
6. Susan Sarandon and Tim Robbins play the Annie-Nuke coupling. It began a real-life romance that lasted until 2009, when they separated. Sarandon and Robbins have two kids together.
7. *Jimmy Kimmel Live!*, Jackhole Industries, Aired on ABC, June 12, 2018.
8. Bob Strauss, “Costner’s game plan on target,” *San Francisco Examiner*, June 15, 1988: B-1.
9. Momentum, *Bauer Bytes*, Season 2, Episode 9, “The Origin of Bull Durham According to Director Ron Shelton,” posted October 7, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P6cDSm0XzFw> (last accessed January 28, 2022).

My Kingdom for a Pony

The Era of “Pony Nights” In Reading (PA) Baseball

Brian C. Engelhardt

Since the 1967 season Reading, Pennsylvania, has been the home of the AA minor league affiliate of the Philadelphia Phillies.¹ Now entering its 55th year, this affiliation between the major league Phillies and the “Reading Phillies” or “R-Phils” (changed a few years ago to the “Reading Fightin’ Phils,” but now commonly referred to as either one) has the distinction of being one of the two longest affiliations between a major league team and a minor league affiliate.² Generations of Reading fans have grown up with summers at the R-Phils being a vital component of the local community. The franchise has enjoyed immense success at the gate—finishing either first or second in league attendance 34 times over that time, annual attendance having exceeded 400,000 20 times and not having gone below 200,000 since 1989.³

It wasn’t always that way.

Between 1883 and 1941 Reading was the home of several minor league teams, most of which played there for only a few years. Some of the teams folded on their own, often mid-season, while others were casualties of their entire league folding—also frequently mid-season. The teams which managed to survive economically often departed for greener pastures in some other city. The longest tenure was that of the Reading franchise in the International League that limped through 13.5 seasons and 4 names before leaving for Albany, New York, in 1932. In mid-season. On top of this revolving door of teams, the ballpark in which most of these teams played was demolished in 1943.⁴

IT WAS BUILT AND THEY CAME

Despite this dismal history and with no team in residence, in 1951 the city of Reading built a stadium. The dilemma of what to do with a ballpark but no team was resolved when, prior to the 1952 season, Cleveland moved its team in the then Class A Eastern League to Reading from Wilkes-Barre.⁵ Things began well: in their first seven years, the Reading Indians won two pennants and never finished out of the first division. The teams over that period featured several future major league stars including Rocky Colavito,

Herb Score, Jim “Mudcat” Grant, and Roger Maris.⁶ Their success on the field was matched at the gate, with Reading’s attendance leading the Eastern League in three of those seasons, and being second-best twice. Two years the gate topped 100,000, and only dropped below 95,000 twice.⁷

But things changed.

THE COMING OF PONY NIGHT

From 1958 through 1960, annual attendance for the Reading Indians ranged between 70,772 and 81,311—far below the early numbers. In 1961 the team finished in last place with a dismal attendance of 53,283, second-worst in the league.⁸ Despite its early success, the Reading franchise had fallen prey to the disease at the turnstile that afflicted most minor league teams 1952–62, which the *Encyclopedia of Minor League Baseball* calls “The Second Decline.”⁹ Among the contributing factors to “The Second Decline” were the growth of the popularity of television, the poor condition of most minor league ballparks, the growth of popularity of other sports, and the failure of major league teams to adequately fund minor league operations. The net result was that over that decade, the number of minor leagues shrank from 43 to 20, with dozens of teams vanishing along with the leagues.¹⁰

Like other minor league teams, Reading offered promotions to generate crowds, often sponsored by local businesses or organizations. Among the memorable ones from the era:

- Traffic Club Night¹¹
- Industry Night¹²
- Food Fair Night¹³ (sponsored by a local grocery chain)
- Keystone Stores Night¹⁴ (sponsored by another local grocery chain)
- Big Indian Little Indian Night¹⁵ (where children accompanied by their parents got in for half price)
- Booster Night¹⁶
- Pee Wee Booster Night¹⁷

Although these nights did draw bigger-than-usual crowds, the overall attendance continued to wane. Annual visits for exhibition games by the parent Cleveland Indians team stopped when the gate declined from a robust 6,390 in 1952—the top crowd that year¹⁸—to a comparatively paltry 3,734 in 1955.¹⁹ Both Industry Night (3,934²⁰) and Big Fellow Little Fellow Night (6,460²¹) outdrew them. And this was the year after Cleveland won the pennant with a 111–43 record and a record-setting .721 winning average!²²

The “Kids Night” promotion of August 22, 1960, featured prizes to be awarded to holders of winning tickets, including the main prize of a Shetland pony. The “Kids Night” crowd of 5,449 would be the top gate of the year.²³ This number was well above the opening night crowd (3,099²⁴) or even Booster Night (4,385²⁵). Without being designated as such, “Pony Night” had come to Reading.

Termed by one newspaper as “Baseball’s top promotion,” through the 1960s and 1970s, “Pony Nights” were held at minor league ballparks, across the country, large and small.²⁶ Pony Nights occurred in just about every minor league ballpark, from Modesto, California, where the Modesto Reds drew a crowd of about 1,000 against the San Jose Bees in a California League game, to Pittsfield, Massachusetts, where Pony Night promotion by the Pittsfield-Berkshire Red Sox of the Eastern League against the York White Roses drew 8,233 fans, the largest crowd in the history of baseball in Pittsfield, to Buffalo, New York where 18,655 jammed into War Memorial Stadium for an August 30 game between the Bisons and the Rochester Red Wings—double the size of the Pony Night promotion the year before.^{27,28,29} At the major league level, Charles O. Finley even held a Pony Night to fight sagging attendance for the Kansas City A’s.³⁰

The formula for a Pony Night promotion was simple. A lucky fan with a winning ticket would—obviously—win a pony. Other prizes such as bicycles and cameras were also generally available. (Parents were usually rooting for their child to win the latter prizes. More on that below.) The business logistics underlying the surface of Pony Night varied, but generally did not have the complexity of a leveraged buyout. John W. Smith, the *Reading Eagle* beat writer for the greater part of the time that such nights were part of the Reading baseball scene, explained that regardless of whether the team was the Indians, Red Sox, or Phillies, it would sell three tickets for each dollar paid by local businesses, which would in turn distribute the tickets to their customers (and their customers’ hopeful youngsters) all resulting in the magic



LITTLE DEBBIE SHERLIN SITS ATOP SHETLAND PONY WHICH SHE WON With Father C. D. Sherlin, Little Brother At Paterson’s Pony Night

AUTHORS COLLECTION

of Pony Night.³¹ This seemed to be the most popular formula employed by teams that disclosed the method of financing the promotion, although some teams simply directly sold the lucky tickets for children at discounted prices in advance.³²

Notably, Pony Nights were not just restricted to baseball parks. They were regular features of the Wilkes-Barre Barons of the Eastern Pennsylvania Basketball League, and the Hull-Ottawa Canadians of the Eastern Professional Hockey League.^{33,34} Even the attendance-starved Philadelphia Ramblers of the Eastern Hockey League held a Pony Night in 1961 (which drew a season-high crowd of 3,049 that evening).³⁵

After holding the Pony Night in 1960 without labeling it as such, the management of the Reading Indians got it right the following season and advertised a “Pony Night” on August 27, 1961, which drew a season-high crowd of 4,159.³⁶ It was the only gate to exceed 3,000 that season, with only one other night in which crowd exceeded 2,000.³⁷ Losses arising from the poor attendance, juxtaposed with a dispute with the city of Reading over a stadium use fee as well as a tax on ticket sales, resulted in the Cleveland Indians announcing in December that the team was moving to Charleston, West Virginia.³⁸ Not even two Pony Nights were able to stop Reading from being without a team for the 1962 season.

Professional baseball—as well as Pony Night—was back when Joe Buzas, who would be eventually referred to on his memorial plaque at First Energy Stadium in Reading as “The King of Minor League Baseball,” came to town.³⁹ The owner of the York Red Sox of the Eastern League (newly elevated to AA status⁴⁰), he agreed to transfer that team to Reading

for the 1963 season. Reading would be the team's fourth location in four years, as Buzas had moved the team from Allentown to Johnstown, then to York.⁴¹ Buzas was familiar with Pony Nights, having held one in York in 1962 which drew 6,528 fans—more than ten per cent of the 57,173 total attendance the White Roses would draw that year.⁴²

A Pony Night on July 8 in Reading drew a crowd of 5,848, who witnessed the Reading Red Sox get shellacked by the Springfield Giants, 13–2.⁴³ It would be the largest crowd of the season, with the next largest being 1,889.⁴⁴ Although the team finished in last place in the league standings, the fine showing on Pony Night in all likelihood saved the Red Sox from also finishing last in league attendance. Their total attendance figure of 46,541 was only 3,714 greater than that of the York White Roses.

1964 was a more favorable year for the Red Sox. The team featured several future members of the Boston Red Sox “Impossible Dream” team, including Mike Andrews, Reggie Smith, Joe Foy, and Mike Ryan. Reading finished in second place, with attendance increasing to 51,200—third in the league.⁴⁵ A Pony Night held on September 1 drew a crowd of 6,657, representing the largest of the season⁴⁶—slightly larger than the crowd at an exhibition game played in Reading on April 12 between the Boston Red Sox and the Chicago Cubs, which drew 5,780.⁴⁷ Pony Night outdrew a game between two major league teams.

Following the 1964 season, Buzas relocated the team to Pittsfield, Massachusetts, having received an offer for a more favorable financial arrangement.⁴⁸ Happily, Reading would not be without a team for 1965, as Cleveland's experience in Charleston was so miserable that after the 1964 season the team abandoned that location without an alternative site, leading to an agreement reached in January for the Indians to return to Reading.⁴⁹

That is where just about anything happy about the story ends.

The consensus of the local writers at the time was that the 1965 Reading Indians had a roster that was overmatched by the veteran talent of other teams in the AA Eastern League. “Whitey didn't have the horses,” wrote local sportswriter Paul Lucas of Reading manager Whitey Kurowski, in a piece in which Lucas said that both Kurowski and the local fans deserved better than a team composed predominantly of players right out of high school.⁵⁰ The player on the team with the most promising future, catcher Ray Fosse, was only 18 years old and in need of seasoning before facing the pitching at AA. The Indians finished in last

place, 9½ games behind the fifth-place Springfield Giants. Matching the performance of the team on the field, total attendance was also last in the league at 40,594—13,000 fewer than the York White Roses, who had the next worst gate.⁵¹

One of the few bright spots of the 1965 season was—you guessed it—the July 19 Pony Night, which drew 7,943.⁵² This was far more than the next best crowd—2,265 on Dairy Night. Crowds exceeded 1,000 on only two other nights. The gate the night before Pony Night was 166—the smallest of the year. Rocco Santilli, who headed the local group who ran the attendance-starved franchise, said in the immediate wake of the comparatively huge gate, “There should be two Pony Nights.”⁵³ (Just one year before, Joe Buzas, a veteran of such affairs, had declared to a reporter, “One Pony Night a year is enough.”⁵⁴)

After that disastrous season at the turnstile, the Indians left Reading for a second time—this time moving to Pawtucket, Rhode Island.⁵⁵ Between the end of the 1961 season and the end of the 1965 season Reading experienced its local team leaving town three times within a four-year period. It was truly the dark ages in Reading from a baseball standpoint. However, the dark ages ended when, in 1966, the Philadelphia Phillies agreed to transfer its AA team from Macon, Georgia, for the 1967 season. Thus began the relationship between Reading and the Phillies that continues to profit both parties today.

PONY NIGHT IN READING GOES OUT TO PASTURE

Pony Night continued with the new Reading Phillies team, initially drawing the top crowd for the season except on those nights when the parent Phillies would



The happy winner of a 1965 Pony Night on his prize.

appear for an annual exhibition game. Interesting situations arose, such as in 1972 when the first two numbers drawn as winners went unclaimed, with a winning ticket not being claimed until the third number was drawn, with the ultimate winner having a rural address.⁵⁶ As to the holders of the two unclaimed winning tickets, one can only imagine two individual cars full of children each making its way home from the Stadium that night either driven by a parent dealing with the wailing and cries of offspring despairing from being deprived of the pony they won fair and square—or a parent who held in his pocket or her purse a deep secret that would never be revealed.

Pony Night in 1973 was a disappointment, drawing only 3,700 fans when 5,000 were anticipated. By the time the drawing occurred at the end of the evening, most of the crowd had left. Much to the relief of R-Phils General Manager Steve Daly, the holder of the winning ticket was still around to claim the pony and take it away. Daly speculated, “Maybe the pony isn’t as attractive as it used to be.”⁵⁷

The issue of what to do with the pony became a problem on several occasions, not only in Reading but elsewhere. When the Philadelphia Ramblers awarded the winning pony, the winner’s response was, “I don’t want the horse. What can I get for it?” Larry Merchant wrote in the *Philadelphia Daily News* that the winner no doubt had “a 10,000 acre ranch at 25th and Lehigh,” in North Philadelphia.⁵⁸ Aside from a number of winners not wanting to have a horse (nearly all the winners of the pony drawings in Reading had rural addresses), there have been occasional concerns expressed by groups relating to the welfare of the animal. In one instance the Humane Society of Indianapolis raised a public protest.⁵⁹

In 1977, Joe Buzas returned as owner of the Phillies, but discontinued Pony Nights after several years. According to Francis “Ducky” Turner, head of the Reading Stadium Commission at the time, “After a while Joe got tired of having the winners not want the horse, and having to get rid of it after he had bought it. He said they were more trouble than they were worth.”⁶⁰ In 1986 Buzas, who passed away in 2003, sold the franchise to Craig Stein, who brought in Chuck Domino as general manager. Improvements were made to the stadium including the addition of picnic areas, a swimming pool, a beer garden, and a food court. Beyond the attraction of the ballpark being markedly enhanced, marketing practices changed, placing emphasis on marketing to groups. Several years ago Stein sold the majority interest in the franchise to the Phillies, but has retained a minority interest in the franchise. Suffice

it to say, the franchise has developed and flourished—without Pony Nights.⁶¹

When asked about Pony Nights, Domino said they had been discontinued before his time in Reading began, but added, “All I know about Pony Nights is that someone went home with a pony at the end of the game. However, back when I used to hear about them, it was as if they were almost mythical.”⁶² ■

Notes

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2. “Baseballtown History Book.” The other major-minor affiliation of equal longevity is between Detroit and their Lakeland (Florida) affiliate. See also J.J. Cooper, “Happy Together: Longest Active MiLB, MLB Affiliations,” *Baseball America*, May 9, 2019, <https://www.baseballamerica.com/stories/the-longest-active-milb-mlb-affiliations>.
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5. “Baseballtown History Book.”
6. Source: various rosters of the Reading Indians under BaseballReference.com for those seasons, <https://www.baseball-reference.com>.
7. See sources under Note 3.
8. See sources under Note 3.
9. Johnson and Wolff, *The Encyclopedia of Minor League Baseball*, 411.
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11. Paul Lukas, “Indians Treat Seasons Top Crowd to 9–5 Win,” *Reading Eagle*, August 10, 1956, 10.
12. “Nance, Minnick Pitch Against Johnstown Here Tonight,” *Reading Eagle*, August 15, 1955, 12.
13. Joe Much, “Improved Indians Ready for Binghamton,” *Reading Eagle*, June 24, 1955, 18.
14. Joe Much, “Indians in Third Place, Trail Blue Jays by Three Games,” *Reading Eagle*, September 1, 1956, 6.
15. Joe Much, “7,954 Fans See Reading Beat Binghamton,” *Reading Eagle*, June 8, 1957, 6.
16. “Reading Seeks to Even Series with Grays Here,” *Reading Eagle*, August 28, 1959, 16.
17. “5,051 Fans See Reading Lose Doubleheader,” *Reading Eagle*, July 9, 1959, 16.
18. “Indians Take on Elmira in Two Games Tonight,” *Reading Eagle*, June 10, 1952, 22.
19. Joe Much, “Indians Call on Law Against Elmira Tonight,” *Reading Eagle*, June 21, 1955, 18.
20. “Indians Battle Johnnies Last Time Tonight,” *Reading Eagle*, August 25, 1955, 16.
21. “Indians Defeat Schenectady 4–2 Before 6,460 Fans,” *Reading Eagle*, August 16, 1955, 18.
22. “The Best Season in Every Club’s History,” *MLB.com*, accessed March 6, 2022, <https://www.mlb.com/news/best-regular-season-record-for-every-mlb-teamc293612050#:~:text=The%20%54%20Indians%20hold%20the,winning%20103%20games%20behind%20them>.

23. "Grays Lead Eastern League by 9 ½ Games," *Reading Eagle*, August 23, 1960, 18.
24. George Ege, "Shaky Hurling Dooms Indians in Opener, 5–4," *Reading Eagle*, April 23, 1960, 8.
25. "Jones' 4-Run Homer Aids Reading Win, 9–2," *Reading Eagle*, August 2, 1960, 18.
26. Harold Harris, "Baseball Brass Invited to Opener," *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, March 26, 1967, 34.
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Triple-A Nicknames When SABR Was Born

Francis Kinlaw

When Bob Davids met friends in '71
A unique and small organization was formed;
Over years the number of members did grow,
And to large conventions they swarmed.

The majors then had 24 teams...
The minors' top level a trio of leagues;
Recalling all American Association, Pacific Coast,
and International clubs
Requires thought, good memory, and expertise.

Two teams called Indians, in less sensitive times,
Played in Indianapolis and Spokane;
While the 89ers, Royals, Oilers, and Aeros
Settled in a regional span.

There were Cubs and Bears, and Beavers and Braves,
Even some Emeralds and Oaks,
Toros and Tides, Charlies and Chiefs,
And Islanders that seldom got soaked.

There were Angels, featuring no Red Wings,
And Giants residing in Phoenix;
Colonels from Louisville played against Whips,
With the Colonels landing more licks!

Triplets and Mud Hens complete this verse,
Though no phrase cleverly links the pair;
So let's proceed to matching nicknames and cities—
Read on and the answers are there.

Class AAA teams (1971)

Indianapolis Indians (Reds), Spokane Indians (Dodgers), Oklahoma City 89ers (Astros), Omaha Royals (Kansas City Royals), Tulsa Oilers (Cardinals), Wichita Aeros (Cleveland Indians), Tacoma Cubs (Chicago Cubs), Denver Bears (Senators), Portland Beavers (Twins), Richmond Braves (Atlanta Braves), Eugene Emeralds (Phillies), Iowa Oaks (Athletics), Tucson Toros (White Sox), Tidewater Tides (Mets), Charleston Charlies (Pirates), Syracuse Chiefs (Yankees), Hawaii Islanders (Padres), Salt Lake City Angels (California Angels), Rochester Red Wings (Orioles), Phoenix Giants (San Francisco Giants), Louisville Colonels (Red Sox), Winnipeg Whips (Expos), Evansville Triplets (Brewers), Toledo Mud Hens (Tigers)

Harvard Boy Revisited

When Rick Wolff Chronicled the Minors

John Fredland

In June 1972, the Detroit Tigers selected Harvard University's Rick Wolff in the 33rd round of baseball's amateur draft.¹ Wolff played two seasons in Detroit's farm system, batting .236 in 196 Class A games before retiring to attend law school, and then pursue careers in publishing and sports psychology.

Wolff's time in the Western Carolinas League and Midwest League also yielded a charming, compelling, and valuable artifact for baseball fans and students of the minors: a book-length, first-person chronicle of his time with the Anderson Tigers and Clinton Tigers. Published in 1975, Wolff's *What's a Nice Harvard Boy Like You Doing in the Bushes?* fits alongside contemporaries like Jim Bouton's 1970 *Ball Four* and Sparky Lyle's 1979 *The Bronx Zoo* in its depiction of a baseball player's day-to-day life, and foreshadows *Bull Durham's* 1988 cinematic portrayal of life in the minors.²

Wolff's book originated from a conversation with *New York Daily News* sportswriter Phil Pepe after his first season in the minors. Wolff's father was Bob Wolff, who received the 1995 Ford C. Frick Award for a broadcasting career that included radio and television work for the Washington Nationals/Senators, Minnesota Twins, and national outlets.³ Bob Wolff and Pepe were friends, and Rick Wolff relayed stories of his minor-league experience over dinner at Yankee Stadium.⁴ Pepe suggested that he write an article for a baseball magazine about it.⁵

Wolff wrote the article, drawing on letters that he had sent his parents during the season.⁶

"This was the early '70s—there was no Internet, no cable TV, no cell phones," Wolff remembered in a 2022 interview.⁷ "Once a week, I would call home from a pay phone, because it was too expensive to call home. I got in the habit of writing letters. Every couple of

days I'd write a note about what was happening, how I was doing."⁸

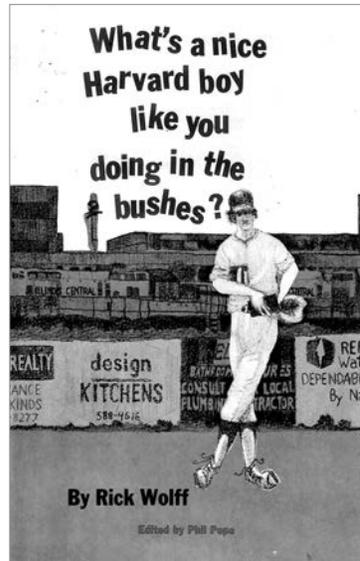
His article got the attention of a book editor, who recommended that Wolff develop it into a book, which he did, with Pepe's assistance.⁹ The result was a candid account of Wolff's two seasons in Class A ball, albeit without the sensationalism of *Ball Four* or the raunchiness of *The Bronx Zoo*.¹⁰

"When I was in the minors, the impact of *Ball Four* was everywhere," Wolff said.¹¹ "In those days, especially in the minors, it was like being in the military—you just said, 'yes sir, no sir.'¹²

"I can very vividly recall my second spring training, when [Detroit's] director of minor league baseball, an old gruff guy, former major-leaguer named Hoot Evers, walked by me when we were working out," Wolff remembered.¹³ "He looked at me and he said, 'Have you read any good books lately?...Or maybe I should say, Have you written any good books lately?' With the amount of sarcasm in his voice he was making it clear to me that I had to be very careful about what I put into my book."¹⁴

Wolff drew on a cast of characters—all real people as named¹⁵—that included many familiar faces in lesser-known stages of their lives and careers. Mike Hargrove is a near-impossible out for the Gastonia Rangers in 1973, "adjusting [at bat] better than anyone else."¹⁶ A year later Wolff and his teammates would be watching him on the Game of the Week, at the dawn of Hargrove's three decades as major-league player, coach, and manager.¹⁷

Matt Keough is "a fine shortstop, but he's a slap hitter and not considered a long ball threat" in the Midwest League; Keough soon converted to pitching, resulting in a decade-long career in the majors.¹⁸ Hoyt Wilhelm, managing in the Western Carolinas League less than a year after his final game as an active player,



tosses his knuckler in batting practice.¹⁹ Other names—Moe Hill, Lafayette Currence, Ed Nottle—may resonate with students of the minors.

But *Harvard Boy's* true heart beats in its descriptions of a protagonist and his teammates who likewise never reached the majors as players, young men who pursued their dreams through success and failure, joy and pain, and camaraderie and isolation. There's wise-cracking relief pitcher Brian Sheekey, a New Jersey native, "a cocky guy with big city sophistication, an operator who always gets the upper hand," who provides one of the book's most poignant scenes when the Tigers cut him during spring training of the book's second season.²⁰

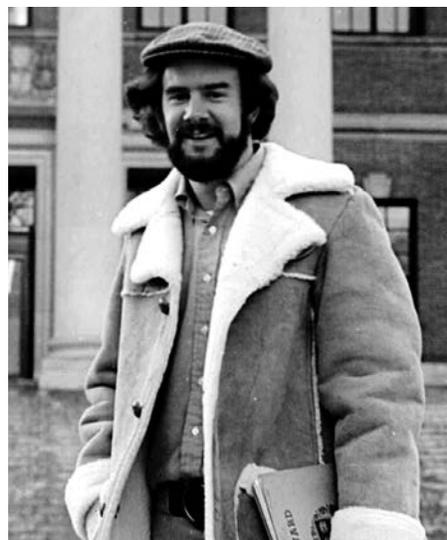
There's Ray Gimenez, who steals the show at a team meeting with "the most sincere, most appealing speech I've ever heard in a clubhouse."²¹ There's Steve Tissot, a 26-year-old guitar-playing college grad, reading Hermann Hesse and Nietzsche and theorizing on human performance.²²

Over a decade before former Baltimore Orioles farmhand Ron Shelton's *Bull Durham* screenplay brought the minors to America's movie screens, Wolff offered similarly mundane, quirky, and poignant vignettes of minor-league life.²³ A group of bored ballplayers go to see *The Sound of Music*.²⁴ The closing line of *The Great Gatsby* punctuates a mound meeting.²⁵ A Black player has an outstanding game in Greenwood, South Carolina, while the Klu Klux Klan rallies outside the ballpark.²⁶ "Clown Prince of Baseball" Max Patkin appears in *Harvard Boy*, just as in *Bull Durham*.²⁷

Harvard Boy ended with a cliffhanger. Wolff has completed his second season in the minors and started law school at Boston College, still hopeful for another year in the pros.²⁸ What happened next was a candid conversation with Hoot Evers, who offered him a contract for 1975, but told Wolff that he would return to Class A and was being groomed as a utility man.²⁹

Wolff elected to retire.³⁰ In 1989, however, 15 years after his final game with the Tigers, he returned to the Midwest League to play three games with the South Bend White Sox for a *Sports Illustrated* article, batting .571.³¹

Even though Wolff never reached the majors as a player, writing *Harvard Boy* led to a career in publishing, with the opportunity to oversee two beloved baseball books. One of the books, coincidentally, was *Ball Four* itself. In 1989, its original publisher folded and sold off its licensed properties. Wolff, then an editor at Macmillan, persuaded the company to bid for its rights. Once Macmillan had acquired *Ball Four*, Wolff



TOP: COURTESY OF RICK WOLFF/PHOTO BY NELSON CHEN / BOTTOM: DETROIT TIGERS



TOP: Rick Wolff, shown in this 1973 photo in front of the Widener Library, chronicled his journey from Harvard to the Detroit Tigers' organization in *What's A Nice Harvard Boy Like You Doing In The Bushes?*

BOTTOM: Wolff in his official Tigers team photo.

worked with Bouton on an updated preface and new afterword, which came out in the book's 1990 update.³²

At Macmillan, Wolff also edited three editions of the *Baseball Encyclopedia*. While ensuring the *Encyclopedia's* records were accurate, Wolff worked with several SABR members, including Ken Samuelson.³³ "It was a joy to work with these guys from SABR because they had such great knowledge and insight, and they did all the legwork in terms of going out and checking old newspapers and records," Wolff said.³⁴

Wolff also pursued interests in sports psychology, which caught the attention of prominent baseball psychologist Harvey Dorfman.³⁵ In 1990 he became the Cleveland Indians' first-ever sports psychology coach—

giving him the opportunity to wear a major-league uniform.³⁶ “Harvey said to me, ‘If you’re going to be working with these ballplayers, you have to build a rapport with them,’” Wolff remembered.³⁷ “They should know you know how to act on a ballfield, that you actually played the game and you’re legit.”³⁸

Nearly five decades after *Harvard Boy*’s publication, Wolff counts his minor-league experience and book among the highlights of his life. “I look back and say, ‘wow—that was amazing. It was just something you did because you had a passion for the sport, and you hoped and prayed that it may take you somewhere in the future.’”³⁹ ■

Notes

1. A December 1972 *Boston Globe* article by Peter Gammons facetiously named Wolff “New England Collegiate Sportsman of the Year” for being drafted by the Tigers despite limited playing time at Harvard, including not starting a game in two years. Wolff’s play in the summer Atlantic Collegiate Baseball League, where he ranked among the league leaders in batting average and steals at the time of the draft in June 1972, appears to have been a larger factor in the Tigers’ decision to select him. Peter Gammons, “Rick Wolff... That’s Who Rates Award,” *Boston Globe*, December 31, 1972: 40; “ACBL Statistics,” Hackensack (New Jersey) Record, June 30, 1972: B–10.
2. Rick Wolff, *What’s a Nice Harvard Boy Like You Doing in the Bushes?* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1975); Jim Bouton, with Leonard Shechter, *Ball Four: My Life and Hard Times Throwing the Knuckleball in the Big Leagues* (New York: The World Publishing, 1970); Sparky Lyle and Peter Golenbock, *The Bronx Zoo* (New York: Crown Publishing, 1979).
3. Richard Goldstein, “Bob Wolff, Sports Broadcaster for Nearly 80 Years, Dies at 96,” *The New York Times*, July 16, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/16/sports/bob-wolff-dead-sports-broadcaster.html>.
4. Wolff, vii; Author’s phone interview with Rick Wolff, February 4, 2022.
5. Author’s phone interview with Rick Wolff.
6. Author’s phone interview with Rick Wolff.
7. Author’s phone interview with Rick Wolff.
8. Author’s phone interview with Rick Wolff.
9. Author’s phone interview with Rick Wolff.
10. Dick Young, “Young Ideas,” *New York Daily News*, May 28, 1970: 99.
11. Author’s phone interview with Rick Wolff.
12. Author’s phone interview with Rick Wolff.
13. Author’s phone interview with Rick Wolff.
14. Author’s phone interview with Rick Wolff.
15. In contrast, Dirk Hayhurst’s 2010 account of playing in the San Diego Padres’ minor-league system, *The Bullpen Gospels: Major League Dreams of a Minor League Veteran*, frequently uses composite characters, based on people the author knew or played with. Dirk Hayhurst, *The Bullpen Gospels: Major League Dreams of a Minor League Veteran* (New York: Citadel Press, 2010).
16. Wolff, 143.
17. Wolff, 190–92.
18. Wolff, 213.
19. Wolff, 51.
20. Wolff, 33, 116–18.
21. Wolff, 147.
22. Wolff, 51–54.
23. Robert S. Cauthorn, “‘Bull’ Director Intertwined UA Master’s in Art with Minor League Baseball,” *Arizona Daily Star*, June 15, 1988: 5B.
24. Wolff, 88–89.
25. Wolff, 53–54.
26. Wolff, 96–98.
27. Wolff, 81–84.
28. Wolff, 215–16.
29. Author’s phone interview with Rick Wolff.
30. Author’s phone interview with Rick Wolff.
31. Rick Wolff, “Triumphant Return,” *Sports Illustrated*, August 21, 1989.
32. Mitchell Nathanson, *Bouton: The Life of a Baseball Original* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska, 2020), 316–17.
33. Author’s phone interview with Rick Wolff.
34. Author’s phone interview with Rick Wolff.
35. Author’s phone interview with Rick Wolff.
36. Author’s phone interview with Rick Wolff.
37. Author’s phone interview with Rick Wolff.
38. Author’s phone interview with Rick Wolff.
39. Author’s phone interview with Rick Wolff.

Take Me Out to the (Minor League) Ballpark

Will Christensen

Contrary to what you might read elsewhere, Forbes Field was not the first modern ballpark made of steel and concrete. That honor belongs to a minor-league stadium that now, like so many historic baseball sites, is a parking lot.¹ Neil Park in my hometown of Columbus, Ohio, was by no means the first—or only—significant minor-league ballpark to have thrived, only to meet an ignominious fate at the hands of those who didn't fully appreciate what they had. You might be familiar with the names of some of them: Nicollet Park, Rickwood Field, Seals Stadium, Wrigley Field, Gilmore Field, Engel Field, Offermann Stadium, Sulphur Dell. Whole books have been written about some of these places, and a few have even appeared in a movie or two that you might have seen, such as the Rockpile in Buffalo (*The Natural*), Bush Stadium in Indianapolis (*Eight Men Out*), and the old Durham Athletic Park (*Bull Durham*, of course).

Lots of stories and memories exist of these stadiums, but with a few notable exceptions, we don't have a concrete idea of how these parks played. Sure, most people who know anything about minor-league baseball know that Nicollet Park and Sulphur Dell, with their short right-field fences, were great homer havens, but what about Seals Stadium in San Francisco? Was it a hitters park? A pitchers park? I believe it was a tough park for home runs and a bit of a hitters park otherwise, but we don't really know because of a dearth of information on park effects for minor-league stadiums. Unless you're willing to go through box scores and assemble them yourself, home-road splits for minor-league ballparks before 2005 don't exist in the public eye.

A quick-and-dirty way to assess park effects is to take the total of team runs scored and allowed and divide that by the league average. It works better for assessing individual players than it does ballparks, but for the most part, this method shows which parks helped batters and which helped pitchers.

I developed another quick-and-dirty subjective assessment along those lines for ballparks, assigning or subtracting points on the following system:

Add 1 point if

- A team led its league in home runs.
- A team led its league in runs scored.
- A team led its league in runs allowed.
- A team led its league in home runs allowed.
- A team's lineup included the league leader in home runs.

Add 2 points if

- A team led its league in run context, which is runs scored + runs allowed.

Add 1.5 points if

- A team led its league in home run context, or home runs + home runs allowed.

Subtract the same amount if

- A team finished last in its league in those respective categories.



COURTESY OF THE MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A game at Nicollet Park in 1954, the most hitter-friendly park of its era.

Team homers, runs, and runs allowed are mostly available across the board after 1918. Because homers allowed weren't tracked at all until the 1950s and not universally until the 1970s, I split minor-league parks into two groups, with the dividing line being 1963. The ballparks that were in use for more of their seasons before that year were put in Group A, the rest in Group B.

By this method, Table 1 shows the 10 most hitter-friendly ballparks in minor-league history.

You can't compare the point totals in Group A with those in Group B because more data are included in Group B, of course. That said, I'd bet that if a vote were taken among experts as to which minor-league ballpark was the best hitters park of all time, Nicollet Park would be at the top of the heap. Its legendary

279-foot right-field wall helped dozens if not hundreds of hitters. It seems hard to believe that when it opened, Nicollet was actually a canyon compared with the Millers' previous park, Athletic Park, which helped Perry Werden hit an incredible 43 and 45 homers in 1894 and 1895. (Werden dropped to 18 the first year he played half his games in Nicollet.)

One more note: Obviously, my ratings are based on totals. One could argue that a better way to evaluate ballparks is by points per season. I wouldn't disagree, but completing the research necessary for such a thorough evaluation is beyond my bandwidth. That said, if one wanted to perform the research, I'd go double or nothing that with the possible exception of a ballpark that was used for just a single year, he or she would

Table 1. The Ten Most Hitter-Friendly Ballparks in the Minor Leagues

<u>GROUP A</u>	<u>GROUP B</u>
<p>1. NICOLLET PARK II City: Minneapolis, Minnesota Years in operation: 44, 1912–1955 Points: 133 Average team run context: 1.09</p>	<p>1. MILE HIGH STADIUM City: Denver, Colorado Years in operation: 45, 1948–92 Points: 141.5 Average team run context: 1.13 Average team home-run context: 1.13</p>
<p>2. SULPHUR DELL II City: Nashville, Tennessee Years in operation: 36, 1927–61, 1963 Points: 95 Average team run context: 1.08</p>	<p>2. DUDLEY FIELD City: El Paso, Texas Years in operation: 45, 1930–32, 1937–41, 1947–57, 1961–70, 1972–89 Points: 138.5 Average team run context: 1.12 Average team home-run context: 1.33</p>
<p>3. MCCORMICK FIELD I City: Asheville, North Carolina Years in operation: 60, 1924–32, 1934–42, 1946–55, 1959–91 Points: 84 Average team run context: 1.04 (130.5 points in other method)</p>	<p>3. MOANA STADIUM II City: Reno, Nevada Years in operation: 35, 1961–92, 1996–99 Points: 122 Average team run context: 1.13 Average team home-run context: 1.15</p>
<p>4. ORIOLE PARK V City: Baltimore, Maryland Years in operation: 29, 1916–44 Points: 75 Average team run context: 1.09</p>	<p>4. ADELANTO STADIUM City: Adelanto, California Years in operation: 29, 1991–2019 Points: 120 Average team run context: 1.13 Average team home-run context: 1.27</p>
<p>5. HALLIWELL PARK I City: Pocatello, Idaho Years in operation: 24, 1939–42, 1946–65 Points: 70 Average team run context: 1.09</p>	<p>5. SALEM MUNICIPAL FIELD City: Salem, Virginia Years in operation: 39, 1955, 1957–94 Points: 116 Average team run context: 1.06 Average team home-run context: 1.24</p>

find that the two ballparks at the top of that list are **Bonneville Park/Derks Field** and **Hughes Stadium**.

Bonneville Park, later renamed Derks Field, was home to the Salt Lake City Bees from 1915 to 1946. It operated only 19 seasons during that time, but it racked up 61 points, or an average of 3.21 per season. That's the highest of any ballpark that I evaluated that was open for at least 10 seasons (that didn't include full home runs data). Almost all of that was accumulated when Bonneville Park was the hitters paradise of the Pacific Coast League from 1915 to 1925. Back then, the Bees led the PCL in run context every season—11 for 11. The Bees led every season in runs allowed (estimated) and in runs scored in eight out of 11. Of course, the reason for this was that Salt Lake City is about 4,000 feet farther above sea level than any of the other PCL cities at the time.

That said, the best hitters park of any minor-league stadium that lasted more than a year (that we can evaluate properly) has to be Hughes Stadium in Sacramento. Hughes Stadium is a track and football stadium at Sacramento City College, and in 1974 it was called into service as a baseball stadium for the Sacramento Solons, returning after a 14-year absence. Shoehorning a baseball diamond into the space resulted in a farce, with a left-field fence that was 235 feet from home plate.

The Solons used Hughes Stadium for three years before the team moved to San Jose (a culture shock to be sure for the hitters), and during those three years, the Solons led the PCL in every possible hitters category that my method uses except runs in 1976, when the Solons finished as runners-up by 24 (and a Solon player did not lead the league that year in homers). That's 24 points out of a possible 26 in three seasons, or an 8.00 average.

As you might imagine, the home-run numbers are ridiculous. In 1974, the Solons hit a minor-league record 305 home runs. (The previous mark was 271 by the 1947 Las Vegas Stars.) They allowed what also has to be a minor-league record 301 home runs. That's 606 home runs in 144 games that the Solons played. The league hit 1,107 homers for the whole season, so, yes, more than half were hit during Solons games alone!

That year, the Solons had a run context that was 22 percent better than the league average. That's impressive, but it isn't a record. The home-run context was—are you ready for this?—118 percent better than the league average. If that isn't a record, it should be.

So Hughes Stadium is the greatest hitters park in minor-league history, unless it's Bonneville Park, unless... as noted above, Nicollet Park went from being a decent hitters park relative to the league (based on

incomplete data) to a launching pad after World War I. From 1919 to when Nicollet closed after 1955, the Millers racked up 125 points in 37 years, or an average of 3.38 per season. During that time, the Millers led the AA in homers 27 times, runs 21 times and run context 25 times. And that's without any help from altitude.

On the flip side of the coin, parks that were pitcher-friendly tend to be less well-known. That isn't surprising when you consider that most fans prefer offense, so they're more likely to remember ballparks where runs were plentiful.

Here are the five best pitchers parks in minor-league history, according to my method:

1. NAT BAILEY STADIUM

City: Vancouver, B.C., Canada

Years in operation: 58, 1951–54, 1956–62, 1965–69, 1978–2019

Points: minus-116.5

Average team run context: 0.92

Average team home-run context: 0.80

2. SAN JOSE MUNICIPAL STADIUM / EXCITE PARK

City: San Jose, California

Years in operation: 69, 1942, 1947–58, 1962–present

Points: minus-111

Average team run context: 0.93

Average team home-run context: 0.83

3. PARQUE CENTENARIO 27 DE FEBRERO

City: Villahermosa, Tabasco, Mexico

Years in operation: 51, 1964–70, 1975, 1977–present

Points: minus-109

Average team run context: 0.88

Average team home-run context: 0.72

4. BILLY HEBERT FIELD

City: Stockton, California

Years in operation: 47, 1953–72, 1978–2004

Points: minus-99

Average team run context: 0.91

Average team home-run context: 0.83

5. DUNN FIELD

City: Elmira, New York

Years in operation: 65, 1939–55, 1957–2005

Points: minus-93.5

Average team run context: 0.97

Average team home-run context: 0.86

Yes, that's correct: Every one of the five best pitchers parks are old parks that survived. Three of the top five were in use in 2017, and all of the top five saw action as



Sulphur Dell, shown here in the 1950s, was known as a hitter haven.

recently as 2004. I have no explanation for that other than perhaps older ballparks, when all other things are equal, play more as pitchers parks relative to new parks, perhaps because of shorter, closer fences in newer parks built to promote action.

One thing that you'll note about pitchers parks is that you don't see atmospheric anomalies, or ballparks from places where the ball didn't travel well relative to the league, as you did with hitters parks, such as Bonnevill Park in the PCL. In other words, you can't find a situation where all of the parks are, say, above 3,000 feet in elevation except for one that's 50 feet, so the negative totals generally aren't as high as are the positive totals.

That said, I have no doubt that had Stockton and San Jose not been in the same league at mostly the same time, either one of those parks (and perhaps both) likely not only would be atop the list of pitchers paradises but might also have accumulated more points than any of the hitters havens.

For what it's worth, I believe that the pitchers' best friend with respect to preventing the home run relative to the league was Damaschke Field in Oneonta, New York. Used between 1939 and 2009, Damaschke just missed being included among the top five pitchers parks by a half-point. Of its -86 points accumulated in 43 seasons, 66 were the result of home run categories. Oneonta teams led their respective leagues (primarily the New York-Penn League) in fewest home runs eight times, fewest home runs allowed 23, and lowest home-run context 22 (the latter two in 34 seasons). The dimensions were nothing special, 335 feet to the corners and 401 to center, but the ball might as well have been made of pewter as far as how it traveled.

A final note: Some parks are hitters parks or pitchers parks only because of the league that they're in at the time. In other words, they're extraordinary compared with the rest of one league, but they might be absolutely ordinary when they're in a different league, with different teams, parks, and locales.

Take the Dudley Dome, for example. It played as slightly pitcher-friendly until El Paso joined the Texas League. Instantly, the Dome became a launching pad. Conversely, Dunn Field was a desert when Elmira was in the Eastern League. As soon as it moved to the NYPL, it became primarily a hitters park, then reverted to a pitchers paradise after Elmira teams went independent.

As time goes on, it will be interesting to see what happens to Adelanto Stadium. Based on points per season, a case exists that it's the greatest hitters park in minor-league history. It racked up 120 points in only 26 seasons in the California League. However, when the High Desert Mavericks closed shop in 2016 and the High Desert Yardbirds opened in the independent Pecos League in 2017, Adelanto Stadium played like a pitchers park in the pinball PecL.

It turns out that ballpark factors, like player performance, can be relative.

To complete the story, Neil Park closed in 1932 when the renamed Redbirds moved to Redbird Stadium. According to my analysis, Neil Park was dead neutral. ■

Note

1. Philip Lowry, et al., *Green Cathedrals* (Fifth Edition). Page 104 of the recent SABR edition states that "in 1905, [Neil Park II] was the only steel-and-concrete stadium used for a major league game until Forbes Field opened in 1909."

APPENDIX

Presented here are the fully compiled numbers for some of the ball-parks discussed in the article. Two tables are included for each park, one for runs, and one for home runs. The home run table for each park contains only the seasons for which home run totals were published.

For each season, the following stats are included:

- G:** Team games (entire season, not just at the park)
- R:** Team runs
- RA :** Team runs allowed
- LgR:** League average runs per team
- LGm:** League average games played per team
- HR:** Team home runs
- HRA:** Team home runs allowed
- T Cxt:** Team context. This is the runs context for the team for the season, or the percentage of runs scored in games played

by played by the team compared with the league average, calculated as:

$$\frac{(\text{team runs} + \text{team runs allowed})}{2 * \text{league average}} * \frac{\text{team games}}{\text{league average games}}$$

For example, in 1953, the Stockton Ports scored 679 runs and allowed 593 in 141 games. The average California League that season scored and allowed 747 runs (rounded) in 140.75 games, so the context formula is:

$$\left(\frac{679 + 593}{2 * 747}\right) * \left(\frac{141}{140.75}\right) = \left(\frac{1,272}{1,494}\right) * \left(\frac{141}{140.75}\right) = 0.85$$

In 1953, Ports games had an average of 15 percent fewer runs than the league average.

Billy Hebert Field (1951–2004)

Year	G	R	RA	LgR	LGm	T Cxt
1953	141	679	593	747	140.75	0.85
1954	140	733	625	785	140.5	0.87
1955	147	807	657	787	147	0.93
1956	140	799	634	831	140	0.86
1957	140	591	773	777	137.5	0.86
1958	138	716	652	762	138	0.90
1959	139	766	697	799	140	0.92
1960	141	684	701	752	140	0.91
1961	139	560	720	743	139.67	0.87
1962	140	715	692	795	139.5	0.88
1963	140	808	588	756	139.75	0.92
1964	139	594	570	695	138.75	0.84
1965	140	699	574	675	139.67	0.94
1966	141	602	669	746	140.5	0.85
1967	139	503	589	601	138.75	0.91
1968	140	586	575	635	139.75	0.91
1969	140	595	508	616	140	0.90
1970	140	537	662	646	139.75	0.93
1971	138	614	677	735	139	0.88
1972	137	518	731	693	139	0.91
1978	140	628	661	789	139.75	0.82
1979	141	654	594	764	140	0.81
1980	141	705	551	692	140	0.90
1981	139	634	644	740	139.5	0.87
1982	138	619	538	643	139.6	0.91
1983	138	607	527	645	139.2	0.89
1984	139	646	742	635	139.6	1.10
1985	145	775	647	720	144.67	0.99
1986	142	797	640	720	142	1.00
1987	142	762	537	672	142.2	0.97
1988	143	833	560	719	142.2	0.96
1989	142	654	496	597	142	0.96
1990	141	691	611	694	141.2	0.94
1991	136	639	544	676	136	0.88
1992	136	726	562	708	136	0.91
1993	136	776	659	731	136.2	0.98
1994	136	601	697	693	136	0.94
1995	140	730	694	725	139.6	0.98
1996	140	767	686	808	140	0.90
1997	140	622	672	745	140.2	0.87
1998	140	601	686	712	140	0.90
1999	140	654	802	775	140.2	0.94
2000	140	604	638	744	140	0.83
2001	140	623	618	703	140	0.88
2002	140	760	541	714	140.2	0.91
2003	140	736	684	721	140	0.98
2004	140	711	700	747	140	0.94

Year	G	HR	HRA	LgR	LGm	T Cxt
1971	138	64	93	112	139	0.71
1972	137	100	63	97	139	0.85
1978	140	51	59	84	139.75	0.65
1979	141	54	51	93	140	0.56
1980	141	87	58	77	140	0.93
1981	139	61	79	93	139.5	0.76
1982	138	45	53	63	139.6	0.79
1983	138	45	54	66	139.2	0.76
1984	139	41	71	56	139.6	1.00
1985	145	64	39	69	144.67	0.74
1986	142	105	53	84	142	0.94
1987	142	73	47	69	142.2	0.87
1988	143	72	38	66	142.2	0.83
1989	142	57	41	62	142	0.79
1990	141	67	68	78	141.2	0.87
1991	136	79	41	79	136	0.76
1992	136	78	57	77	136	0.88
1993	136	106	77	96	136.2	0.95
1994	136	63	86	103	136	0.72
1995	140	80	93	99	139.6	0.87
1996	140	102	113	123	140	0.87
1997	140	79	116	122	140.2	0.80
1998	140	58	87	95	140	0.76
1999	140	78	129	111	140.2	0.93
2000	140	88	83	95	140	0.90
2001	140	100	93	108	140	0.89
2002	140	134	71	111	140.2	0.92
2003	140	84	93	101	140	0.88
2004	140	92	90	111	140	0.82

Nat Bailey Stadium (1951-)

Year	G	R	RA	LgR	LGm	T Cxt
1951	145	834	584	710	143.75	0.99
1952	142	712	626	739	150.5	0.96
1953	141	581	585	738	138.6	0.78
1954	123	752	574	743	134.29	0.97
1956	166	716	828	759	167.5	1.03
1957	168	736	578	690	168	0.95
1958	153	623	607	687	154.25	0.90
1959	151	638	570	645	153.5	0.95
1960	153	678	756	691	153.25	1.04
1961	154	787	617	723	154.5	0.97
1962	152	555	595	674	153.5	0.86
1965	146	554	523	607	147.67	0.90
1966	149	604	588	639	148.33	0.93
1967	146	529	499	584	147.33	0.89
1968	146	459	587	569	146	0.92
1969	145	591	574	622	146	0.94
1978	139	805	723	769	138.8	0.99
1979	147	637	592	733	147.4	0.84
1980	139	621	587	704	143.8	0.89
1981	132	470	577	683	135.8	0.79
1982	144	647	686	780	143.4	0.85
1983	140	703	808	817	142.2	0.94
1984	142	608	597	722	140.8	0.83
1985	143	657	578	665	142.4	0.92
1986	138	719	598	706	142	0.96
1987	144	580	573	703	142.6	0.81
1988	142	661	573	709	141.8	0.87
1989	141	498	527	667	142.2	0.77
1990	141	661	628	726	141.6	0.89
1991	135	562	720	716	137.6	0.91
1992	142	644	592	699	142.8	0.89
1993	140	746	731	778	142	0.96
1994	142	757	704	812	142.2	0.90
1995	141	723	620	742	143.2	0.92
1996	138	677	639	727	141.6	0.93
1997	143	766	767	817	143.13	0.94
1998	143	571	680	749	140.38	0.82
1999	142	759	617	755	142.63	0.92
2000	76	344	322	362	76	0.92
2001	76	320	328	361	75.5	0.89
2002	76	334	310	346	76	0.93
2003	76	326	373	356	76	0.98
2004	76	427	373	398	76	1.01
2005	76	344	268	357	76	0.86
2006	76	342	332	351	76	0.96
2007	75	378	405	389	75.75	1.02
2008	76	314	369	374	76	0.91
2009	76	349	402	382	76	0.98
2010	76	317	316	339	75.75	0.93
2011	76	329	372	362	76	0.97
2012	76	360	291	346	76	0.94
2013	76	350	306	325	76	1.01
2014	76	402	332	372	76	0.99
2015	76	350	350	350	76	1.00
2016	74	305	382	362	75.25	0.96
2017	76	344	345	370	76	0.93
2018	76	315	299	349	76	0.88
2019	76	303	348	353	76	0.92

Year	G	HR	HRA	LgR	LGm	T Cxt
1965	146	73	90	119	147.67	0.69
1966	149	86	84	106	148.33	0.80
1967	146	58	59	86	147.33	0.69
1968	146	46	103	84	146	0.89
1969	145	58	52	74	146	0.75
1978	139	107	90	89	138.8	1.11
1979	147	64	69	79	147.4	0.84
1980	139	59	61	80	143.8	0.78
1981	132	66	57	92	135.8	0.69
1982	144	112	97	115	143.4	0.90
1983	140	132	125	137	142.2	0.95
1984	142	70	82	103	140.8	0.73
1985	143	80	92	96	142.4	0.89
1986	138	85	78	95	142	0.88
1987	144	54	68	84	142.6	0.72
1988	142	67	60	91	141.8	0.70
1989	141	63	66	94	142.2	0.69
1990	141	77	74	93	141.6	0.82
1991	135	60	94	93	137.6	0.84
1992	142	79	61	81	142.8	0.87
1993	140	68	85	105	142	0.74
1994	142	96	146	137	142.2	0.88
1995	141	76	99	101	143.2	0.88
1996	138	66	105	116	141.6	0.76
1997	143	136	134	147	143.13	0.92
1998	143	113	119	148	140.38	0.77
1999	142	124	103	152	142.63	0.75
2000	76	21	23	37	76	0.59
2001	76	44	35	45	75.5	0.87
2002	76	35	27	41	76	0.76
2003	76	22	36	38	76	0.76
2004	76	43	39	57	76	0.72
2005	76	35	26	48	76	0.64
2006	76	33	47	44	76	0.91
2007	75	43	46	49	75.75	0.92
2008	76	28	26	41	76	0.66
2009	76	22	40	45	76	0.69
2010	76	34	25	38	75.75	0.77
2011	76	48	43	43	76	1.06
2012	76	44	37	52	76	0.78
2013	76	23	15	32	76	0.59
2014	76	27	32	42	76	0.70
2015	76	36	32	37	76	0.92
2016	74	24	28	35	75.25	0.76
2017	76	25	48	44	76	0.83
2018	76	47	45	54	76	0.85
2019	76	32	46	44	76	0.89

Adelanto Stadium (1991–2019)

Year	G	R	RA	LgR	LGm	T Cxt
1991	136	873	772	676	136	1.22
1992	136	727	677	708	136	0.99
1993	137	939	769	731	136.2	1.16
1994	136	764	959	693	136	1.24
1995	140	669	996	725	139.6	1.14
1996	140	924	881	808	140	1.12
1997	140	890	766	745	140.2	1.11
1998	140	779	676	712	140	1.02
1999	141	903	890	775	140.2	1.15
2000	140	738	987	744	140	1.16
2001	140	837	844	703	140	1.20
2002	140	818	979	714	140.2	1.26
2003	140	687	959	721	140	1.14
2004	140	720	955	747	140	1.12
2005	140	918	899	802	139.6	1.13
2006	140	729	742	745	140	0.99
2007	140	802	1085	781	139.8	1.21
2008	140	729	917	724	140	1.14
2009	140	860	806	716	140	1.16
2010	140	860	793	730	140	1.13
2011	140	798	986	782	140	1.14
2012	140	951	802	756	140	1.16
2013	140	827	816	738	140	1.11
2014	140	841	870	731	140	1.17
2015	140	840	811	686	140	1.20
2016	140	812	718	702	140	1.09
2017	65	449	412	452	62	0.91
2018	62	443	434	513	62.5	0.86
2019	64	646	310	452	60	0.99

Year	G	HR	HRA	LgR	LGm	T Cxt
1991	136	113	102	79	136	1.36
1992	136	86	90	77	136	1.14
1993	137	118	130	96	136.2	1.28
1994	136	134	162	103	136	1.44
1995	140	120	132	99	139.6	1.27
1996	140	146	153	123	140	1.22
1997	140	165	156	122	140.2	1.32
1998	140	124	113	95	140	1.25
1999	141	159	144	111	140.2	1.36
2000	140	112	128	95	140	1.26
2001	140	158	156	108	140	1.45
2002	140	155	155	111	140.2	1.40
2003	140	81	168	101	140	1.23
2004	140	135	148	111	140	1.27
2005	140	203	173	142	139.6	1.32
2006	140	109	143	112	140	1.13
2007	140	133	198	132	139.8	1.25
2008	140	111	170	110	140	1.28
2009	140	164	129	113	140	1.30
2010	140	172	163	123	140	1.36
2011	140	158	183	131	140	1.30
2012	140	189	152	136	140	1.25
2013	140	154	146	132	140	1.14
2014	140	176	167	134	140	1.28
2015	140	153	173	116	140	1.41
2016	140	177	148	120	140	1.35
2017	65	43	25	63	62	0.51
2018	62	61	50	80	62.5	0.70
2019	64	91	70	67	60	1.13

Moana Stadium (1961–1999)

Year	G	R	RA	LgR	LGm	T Cxt
1961	140	912	590	743	139.67	1.01
1962	139	975	967	795	139.5	1.23
1963	140	855	824	756	139.75	1.11
1964	137	782	804	695	138.75	1.16
1966	141	855	885	746	140.5	1.16
1967	136	547	698	601	138.75	1.06
1968	140	686	650	635	139.75	1.05
1969	140	643	615	616	140	1.02
1970	140	699	599	646	139.75	1.00
1971	139	712	863	735	139	1.07
1972	138	696	932	693	139	1.18
1973	140	724	665	670	140	1.04
1974	140	653	756	696	140	1.01
1975	140	881	655	686	140	1.12
1976	137	915	806	777	139	1.12
1977	140	892	1038	902	140	1.07
1978	140	909	995	789	139.75	1.20
1979	141	814	729	764	140	1.00
1980	141	819	705	692	140	1.09
1981	139	986	838	740	139.5	1.24
1982	138	779	760	643	139.6	1.21
1983	139	688	799	645	139.2	1.15
1984	139	701	745	635	139.6	1.14
1985	145	815	915	720	144.67	1.20
1986	142	815	789	720	142	1.11
1987	142	808	774	672	142.2	1.18
1988	142	613	1071	719	142.2	1.17
1989	142	638	673	597	142	1.10
1990	139	816	795	694	141.2	1.18
1991	136	627	841	676	136	1.09
1992	136	855	916	708	136	1.25
1996	90	559	547	484	89.75	1.14
1997	90	724	615	522	90	1.28
1998	90	662	624	514	89.5	1.24
1999	90	616	670	595	90	1.08

Year	G	HR	HRA	LgR	LGm	T Cxt
1971	139	121	92	112	139	0.95
1972	138	73	106	97	139	0.93
1973	140	56	78	74	140	0.91
1974	140	45	76	75	140	0.81
1975	140	97	78	74	140	1.18
1976	137	110	82	84	139	1.16
1977	140	116	159	123	140	1.12
1978	140	92	109	84	139.75	1.19
1979	141	107	90	93	140	1.05
1980	141	92	100	77	140	1.24
1981	139	151	113	93	139.5	1.42
1982	138	90	80	63	139.6	1.36
1983	139	84	67	66	139.2	1.15
1984	139	58	62	56	139.6	1.08
1985	145	80	106	69	144.67	1.34
1986	142	108	111	84	142	1.30
1987	142	80	71	69	142.2	1.10
1988	142	68	97	66	142.2	1.25
1989	142	70	79	62	142	1.20
1990	139	97	93	78	141.2	1.24
1991	136	63	101	79	136	1.04
1992	136	82	97	77	136	1.16
1996	90	79	76	68	89.75	1.14
1997	90	115	84	83	90	1.20
1998	90	87	109	76	89.5	1.28
1999	90	87	101	84	90	1.12

Dudley Field (1930–1989)

Year	G	R	RA	LgR	LGm	T Cxt
1937	122	780	633	719	118.5	0.95
1938	132	909	828	851	131.5	1.02
1940	124	779	853	839	124	0.97
1947	130	787	1009	935	131.33	0.97
1948	141	925	867	958	140.33	0.93
1949	150	1061	1002	1057	150	0.98
1950	150	1176	983	1070	149.33	1.00
1951	144	975	837	841	143.2	1.07
1952	140	1056	996	991	139.67	1.03
1953	140	814	972	914	139.33	0.97
1954	140	966	969	1041	141	0.94
1955	140	735	919	912	139.75	0.91
1956	144	899	748	942	142.6	0.87
1957	117	794	887	790	122.67	1.12
1961	130	970	902	853	126.67	1.07
1962	141	998	848	800	140.33	1.15
1963	140	835	853	696	140	1.21
1964	140	694	745	637	140	1.13
1965	140	633	836	630	140.33	1.17
1966	140	546	657	563	140	1.07
1967	141	638	647	602	140.33	1.06
1968	138	661	608	571	139	1.12
1969	136	656	602	558	134.25	1.11
1970	136	746	673	603	135.25	1.17
1972	140	647	580	567	139.75	1.08
1973	140	730	756	613	139.25	1.21
1974	137	800	743	621	135	1.22
1975	133	742	710	611	132	1.18
1976	133	843	679	627	134.75	1.23
1977	130	960	726	640	129.5	1.31
1978	135	853	711	661	134.75	1.18
1979	136	798	862	642	134.25	1.28
1980	136	740	910	666	136	1.24
1981	134	712	736	636	134	1.14
1982	136	928	832	701	135.75	1.25
1983	136	953	948	746	136	1.27
1984	135	738	674	620	135.75	1.15
1985	136	882	662	648	136	1.19
1986	135	908	716	652	135	1.25
1987	134	893	813	672	135.25	1.28
1988	134	869	767	628	135.5	1.32
1989	135	678	782	628	135.5	1.17

Year	G	HR	HRA	LgR	LGm	T Cxt
1962	141	183	151	128	140.33	1.30
1963	140	207	155	125	140	1.45
1965	140	104	121	93	140.33	1.21
1966	140	120	93	81	140	1.31
1967	141	114	124	106	140.33	1.12
1968	138	155	104	78	139	1.67
1969	136	118	67	65	134.25	1.40
1970	136	119	84	82	135.25	1.23
1972	140	63	89	84	139.75	0.90
1973	140	76	116	83	139.25	1.15
1974	137	98	86	85	135	1.07
1975	133	94	84	71	132	1.24
1976	133	122	95	77	134.75	1.43
1977	130	162	106	81	129.5	1.65
1978	135	165	92	86	134.75	1.49
1979	136	133	143	86	134.25	1.58
1980	136	143	109	88	136	1.43
1981	134	121	108	94	134	1.22
1982	136	161	162	116	135.75	1.39
1983	136	136	158	112	136	1.31
1984	135	80	108	88	135.75	1.07
1985	136	122	106	88	136	1.30
1986	135	144	128	89	135	1.53
1987	134	189	144	114	135.25	1.47
1988	134	160	106	89	135.5	1.51
1989	135	83	100	77	135.5	1.19

Mile High Stadium (1948–1992)

Year	G	R	RA	LgR	LGm	T Cxt
1948	138	824	906	782	139.33	1.12
1949	141	771	756	742	139.67	1.02
1950	154	956	970	839	155.5	1.16
1951	156	785	693	737	153	0.98
1952	156	808	665	754	154.5	0.97
1953	154	901	677	732	154.75	1.08
1954	151	944	711	746	153	1.12
1955	156	874	838	768	154.75	1.11
1956	154	935	869	742	153.5	1.21
1957	154	957	732	706	154.5	1.20
1958	150	808	796	659	153.25	1.24
1959	163	771	860	673	162.4	1.21
1960	155	903	783	669	154	1.25
1961	150	822	703	697	150.67	1.10
1962	150	783	715	684	147.67	1.08
1963	158	843	898	685	158	1.27
1964	158	748	692	668	157.5	1.07
1965	146	731	646	607	147.67	1.15
1966	148	762	747	639	148.33	1.18
1967	145	625	680	584	147.33	1.14
1968	145	655	668	569	146	1.17
1969	140	679	858	729	140	1.05
1970	139	668	684	610	139.25	1.11
1971	140	767	727	639	140	1.17
1972	140	591	697	568	140	1.13
1973	136	708	843	688	136	1.13
1974	136	650	726	648	135.5	1.06
1975	136	728	635	613	136	1.11
1976	137	748	602	609	135.75	1.10
1977	136	741	722	630	135	1.15
1978	135	817	808	690	135.5	1.18
1979	135	712	720	656	135.75	1.10
1980	136	865	575	640	135.75	1.12
1981	136	733	666	621	135.75	1.12
1982	135	771	753	700	135.25	1.09
1983	134	748	673	677	135.5	1.06
1984	154	756	782	702	154.25	1.10
1985	142	686	663	607	142.25	1.11
1986	142	694	648	663	142.25	1.01
1987	140	928	829	746	139.5	1.17
1988	141	755	641	607	141.75	1.16
1989	146	651	674	599	145	1.10
1990	146	724	839	634	146.25	1.23
1991	144	735	638	626	143.5	1.09
1992	144	767	704	654	143.75	1.12

Year	G	HR	HRA	LgR	LGm	T Cxt
1956	154	169	172	132	153.5	1.29
1957	154	175	119	118	154.5	1.25
1958	150	121	115	94	153.25	1.28
1959	163	110	155	97	162.4	1.36
1960	155	162	138	103	154	1.45
1961	150	129	94	83	150.67	1.35
1962	150	96	87	78	147.67	1.15
1964	158	109	135	134	157.5	0.91
1965	146	122	133	119	147.67	1.08
1966	148	126	104	106	148.33	1.09
1967	145	66	105	86	147.33	1.01
1968	145	118	100	84	146	1.31
1969	140	63	113	77	140	1.14
1970	139	103	78	95	139.25	0.95
1971	140	114	94	102	140	1.02
1972	140	95	86	88	140	1.03
1973	136	81	106	95	136	0.98
1974	136	89	101	99	135.5	0.96
1975	136	107	93	84	136	1.19
1976	137	149	125	102	135.75	1.33
1977	136	131	100	105	135	1.09
1978	135	139	127	121	135.5	1.10
1979	135	110	100	105	135.75	1.01
1980	136	146	76	99	135.75	1.12
1981	136	103	91	101	135.75	0.96
1982	135	158	145	130	135.25	1.17
1983	134	158	114	118	135.5	1.17
1984	154	119	119	123	154.25	0.97
1985	142	134	83	96	142.25	1.13
1986	142	114	77	98	142.25	0.98
1987	140	192	142	134	139.5	1.24
1988	141	108	74	79	141.75	1.16
1989	146	97	88	81	145	1.13
1990	146	118	99	89	146.25	1.22
1991	144	99	104	90	143.5	1.12
1992	144	114	123	114	143.75	1.04

Excite Stadium, formerly San Jose Municipal Stadium (1942–)

Year	G	R	RA	LgR	LGm	T Cxt	Year	G	HR	HRA	LgR	LGm	T Cxt
1942	68	398	334	356	67.5	1.02	1971	140	90	90	112	139	0.80
1947	140	966	811	878	140	1.01	1972	140	88	73	97	139	0.82
1948	140	728	750	780	140	0.95	1973	140	56	65	74	140	0.82
1950	140	842	749	802	140	0.99	1974	140	52	58	75	140	0.73
1951	147	778	708	822	147.25	0.91	1975	140	45	74	74	140	0.80
1952	140	647	597	739	140	0.84	1976	140	54	71	84	139	0.74
1953	141	790	574	747	140.75	0.91	1977	144	84	112	103	141.5	0.93
1954	142	798	765	785	140.5	0.99	1978	140	65	85	111	138.8	0.67
1955	147	860	554	787	147	0.90	1979	140	100	60	93	140	0.86
1956	140	797	717	831	140	0.91	1980	139	72	49	77	140	0.79
1957	135	639	685	777	137.5	0.87	1981	140	63	88	93	139.5	0.81
1962	137	756	679	795	139.5	0.92	1982	140	49	53	63	139.6	0.81
1963	140	673	749	756	139.75	0.94	1983	140	39	63	66	139.2	0.77
1964	140	655	680	695	138.75	0.95	1984	140	37	44	56	139.6	0.72
1965	140	667	628	675	139.67	0.96	1985	143	52	63	69	144.67	0.84
1966	141	689	708	746	140.5	0.93	1986	142	50	81	84	142	0.78
1967	139	598	434	601	138.75	0.86	1987	142	40	55	69	142.2	0.69
1968	140	603	490	635	139.75	0.86	1988	143	61	54	66	142.2	0.87
1969	140	556	559	616	140	0.91	1989	142	55	53	62	142	0.87
1970	140	573	513	646	139.75	0.84	1990	142	72	59	78	141.2	0.84
1971	140	665	615	735	139	0.86	1991	136	53	37	79	136	0.57
1972	140	669	581	693	139	0.90	1992	137	51	44	77	136	0.61
1973	140	618	570	670	140	0.89	1993	136	78	85	96	136.2	0.85
1974	140	609	557	696	140	0.84	1994	136	92	92	103	136	0.89
1975	140	622	683	686	140	0.95	1995	140	70	75	99	139.6	0.73
1976	140	639	910	777	139	0.99	1996	140	82	76	123	140	0.64
1977	144	753	826	828	141.5	0.94	1997	140	72	95	122	140.2	0.69
1978	140	625	782	769	138.8	0.91	1998	140	105	77	95	140	0.96
1979	140	804	616	764	140	0.93	1999	140	126	68	111	140.2	0.88
1980	139	743	631	692	140	1.00	2000	140	59	103	95	140	0.85
1981	140	607	734	740	139.5	0.90	2001	140	89	110	108	140	0.92
1982	140	614	634	643	139.6	0.97	2002	140	92	116	111	140.2	0.94
1983	140	619	784	645	139.2	1.08	2003	140	91	93	101	140	0.91
1984	140	521	687	635	139.6	0.95	2004	140	99	107	111	140	0.93
1985	143	594	728	720	144.67	0.93	2005	140	143	122	142	139.6	0.93
1986	142	547	681	720	142	0.85	2006	140	87	102	112	140	0.84
1987	142	423	816	672	142.2	0.92	2007	140	106	96	132	139.8	0.76
1988	143	836	563	719	142.2	0.97	2008	140	106	70	110	140	0.80
1989	142	600	498	597	142	0.92	2009	140	123	108	113	140	1.02
1990	142	766	688	694	141.2	1.04	2010	140	117	115	123	140	0.94
1991	136	726	450	676	136	0.87	2011	140	139	106	131	140	0.94
1992	137	689	566	708	136	0.88	2012	140	118	94	136	140	0.78
1993	136	696	683	731	136.2	0.94	2013	140	116	103	132	140	0.83
1994	136	719	656	693	136	0.99	2014	140	103	110	134	140	0.79
1995	140	695	516	725	139.6	0.83	2015	140	91	103	116	140	0.84
1996	140	771	594	808	140	0.84	2016	140	126	133	120	140	1.08
1997	140	656	706	745	140.2	0.92	2017	140	124	100	118	140	0.95
1998	140	704	567	712	140	0.89	2018	140	119	123	122	140	0.99
1999	140	722	704	775	140.2	0.92	2019	139	115	97	114	138.25	0.92
2000	140	656	855	744	140	1.02							
2001	140	667	686	703	140	0.96							
2002	140	663	676	714	140.2	0.94							
2003	140	620	740	721	140	0.94							
2004	140	725	646	747	140	0.92							
2005	140	813	666	802	139.6	0.92							
2006	140	716	640	745	140	0.91							
2007	140	685	636	781	139.8	0.84							
2008	140	736	531	724	140	0.88							
2009	140	803	526	716	140	0.93							
2010	140	739	673	730	140	0.97							
2011	140	814	590	782	140	0.90							
2012	140	755	684	756	140	0.95							
2013	140	690	590	738	140	0.87							
2014	140	655	689	731	140	0.92							
2015	140	594	583	686	140	0.86							
2016	140	636	720	702	140	0.97							
2017	140	633	718	689	140	0.98							
2018	140	607	718	676	140	0.98							
2019	139	628	621	651	138.25	0.95							

Triple Crown Batters in the Minor Leagues (1946–62)

What They Did Before and After

Herm Krabbenhoft

One of the rarest and most highly regarded achievements for a hitter is winning the Triple Crown (TC)—leading the league in Batting Average (BA), Home Runs (HR), and Runs Batted In (RBI). In this article I present the minor league batters who won the Triple Crown from 1946 through 1962—the periods designated as “The Golden Age” of minor league baseball (1946–51) and “The Decline” (1952–62).¹ This article is limited to those who earned their Triple Crowns in the top-three levels of play: Single-A, Double-A, and Triple-A. The focus of the article is on what the players did before and after reaching the Triple Crown pinnacle, especially Hal Summers and Larry Osborne. The before-and-after details for the other TC batters are summarized briefly, since there already are excellent SABR biographies for each of them.

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

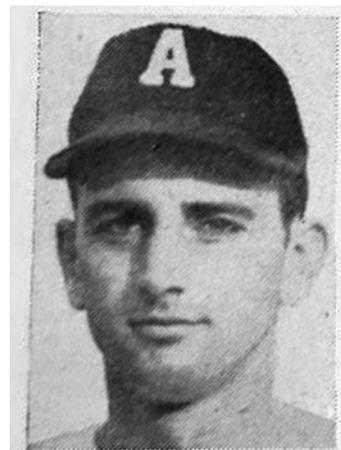
The information presented for each of the players was culled from several sources: *The Encyclopedia of Minor League Baseball*, *The Sporting News Official Baseball Guide*, Baseball-Reference, Retrosheet, the SABR Biography Project, and newspaper articles. Whenever a statistics line given on the Baseball-Reference site had a blank cell for one or more of the critical stats (G, AB, H, BA, HR, RBI), I proceeded to ascertain the missing number(s) by using the statistics provided in *The Sporting News Baseball Guide* and/or by checking all of the pertinent box scores and game accounts provided in both *The Sporting News* and the newspapers published in or near the city of the player’s team. Thus, for each of the players featured in this article I achieved complete minor league statistics (not including independent minor leagues, winter leagues, and instructional leagues, which were irrelevant to this research). The Appendix which follows this article provides the complete details for each of the 30 blank spaces I filled in. For the summary charts provided for each of the Triple Crowners, when the player’s total number of games in the before or after sections was greater than 154, I have also included the stats normalized to 154 games; these values are shown in italics.

HAL SUMMERS

Hal Summers won the Triple Crown in 1948 with the Augusta Tigers (Class-A South Atlantic League). His circuit-leading batting average of .331 surpassed second-place finisher Edgar Hartness by six points; his 28 homers were a dozen more than runner-up Joseph Stringfellow’s 16; and his 115 runs batted in were 11 more than next-in-line Benjamin Taylor’s 104. Summers was chosen as an All-Star for the outfield; the other two All-Star flyhawks were Lloyd Merriman (.294 BA, 9 HR, 75 RBI) and Dick Burgett (.303 BA, 9 HR, 101 RBI).

BEFORE—Summers was a star on the baseball diamond and the basketball court for San Diego State College, earning varsity letters for baseball in 1940, 1941, and 1942 and for basketball in 1941–42, 1942–43, and 1945–46. He was an All-Conference selection as an outfielder for the Aztecs in 1942, during which he compiled a .295 batting average (23 hits in 78 at bats) with two home runs and 19 runs batted in. After the 1942–43 hardwood season, Summers served in the military (US Army Air Corps) 1943–45. After his discharge, he returned to San Diego State in the fall of 1945. He again played hoops for the 1945–46 season, after which his teammates voted him “Honorary Captain”—the second-ranking team honor, “Most Valuable Player” being the highest honor.²

Hal Summers



AUTHOR'S COLLECTION

After that basketball season ended in 1946, Summers began his professional baseball career. He was initially signed by Cleveland on March 4 intending to “finish work for his college degree and report to Wilkes-Barre of the Class-A Eastern League, a Cleveland farm.”³ But on March 17 he was signed by Bakersfield, Cleveland’s farm club in the Class-C California League.⁴ However, on April 24, a week before the regular season was to begin, he was released.⁵ Two weeks later, on May 9, he was hired by Frisco Edwards, the manager of the Salem Senators of the Class-B Western International League.⁶

Edwards described Summers as “a power hitter.” Playing with Salem, Summers produced a .303 batting average with 13 homers and 96 RBIs in 121 games. As a flyhawk he fashioned a .972 fielding average, which ranked fifth among the 16 outfielders with at least 100 games.

Thanks to his solid 1946 performance, Summers began the 1947 campaign with the Triple-A Portland Beavers of the Pacific Coast League. But, after having played in just 7 of the first 26 games in which he went 3-for-22 (.136), he was optioned back to Salem. He responded with a .284 BA (52-for-183) in 49 games. At the end of June he was optioned again, this time to the Augusta Tigers, a Class-A farm club of the New York Yankees (South Atlantic League). Summers continued to perform solidly, producing a .290 BA (38-for-131) in 48 games. At the conclusion of the season, he was “recalled” by Portland and instructed “to report for another whirl with the club next year,” i.e. 1948.⁷ However, analogous to the 1947 campaign, after having seen limited action for the Beavers—2-for-5 in 4 of 12 games—he was farmed out. He appears to have been first offered to Denver, but the deal fell through and he was sent to a team at the Single-A level —again the Yankees farm club in Augusta, with whom he proceeded to win the Triple Crown.

AFTER—With a Class-A Triple Crown winner in their ranks, the Yankees wanted Summers to move up for the 1949 campaign to the Beaumont Exporters, their Double-A farm club in the Texas League. When Summers balked at this, Jack Maupin, the player-manager of the Meridian Millers in the Southeastern League (Class-B), intervened. Maupin and Summers had been teammates at San Diego High School. The Millers purchased Summers’s contract and he and Maupin became teammates again.⁸ Summers did not disappoint. He went on to lead the Southeastern League in batting average (.344, 19 points higher than runner-up John Tayoan’s .325), home runs (19, 3 more than second-place finisher Nesbit Wilson’s 16), and runs batted in (98, 2 more than silver medalist Benjamin Thorpe’s 96). Yes, Summers won another Triple Crown!

Summers was also chosen for the league’s end-of-the-season All-Star team. During the annual convention of the National Association (held in Baltimore, December 7–9), Summers was drafted by the Macon Peaches (Class-A South Atlantic League)—“Among the outstanding transactions of the winter was the drafting of Hal Summers by Macon.”⁹ Despite this success, and evidently feeling that a professional baseball career (in the minor leagues) was not in his best interests, he returned to San Diego State College as a graduate student. Having earned an AB degree in geography with a minor in sociology in June, 1946, Summers pursued studies in elementary education and in January, 1951 earned the requisite teaching credentials for the state of California. Subsequently, Summers continued his studies at San Diego State, earning the requisite state of California credentials for Education Administration (February 1953) and an MA in education (January 1957).¹⁰

Before the start of the 1951 season, the Greenville Spinners (Class-B Tri-State League) contacted Summers. An Augusta teammate of his, manager Vance Carlson,

Hal Summers: Summary of His Triple Crown and Before-and-After Performances.

	Year(s)	Level	G	AB	H	BA	HR	RBI
TC	1948	A	138	508	168	.331	28	115
	1946	B	121	436	132	.303	13	96
BEFORE	1947	AAA	7	22	3	.136	1	4
	1947	B	49	183	52	.284	2	31
	1947	A	48	131	38	.290	6	30
	1948	AAA	4	5	2	.400	0	0
	1946–48	B-AAA	229	777	227	.292	22	161
			154	524	153		15	108
AFTER	1949	B	110	384	132	.344	19	98

was hoping to get Summers back on the diamond. But Summers wired back that he was “definitely out of baseball and teaching school.”¹¹ For the next 19 years Summers was with the Chula Vista, California, Elementary School District, serving as a teacher, principal, and director of special services.¹² He passed away on September 12, 1970. The accompanying chart tabulates Summers’ 1948 Triple Crown and his before-and-after performances.

LARRY OSBORNE

Larry Osborne won the Triple Crown in 1960 with the Denver Bears (Class-AAA American Association). His circuit-leading batting average of .342 surpassed second-place finisher Carl Yastrzemski by three points. His 34 homers were four more than runner-up Steve Boros (his Bears teammate) collected, and his 119 runs batted in were equaled by Boros. In an after-the-season poll of American Association baseball writers, Osborne was chosen unanimously as the first baseman for the loop’s All-Star team.¹³ He was not,



Larry Osborne

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however, selected as the Most Valuable Player, that honor going to Boros.¹⁴

BEFORE—Scouted by Birmingham’s Bill Pierre while attending West Fulton High School in Atlanta, Osborne was signed by the Detroit Tigers on June 1, 1953.¹⁵ He then began his professional baseball career with the Montgomery Grays in the Class-A South Atlantic League,

Larry Osborne: Summary of His Triple Crown and Before-and-After Performances.

	Year(s)	Level	G	AB	H	BA	HR	RBI	
TC	1960	AAA	141	482	165	.342	34	119	
BEFORE	1953	A	58	171	32	.187	1	15	
	1954	B	138	518	120	.232	22	82	
	1955	A	138	519	133	.256	11	94	
	1956	A	130	466	117	.251	16	66	
	1957	AA, AAA	105	377	110	.292	15	77	
	1958	AAA	125	443	127	.287	19	97	
	1953–58	B-AAA	694	2494	639	.256	84	431	
			154	554	142		19	96	
		1957	AL	11	27	4	.148	0	1
		1958	AL	2	2	0	.000	0	0
	1959	AL	86	209	40	.191	3	21	
	1957–59	AL	99	238	44	.185	3	22	
	1964	AAA	131	401	89	.222	15	47	
	1965	AAA	134	461	125	.271	19	76	
	1966	AAA	126	329	76	.231	18	53	
	1967	AAA	114	345	90	.261	12	58	
	1969	AAA	72	214	60	.280	8	46	
AFTER	1964–69	AAA	577	1750	440	.251	72	280	
			154	467	117		19	75	
		1961	AL	71	93	20	.215	2	13
		1962	AL	64	74	17	.230	0	7
		1963	AL	125	385	76	.212	12	44
		1961–63	AL	260	525	113	.215	14	64
154	311			67	8	38			

making his professional baseball debut on June 18. He entered the game in the seventh inning as a pinch hitter and was fanned by Savannah's Courtney Stempel. In the ninth, he collected his first hit, a single. After getting two hits (both singles) in 27 at bats in his next eight games, he clouted his first home run off Columbia's Maurice Fisher. He ended up with a .187 batting average (32 hits in 171 at bats) with one homer.

He continued his career in the minors for the next five years, culminating with a solid .287 batting average and 97 RBIs with the Charleston Senators (Triple-A American Association)—second only to loop-leading Earl Hersch's 98. While Osborne had a couple of brief call-ups to the Big Show (11 games in 1957 and 2 games in 1958), he finally had a longer stay in the majors in 1959. But in his 86 games with the Tigers he managed to bat only .191 (40 hits in 209 at bats) and clout just three homers. So, it was back to the minors for 1960, during which he won the Triple Crown.

AFTER—Osborne was again back “to stay” in the majors starting in 1961. With the Tigers in 1961 and 1962, he compiled a batting average of .222 (37 hits in 167 at bats) in 135 games (mostly in pinch hitting assignments). Near the end of the 1963 spring training, the Tigers traded Osborne to Washington on March 23 for cash and a player to be named later (Wayne Comer).

Bob Lennon (1945–50, 1952–61) won the Triple Crown in 1954 with Nashville (Southern Association). SABR bio by Warren Corbett.

	Year(s)	Level	G	AB	H	BA	HR	RBI
TC	1954	AA	153	609	210	.345	64	161
BEFORE	1945–53	D-AAA	869	3097	824	.266	89	484
			<i>154</i>	<i>549</i>	<i>146</i>		<i>16</i>	<i>86</i>
AFTER	1955–61	AAA	762	2339	665	.284	125	422
	1965	AAA	<i>154</i>	<i>472</i>	<i>134</i>		<i>25</i>	<i>85</i>
	1954–57	NL	38	79	13	.165	3	4

Rocky Nelson (1942, 1946–62) won the Triple Crown in 1955 with Montreal (International League) and also in 1958 with Toronto (International League). SABR bio by David Fleitz.

	Year(s)	Level	G	AB	H	BA	HR	RBI
TC	1955	AAA	154	506	184	.364	37	130
BEFORE	1942–54	D-AAA	803	2866	922	.322	95	557
			<i>154</i>	<i>550</i>	<i>177</i>		<i>18</i>	<i>107</i>
	1949–54	NL, AL	285	740	178	.241	6	70
AFTER	1956–62	AAA	<i>154</i>	1660	498	.300	102	322
			<i>154</i>	<i>554</i>	<i>166</i>		<i>34</i>	<i>108</i>
	1958	AAA	148	522	170	.326	43	120
	1956–61	NL	335	654	169	.258	25	103
			<i>154</i>	<i>302</i>	<i>78</i>		<i>11</i>	<i>47</i>

With the 1963 Senators he had his only full-time major league campaign, turning in a .212 batting average (76 hits in 358 at bats) in 125 games, primarily playing first base during the first four months, before being relegated to pinch hitting duties during August and September.

After that, it was back to the minors for the remainder of his playing career, through 1969. As given on the Baseball-Reference website, “Osborne turned to scouting full time for Kansas City in 1970. Over the next six years he scouted for the A’s, Boston Red Sox, Montreal Expos and Twins. In 1976, he took a position as a crosschecker for the Major League Baseball Scouting Bureau. He remained in the Bureau for 17 years before taking another scouting job with the San Francisco Giants.” With San Francisco, Osborne’s primary job was to report on the Giants’ opponents, a role which he carried out for some 16 years, and for which he merited a 2010 World Series ring. He passed away on April 15, 2011.¹⁶

The accompanying chart tabulates Osborne’s 1960 Triple Crown and his before-and-after performances.

ADDITIONAL TC WINNERS

The following charts provide the pertinent statistics for Triple Crowns achieved by Bob Lennon, Rocky Nelson, Steve Bilko, Alonzo Perry, Pancho Herrera, and Gordy Coleman.

Steve Bilko (1945–63) won the Triple Crown in 1956 with Los Angeles (Pacific Coast League). SABR bio by Warren Corbett.

	Year(s)	Level	G	AB	H	BA	HR	RBI
TC	1956	Open	162	597	215	.360	55	164
BEFORE	1945–55	D-AAA	977	3477	1077	.310	168	724
			154	548	170		26	114
	1949–54	NL	266	870	213	.245	28	119
			154	503	123		16	69
AFTER	1957–63	Open,	394	1275	375	.294	90	269
		AAA	154	500	147		35	105
	1958–62	NL, AL	334	868	219	.252	48	157
			154	401	101		22	72

Alonzo Perry (1946–49, 1951, 1955–59, 1962–63) won the Triple Crown in 1956 with the Mexico City Reds (Mexican League). SABR bio by Dennis Degenhardt; see also Perry's "Player info" from the Baseball-Reference Bullpen.

	Year(s)	Level	G	AB	H	BA	HR	RBI
TC	1956	AA	123	451	177	.392	28	118
BEFORE	1946–48	NN2, NAL	32	59	17	.288	1	8
			113	398	145	.364	21	126
AFTER	1957–63	AA	617	2306	793	.344	89	481
			154	576	198		22	120

Pancho Herrera (1955–70, 1972, 1974) won the Triple Crown in 1959 with Buffalo (International League). SABR bio by Jose I. Ramirez; see also Herrera's "Player info" from the Baseball-Reference Bullpen.

	Year(s)	Level	G	AB	H	BA	HR	RBI
TC	1959	AAA	151	569	187	.329	37	128
BEFORE	1955–58	A, AAA	533	1901	562	.296	72	334
			154	548	162		21	77
	1958	NL	29	63	17	.270	1	6
AFTER	1962–74	A-AAA	1178	3717	1065	.286	202	676
			154	486	139		26	88
	1960–61	NL	271	912	247	.271	30	122
			154	517	140		17	69

Gordy Coleman (1953–56, 1959–67) won the Triple Crown in 1959 with Mobile (Southern Association). SABR bio by Charles F. Faber.

	Year(s)	Level	G	AB	H	BA	HR	RBI
TC	1959	AA	137	507	179	.353	30	110
BEFORE	1953–56	B, AAA	402	1607	519	.323	57	297
			154	616	199		22	114
AFTER	1960–67	AAA	165	558	157	.281	13	74
			154	523	147		12	69
	1959–67	N, ALL	773	2384	650	.273	98	387
			154	473	129		20	77

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Of the eight Triple Crowners presented in this article, only one of them did not reach the major leagues—Hal Summers. While Alonzo Perry did not play in the American or National circuits, he did play in the Negro Leagues. Most of the players had so-so major league careers—only three of them accumulated enough at bats (plate appearances) in a given season to qualify for the batting championship in the majors—Steve Bilko (1953), Pancho Herrera (1960) and Gordy Coleman (1961 and 1962). None of the players achieved an “emboldened” (i.e., league-leading) positive batting statistic in the Big Show; Bilko and Herrera were NL leaders in strikeouts—125 (in 1953) and 136 (in 1960), respectively. While none of the eight achieved the subsequent stardom in the major leagues one might expect based on their high-level minor league Triple Crown, the prestige of their minor league TC is indelible. Indeed, two of the players subsequently won a second Triple Crown in the minors—Summers 1948 and 1949 (Class-B). and Rocky Nelson (1955 and 1958). ■

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I gratefully thank the following people at San Diego State University for their kind cooperation and superb efforts in providing me with pertinent information on Hal Summers’s academic education and athletic performance at San Diego State College: Adrian Aguilar, Alexis Flores, SaBrina White, Jim Solien, Jessica Rentta, and Stephanie Anderson. I should also like to thank Cliff Blau for reviewing the information provided in the Appendix and stating that everything appears correct (email dated January 4, 2022).

NOTES

1. Lloyd Johnson and Miles Wolff, *The Encyclopedia of Minor League Baseball* (Durham, NC: Baseball America, 1997: 347, 411.
2. “Aztecs Nab Finale,” *San Diego Union*, March 04, 1946: 10.
3. “Cleveland Indians Sign Hal Summers,” *San Diego Union*, March 05, 1946: 12.
4. “Six new players have been signed by the Bakersfield Indians and will report for spring practice in April,” *Bakersfield Californian*, March 18, 1946: 11.
5. “Indians Will Play Sea Lions Tonight,” *Bakersfield Californian*, April 25, 1946: 5.
6. “Back to Bevos for B. Carney,” *Statesman Journal* (Salem, Oregon), May 10, 1949: 12.
7. “Beavers Call Players Back,” *Oregonian*, September 7, 1947: 27.
8. “The Barber Chair,” *San Diego Union*, May 10, 1949: 16.
9. Don Barton, “And How Is Sally?,” *Columbus* (South Carolina) *Record*, December 31, 1949: 6.
10. “Fifty-Third Annual Commencement, San Diego State College,” June 08, 1951, and personal communication from Registrar, San Diego State University, January 25, 2022.
11. Carter Latimer, “One In Half-Million,” *Greenville* (South Carolina) *News*, April 3, 1951: 10.
12. “Educator Summers Dies, Services Tuesday,” *Chula Vista Star-News* (California), September 13, 1950: 4. “Harold Summers Services Today,” *San Diego Union*, September 15, 1950: 15.
13. “Two Georgians Make Triple A All-Star Team,” *Atlanta Journal*, November 05, 1960: 6. “New Omaha Chosen,” *Omaha World-Herald*, November 05, 1960: 9. “Four Denver Players on A.A. Team,” *The Sporting News*, December 14, 1960: 33.
14. Watson Spoelstra, “Ferrell Plots Tiger Course on Rebuilding,” *The Sporting News*, October 26, 1960: 29.
15. Leo MacDonell, “Ned Picked To Face A’s,” *Detroit Times*, June 2, 1953: 25.
16. Rick Badie, “Longtime Athlete was ‘Consummate Baseball Player’,” *Atlanta Constitution*, April 18, 2011: B6.

APPENDIX

There were eight players for whom I needed numbers for the games, at bats, hits, home runs, and runs batted in for each season they played baseball professionally (excluding independent leagues, winter leagues, and instruction leagues). The quickest source for the needed information is Baseball-Reference. Unfortunately, there are some blanks in some of Baseball-Reference’s stat lines. I have done the research to fill in the blanks for each of these eight players. For each of the eight players I present a chart with the information as presented on Baseball-Reference. Entries bracketed with asterisks and shown in *boldface-italics* are from my research and fill in the blanks. The sources of my entries are provided beneath each chart.

Hal Summers

Year–Team	Level	G	AB	H	BA	HR	RBI
1947–POR	AAA	*7*	*22*	*3*	*.136*	*1*	*4*
1947–SAL	B	49	183	52	.284	2	31
1947–AUG	A	48	131	38	.290	6	30
1948–POR	AAA	*4*	*5*	*2*	*.400*	*0*	*0*

The stats for 1947 Portland and 1948 Portland were obtained by going through the box scores for Portland as presented in TSN. I also corroborated the box score info by checking the pertinent game accounts as presented in the *Oregon Journal* and the *Oregonian*. Here are the particulars:

1947**April 23 TSN**

1. Game on 4–11—1-for-5; single; 1-RBI.
2. Game on 4–12—0-for-3; 0-RBI.

April 30 TSN

3. Game on 4–17—1-for-3; double; 1-R; 2-RBI.
4. Game on 4–19—1-for-4; home run; 1-R; 1-RBI.
5. Game on 4–20 (1)—0-for-3; 0-RBI.
6. Game on 4–20 (2)—0-for-1; 0-RBI.

May 7 TSN

7. Game on 4–25—0-for-3; 0-RBI.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

1. The Portland Beavers batting averages as presented in the *Oregonian* April 29, 1947 (p 31) show Summers with 22 AB, 3 H, 1 D, 1 HR, and 4 RBI, with a .136 BA.
2. The following was stated in the *Oregon Journal* April 29, 1947 (p 19)—“Hal Summers, outfielder, and Wandell Mosser, pitcher, will be turned over to the Salem Club.”

1948**April 14 TSN**

1. Game on 4–03—0-for-1; 0-RBI.

April 21 TSN

2. Game on 4–09—1-for-1; single; 1-R; 0-RBI.
3. Game on 4–11 (1)—0-for-1; 0-RBI.
4. Game on 4–11 (2)—1-for-2; single; 0-RBI.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

1. A list of players' batting averages given in the *Oregon Journal* April 14, 1948 (p 38) shows Summers with 4 G, 5 AB, 2 H, 0 HR, and 0 RBI, with a .400 BA.
2. A list of batting averages for Beavers players given in the *Oregonian* April 22, 1948 (p 29) shows Summers with 5 AB, 2 H, and a Pct. of .400. Thus, there was no change from the prior week's chart.
3. A list of batting averages for Beavers players given in the *Oregonian* April 28, 1948 (p 22) does not include Summers, indicating that he was no longer with the Portland team.
4. In my search of Portland box scores in TSN for the 12 games played between April 12 and April 26, Summers was not shown as playing in any of the 12 games.

CONCLUSION: I'm completely comfortable claiming that the entries for Summers for his time with Portland in both 1947 and 1948 are accurate.

Bob Lennon

Year–Team	Level	G	AB	H	BA	HR	RBI
1950–JAC	A	115	431	120	.278	9	*64*
1952–NAS	A	61	235	65	.277	15	*35*
1954–NAS	AA	153	609	210	.345	64	*161*

The RBI stats for 1950 Jacksonville and 1952 and 1954 Nashville were taken from the stats given in the relevant editions of TSN BBG.

CONCLUSION: I'm completely comfortable claiming that the entries for Lennon for his RBIs in 1950, 1952, and 1954 are accurate.

ROCKY NELSON

Year–Team	Level	G	AB	H	BA	HR	RBI
1942–JOH	D	53	186	47	.253	0	*23*
1952–MON	AAA	2	3	1	.333	0	*1*

The RBI stats for 1942 Johnson City are taken from the “Final Appalachian Averages” presented in the Johnson City *Press* September 9, 1942 (p 7).

The RBI stats for 1952 Montreal are taken from the game account provided in the *Montreal Star* April 17, 1952 (p 37): the box score of the April 16 game shows Nelson with 1 RBI; the text description states, “Don Hoak had doubled in the first heat and scored on a clout of similar dimensions by Rocky Nelson, the new first baseman.”

Thus, in addition to adding the 1-RBI to Nelson’s stat line, a “1” should also be entered in the “2B” cell. Moreover, as stated in the text description given in the *Syracuse Post-Standard* April 18, 1952 (p 25), for the game on April 17, “Don Hoak singled, Jim Gilliam doubled, and Rocky Nelson drew a base on balls to load the sacks. Jim Pendleton grounded to Claude Corbitt and the sliding Nelson turned his ankle as Benny Zientara was tagging him out. Thus, a “1” should be entered in the “BB” cell. The appropriate entries for OBP, SLG, OPS, and TB, etc. should also be made.

CONCLUSION: I’m completely comfortable claiming that the entries for Nelson for his RBIs in 1942 and 1952 are accurate.

STEVE BILKO

Year–Team	Level	G	AB	H	BA	HR	RBI
1945–ALL	B	*1*	*1*	*1*	*1.000*	*0*	*1*

The information for Bilko comes from the *Allentown Morning Call*:

1. August 21, 1945 (p 16): “. . .and Steve Bilko, a first baseman from Nanticoke, scouted by Benny Borgman, has also been signed by the Allentown club.”
2. August 22, 1945, through September 09, 1945: Bilko did not appear in the box scores in any of the 17 games played by Allentown.
3. September 10, 1945: Bilko played in the first game of the season-ending double header, the box score showing that he played left field with the following statistics: 1 AB, 0 R, 1 H, 0 O, 0 A, 1 Run batted in, and 1 Two-base hit. Bilko did not play in the second game.

CONCLUSION: I’m completely comfortable claiming that the entries for Bilko for 1945 are accurate.

ALONZO PERRY

Year–Team	Level	G	AB	H	BA	HR	RBI
1951–SYR	AAA	9	18	5	.278	*0*	*3*
1963–MON	AA	130	*496*	*175*	*.353*	*17*	*90*

The 1951 HR and RBI statistics come from checking the box scores in TSN and as well as the game accounts in the *Syracuse Post-Standard* for all of Syracuse’s games for the April 19–May 29 period. Here are the details of Perry’s 9 games:

1. April 21: 0–0–0, 0-RBI (walked as PH).
2. May 01: 1–0–0, 0-RBI (PH).
3. May 04: 1–0–0, 0-RBI (PH).
4. May 05: 4–2–3, 1-RBI (1B).
5. May 06 (1): 4–1–1, 1-RBI (1B).
6. May 06 (2): 3–0–0, 1-RBI (1B).
7. May 07: 4–0–1, 0-RBI (1B).
8. May 09: 0–0–0 (1B, defensive replacement).
9. May 13: 1–0–0, 0-RBI (PH).

The 1963 stats are from TSN BBG.

CONCLUSION: I’m completely comfortable claiming that the entries for Perry for 1951 and 1963 are accurate.

PANCHO HERRERA

Year–Team	Level	G	AB	H	BA	HR	RBI
1966–SYR/COL	AAA	129	423	109	.258	15	57
1968–CAR	A	83	*286*	*88*	*.308*	*22*	*67*

The 1966 BA is that shown in TSN BBG for Herrera's time with both Syracuse and Columbus.

The 1968 stats for AB, H, BA, HR, and RBI are those shown in TSN BBG for Herrera with Ciudad del Carmen.

CONCLUSION: I'm completely comfortable claiming that the entries for Herrera for 1966 and 1968 are accurate.

GORDY COLEMAN

Year–Team	Level	G	AB	H	BA	HR	RBI
1954–SPA	B	137	556	177	.318	13	*100*
1955–IND	AAA	4	17	4	*.235*	*0*	*0*

The RBI entry for 1954 is from TSN BBG.

The HR and RBI entries for 1955 are from going through the box scores in TSN; here are the details for Coleman's 4 games:

1. Sept. 03: 1-for-5, 0 HR, 0 RBI.
2. Sept. 04: 0-for-4, 0 HR, 0 RBI.
3. Sept. 05 (1): 3-for-4, 0 HR, 0 RBI NOTE: one of his hits was a double; adjust TB and SLG accordingly.
4. Sept. 05 (2): 0-for-4, 0 HR, 0 RBI.

CONCLUSION: I'm completely comfortable claiming that the entries for Coleman for 1954 and 1955 are accurate.

LARRY OSBORNE

Year–Team	Level	G	AB	H	BA	HR	RBI
1964–TOR/ATL	AAA	131	401	89	*.222*	15	47

The 1964 BA is that shown in TSN BBG for Osborne's time with both Toronto and Atlanta.

CONCLUSION: I'm completely comfortable claiming that the BA entry for Osborne for 1964 is accurate.

Remembering Bob

Marshall Adesman

One of the great joys of my life was the dozen or so years I spent working in minor league baseball. In that time, I bore the titles of General Manager, Assistant General Manager, and Business Manager, and even today, some thirty years after drawing my last baseball paycheck, many of my memories still put a smile on my face. But this one is, most definitely, my very favorite.

In the minor leagues, we always prided ourselves on our abilities to steal. No, not like Rickey Henderson, more like the TV networks each attempting their own version of “Real Housewives of...” We would hear about a promotion, gate attraction, or ad campaign that was clever and successful, and our first thought was “Will it work in my town?” (Our second generally was “Who can we get to pay for this?” but that’s another story.) Stealing from one another was (and still is, I’m sure) common and encouraged openly. But in my two years as Amarillo’s assistant general manager (1979 and 1980, when we were San Diego’s Texas League affiliate), we had a nightly feature that, to my knowledge, has never been duplicated and, in all probability, never will be.

Like most minor league teams, the Gold Sox had a booster club. It wasn’t very large, befitting our fan base, but they were all good folks who cared about the team and those of us who were trying, much like Quixote, to make a success of the venture. And two of our most active boosters were Bob and LaDean Halinski.

Bob was a short but powerfully built man, a native New Yorker whose accent had long since disappeared into the West Texas wind. LaDean was tall and thin, the owner of one of the world’s great lasagna recipes, which was proven and re-proven on numerous occasions. They were both always available if we needed help, either at the ballpark or at home. And they both had a fabulous sense of humor. Bob, especially, could tell a story like no other—his eyes would get a certain gleam as he launched into the joke, his expressive face would play all the parts as he led you to the inevitably uproarious punchline, and then he would laugh right along with you.

LaDean frequently helped us in the office, occasionally in the concession stand. Their son, Herb, spent one full season working the scoreboard, and I mean that literally. It was an old board, with only balls, strikes and outs operated electronically. The inning-by-inning totals, as well as the accumulated runs, hits, and errors, had to be dropped in by hand, so Herb sat inside the scoreboard night after night with a bird’s-eye view of 90 percent of the ballpark, excluding, of course, anything hit beyond the warning track. Meanwhile Bob would set up shop just a few feet inside the main gate and hawk our programs, using his ready good humor and natural effusiveness to sell more than we could have rightly expected. Then around the fifth or sixth inning, he would join LaDean in their box seats along the third base line.

I don’t recall exactly when or how we began what was to become a nightly routine—probably a chance remark on a cool night when the crowd was sparse. Sitting up in the press box as public address announcer, I had the grandstands, bleachers, and entire playing field laid out before me like a mosaic, and I could plainly see Bob take his seat next to LaDean. I’d wait for a natural break—generally an inning change, though occasionally when a new pitcher was coming into the game—and launch into my spiel:

Ladies and gentlemen, we have a special guest in the ballpark tonight. You’ve seen him in numerous movies, like “One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest” and “Chinatown,” he’s here tonight watching the Gold Sox, please welcome MR. JACK NICHOLSON!

And Bob would stand up, wave to the crowd (most of whom were friends and acquaintances of his), and sit down.

We did this every night, the only variation being the name of the personality. It could be anyone, alive or dead, from any profession. I rarely told Bob what name I planned on dropping that night; often I didn’t know myself until the words started to come. Sometimes we would add some spice to this stew, like when I

introduced him as Charles de Gaulle (deceased nearly a decade), and then played the French national anthem on the kazoo while Bob waved.

One night we introduced him as Walter Alston, the former manager of the Dodgers. Our owner and general manager, John Dittrich, had been in the office or concession stand when the announcement was made, and wandered into the stands just a moment later. A woman rushed up to him. “Oh, Mr. Dittrich,” she said with great excitement, “Where is Walter Alston?” “Somewhere in Ohio,” John accurately replied. “Oh, no, he’s here in the ballpark tonight!” she responded, and raced off to find her hero.

The night we introduced Bob as Jack Nicholson, a woman asked for an autograph. Bob tried to explain to her about the gag, but she wouldn’t listen. Even her husband tried to dissuade her, saying “They do this every night out here.” She would not be swayed. “I’ve seen all of your pictures!” she exclaimed. Must not have been looking too closely, because Bob did not resemble the great actor at all. Finally, to get her off his back so he could quietly watch at least a couple of innings, Bob signed. “See, I knew it was you!” she said triumphantly. Bob didn’t even spell it right, he later told me. And then some fellow sitting a row or two behind him bought the pencil he used to sign!

Occasionally Bob made suggestions to me. One time he found a huge Stetson hat, and I introduced him as Hoss Cartwright, then played the *Bonanza* theme on the kazoo. Another time he put a paper bag on his head and was announced as the Unknown Fan. (At the time, a comedian was appearing on TV with a bag on his head, telling jokes as “The Unknown Comedian.”) Later, LaDean also donned a bag and, along with their friend Sarge Baker, they were introduced as the Unknown Fan and his Family. I should point out that Sarge, ostensibly the sibling, was a good foot taller than Bob. When we had the Famous Chicken, LaDean worked for a week or more on a very specific costume, and at an appropriate time we introduced a very special guest... Colonel Sanders! Looked just like him, too, complete with an empty bucket, and a cleaver to help fill that bucket. Teddy Giannoulas, the Chicken, had not been told in advance about this addition to his act, but he played along perfectly, feigning fear for his life and then running off and hiding in the bullpen.

And sometimes life would imitate art. One afternoon, just hours before we were to begin a homestand against El Paso, the great Warren Spahn walked into our office. He was a roving pitching coach for the



AUTHOR'S COLLECTION

Bob Halinski

Angels that year, and he was in town to watch some of his young charges. That night he sat up high in the grandstand behind home plate to get a good view of what they were throwing, and how. I introduced him as a Hall of Famer, winner of 363 games, etc. Spahn obligingly stood up and waved to the crowd, but from my perch in the press box I could see that no one was looking at him, they were all turned towards the third base side, looking at Bob! I grabbed the mike and said, “No, people, look behind home plate, Warren Spahn really is here tonight!” Only then did people see him; poor Spahn had to be filled in later on why people had responded like they did.

After two years I left Amarillo to take over as GM in Waterloo, Iowa. We didn’t do this promotion there; we didn’t have a Bob Halinski. But Bob and LaDean and I always stayed in touch, and when we moved to Durham, North Carolina, they came to visit a couple of times. We rehashed all the old stories, and he told some new ones with his usual panache, and my face would ache for days from all the smiling and laughing I’d done.

One summer night, out of the blue, LaDean called to say that Bob had passed away. He’d contracted a disease so rare it generally only strikes children, and then very few of those. He was in a great deal of pain at the end, so much so that death was a relief. He was not even 60 years old.

As you probably can tell, I think of him often and miss him a lot, and wonder why he died so young. While writing this, I think I now understand. I’m not an especially religious person by nature, but I think it’s likely God needed someone who could tell a good joke, or carry on a great running gag. “Ladies and gentlemen, we have a special guest in heaven tonight...”

Rest easy, pardner. ■

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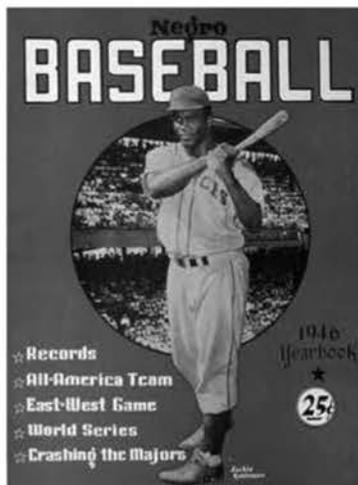
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The Hidden Potato Trick

Steven M. Glassman

Roger Bresnahan was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1945 for his achievements as a catcher. His great-nephew, Dave Bresnahan, was also a catcher, and in 1988 had his uniform number retired by the Williamsport Bills... for throwing a potato.

David Joseph Bresnahan was born on December 29, 1961, in Chicago, Illinois. Known to his teammates as “Brez” growing up, he rose through the ranks of Little League and played at Gerard Catholic High School in Phoenix, Arizona. Brez was named to the *Arizona Republic’s* Class AA All-State First-Team and was the *Arizona Daily Star’s* Super Nine Catcher, while batting .471 and throwing out 60% of baserunners as a senior in 1980. His amateur career included stints in American Legion ball with Valley West Services (1978) and Kerr’s in Phoenix (1980), the Phoenix College Bears (1981–82, Arizona Community College Athletic All-Conference Catcher), and as a two-year letter winner at NAIA (National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics) with the Grand Canyon College Antelopes (1983–84).¹ Originally a right-handed hitter, he became a self-made switch-hitting catcher after “he broke his right hand throwing one summer.”²

On June 4, 1984, the Seattle Mariners drafted him as the second pick in the 18th round (446th overall) of the Primary Phase of the Amateur Draft.³ Bresnahan signed with the Mariners on June 11, 1984, and was assigned to Bellingham (Washington) in the short-season Class A Northwest League. He got off to a good start—.259/.411/.315 in 64 games—in his first professional season that summer, but was released by the Mariners on June 17, 1985, after a subpar performance (.177/.288/.260 in 31 games) with the Class A Wausau Timbers of the Midwest League.⁴ The Cleveland Indians acquired him on March 21, 1986, because he had good catching skills and was well-liked by his teammates. In the chapter “The Great Potato Pick-Off Play” from Mark Bowden’s book *Road Work*, Bowden wrote the following about Bresnahan: “An avid fan and amateur baseball historian, he approached the game with an irrepressible fun streak that endeared him to players, coaches, fans, the media, and, above all, his fellow players.”⁵

Bresnahan was assigned to Class A Waterloo where he served as the team’s backup catcher and was a mid-season Midwest League All-Star selection, after compiling a slash line of .221/.347/.327 in 89 games and setting career bests in almost every offensive category. After Waterloo won the 1986 Midwest League Championship, the Indians rewarded manager Steve Swisher and most of the players (including Bresnahan) with promotion to the Indians AA affiliate of the Eastern League for 1987, the Williamsport Bills.⁶ But a short way into the season, on May 20, 1987, Swisher was promoted again, this time to the struggling Class AAA Buffalo Bisons squad of the American Association.

The Bisons had gotten off to a bad start, 11–22, and when Swisher went up, the Indians demoted manager Orlando Gomez to Williamsport (14–16). While Swisher was “a gung ho leader who owned [the players’] loyalty and esteem,” Gomez was unpopular with the players, “an emotional man, and his feelings about the demotion showed.”⁷ The players were also unhappy about Bresnahan being demoted to Class A Kinston of the Carolina League. (Bresnahan had been hitting under .200 and reportedly there was a hot catching prospect in Kinston he could help season.⁸) The Bills took the field the day after Bresnahan left town with the right sleeves of their blue-and-red jerseys rolled up as a gesture of mourning.⁹ After playing nine games for Kinston, Bresnahan was promoted back to Williamsport when starting catcher Dain Syverson was hurt.¹⁰ By that time, the Bills were already out of the Eastern League playoff picture.

Bresnahan originally thought of using a potato in a game as early as junior college, but hadn’t pulled the prank then because “the games had all seemed too important.”¹¹ But with the Bills out of the playoff race, the idea came back to him. He brought up using a potato in a game with his roommate Rob Swain at Joey’s Place, a restaurant/bar in Williamsport. Bresnahan did some research. Most of his teammates liked the idea except for pitcher Mike Poehl, the Indians’ number one pick in the June 1985 draft. Poehl was

more concerned about his statistics than his team's won-loss record and "[h]e told Bresnahan he thought it would be real funny so long as it didn't happen in his game."¹²

Bresnahan said "that the trick would be to make a runner on third believe the ball had been overthrown into left field. Then he could be tagged out at home with the actual baseball. Furthermore, there 'would have to be a potato shaped the right size.'"¹³ Bresnahan also figured the best opportunity to do this was during a doubleheader, because he would probably play in one of those games. The only doubleheader left on the Bills' schedule was Monday, August 31, versus the Phillies at Bowman Field in Williamsport.¹⁴ Two days before the doubleheader, Bresnahan had teammate and first baseman Bob Gergan phone a friend who was a major league umpire, Tim Tschida.¹⁵ Tschida told him there was not a clear rule (at the time) for what to do if a potato were substituted for the ball, and that if he were the umpire he would eject the player from the game.

Bresnahan went to Weis Market in Williamsport to purchase the potatoes and through trial and error, he managed to peel and carve ones that were shaped like baseballs. He also got another wish: he was starting game one of the doubleheader and Poehl was his batterymate. Poehl, who was still more concerned with his earned run average, still did not want any part of Bresnahan's stunt because he did not want the run counted against him. Gergan reassured Poehl that the run wouldn't count because the situation was not in the rule book. Poehl feeling the pressure from his teammates, "reluctantly" told them, "'Do whatever you want.'"¹⁶

In the top of the fifth with the Phillies leading, 1-0, catcher Rick Lundblade led off with a single and moved to second on a sacrifice by center fielder Gib Siebert. Designated hitter Steve Williams grounded out to second and Lundblade advanced to third. Before shortstop Ken Jackson stepped to the plate, Bresnahan asked for time from home plate umpire Scott Potter.¹⁷ He told Potter he needed to change mitts because there was an issue with the netting in his glove. The guys on the bench, except for Gomez, knew what Bresnahan was up to. When he went to the dugout, Bresnahan retrieved a new glove: one pre-loaded with the potato.

Bresnahan went into his crouch to receive the first pitch from Poehl. Still not wanting any part of this stunt, Poehl threw a pitch low and outside. Potter yelled "'Ball!'" and Bresnahan threw the potato past Swain into left field. Lundblade, thinking there was an overthrow, was told to go home by third base coach Joe Lefebvre. Lefebvre looked out at Bills left fielder

Miguel Roman, who wondered what was thrown his way. Lundblade proceeded to home plate where Bresnahan was waiting for him—with a baseball.

The crowd of 3,258 was just as confused as Lefebvre, Lundblade, the Reading Phillies, and Potter. The potato, now in pieces, was retrieved and shown to Phillies manager George Culver and Potter. Potter was very angry at Bresnahan because he believed he was being "shown up" by the prank. Bresnahan told Potter he was not trying to do that, and that the run should not count. Potter, unconvinced, said that the run counted. Bresnahan was charged with an error and the run was unearned.

Following the play, Bresnahan stayed in the game after the Phillies were retired that inning.¹⁸ The Bills came back and won the first game of the doubleheader, 4-3. Gomez pulled him from the game and told Bresnahan to meet him in the office following the game. Gomez went over to the Phillies dugout and apologized to them. A few months later, Culver told Jayson Stark, "But we weren't that upset, really. We thought it was kind of funny."¹⁹

Gomez called Bresnahan into his office following the first game of the doubleheader to tell him, "'What you do, Brez, is very embarrassing to the team.'"²⁰ Bresnahan was fined \$50.00 and "his teammates took up an immediate collection."²¹

Gomez also contacted Jeff Scott, Indians Head of Player Development. Gomez knew that Bresnahan was one of the more popular members on the squad. He did not like demoting him to Kinston and "felt that the catcher resented him for it" and that Bresnahan was giving Gomez payback by throwing the potato.²² Bills Assistant General Manager Rick Muntean said, "The word got around immediately, and our phone did not stop ringing off the hook about, 'This guy's a bum. I hope he's gone. Get him out of town,' all that stuff. You'd have to know Williamsport. Williamsport was the birthplace of Little League Baseball. They take it seriously over there."²³

The next day, September 1, Bresnahan received a phone call from the team trainer to report to Gomez's office. Gomez delivered the news that he was being released by the Indians. Bresnahan had been expecting to be ejected and fined, not fired. He spoke to Scott. Scott liked him as a person and a player, but he supported the organization's decision to fire Bresnahan. As Tom Speicher wrote in 1997, for the tenth anniversary of the stunt: "Ray Keyes, the late editor of the *Williamsport Sun-Gazette*, revealed in his game story, which appeared on the Associated Press wire service, that Bresnahan tossed a potato during the contest. 'If



In August 2022, the Williamsport Crosscutters plan to commemorate Bresnahan's trick by renaming the team for a night and selling Great Potato Caper collectibles, including the shirt shown here.

Ray hadn't mentioned it in his story, people might still be scratching their heads wondering what happened,' [Jim] Carpenter [sports editor of the *Sun-Gazette* said]. Once the word was out, the floodgates opened."

Bresnahan told Speicher, "After being released, I got home at 10:30 [AM] and the phone was ringing. It was a writer in Arizona who said he saw the story on the AP wire, and he told me that everyone wanted a piece of me because of the potato thing. When I told him I just got released, he said that just added more spice to the story."²⁴ Bresnahan's teammates were flabbergasted and for about an hour Bresnahan was depressed, thinking the stunt had been a bad idea after all."²⁵ He contacted his father who thought the prank was funny, and Brez ended up coughing and crying with laughter at the other end of the phone.²⁶

On September 2, on the way to Bowman field to clean out his locker, Bresnahan purchased another bag of potatoes at Weis Market. Rick Muntean, the Bills' Assistant General Manager, recalled it vividly: "I saw him come to the clubhouse with a sack of potatoes." In their lockers, Bresnahan left a potato for each teammate and put the rest on Gomez's desk with the following note: "'Orlando, you really do not expect me to pay the \$50 fine levied on me. However, I will oblige you by paying you these fifty potatoes. This spud's for you—Brez'"²⁷

During a radio interview, "Williamsport General Manager Bill Terlecky decided to take advantage of the publicity and offered to let fans in for a potato and \$1.00 general admission instead of the usual \$2.75" for the last Bills home game.²⁸ "Team officials said they collected only two bushels of potatoes, but fans

also had collected spuds, complete with Bresnahan's autograph. About two dozen fans crowded around the catcher as he signed his name and wrote 'This Spud's for You.'²⁹ According to the *Los Angeles Times*: "More than 100 of the 1,518 fans showed up with a [potato]."³⁰

Numerous news outlets including *Baseball America*, *Sports Illustrated*, *The Sporting News*, *Time*, and *USA Today* carried the story. Media requests poured into the Bills offices. Bresnahan was a guest on (then) NBC's "Late Night with David Letterman" and "Game of the Week" with Marv Albert.³¹ He appeared on the air in his native Chicago with the Cubs' Harry Caray. Jokingly, Bresnahan considered running for governor of Idaho. Later in the year, the *Chicago Tribune* named him "Sports Person of the Year" for "attempting to have a little fun with life and to inject lost levity into sports."³² The *Los Angeles Times*'s Scott Ostler wrote: "Of all the scammers of 1987, Bresnahan was the most original, the only one who immediately admitted his crime and the only one who didn't wind up with a slap on the wrist, a book deal and a modeling contract. Standing above the rest is Dave Bresnahan, supreme symbol of the absurdity of it all."³³ *Baseball America* honored Bresnahan with one of "minor league baseball's 1987 Flying Fickle Finger of Fate awards."³⁴

The following season, on May 30, 1988, the Bills (who were hosting the Phillies) held a "Dave Bresnahan Night" at Bowman Field in front of 2,734 in attendance. Every fan who brought a potato paid one dollar admission. By the night's end, the Bills had collected six bushels for a local charity.³⁵ Bresnahan autographed both baseballs and potatoes. His uniform number 59 was retired in center field. During the 30-minute celebration, Bresnahan reenacted the throw with Lundblade, who was playing for the AAA Maine Guides of the International League. *The New York Times*'s Ira Berkow wrote in a June 8, 1988, article: "One of those who appreciated the potato play is new general manager of Williamsport, Rick Muntean. 'Baseball purists ask why he made a travesty of the game,' said Muntean, in remarks at home plate during the ceremony. 'But we think Dave did something that is the essence of baseball—he had fun with it. At a time when the business of baseball dominates the headlines, he brought baseball back to the field.'"³⁶

"I remember a black-and-white film of Lou Gehrig when his number was retired," Bresnahan told the crowd. "He said he felt like the luckiest man on the face of the earth. I feel luckier, because Gehrig had to hit .340 and play in more than 2,000 consecutive games to get his number retired. All I had to do is hit less than .150 and throw a potato."³⁷

Bresnahan did receive some offers from other teams to play with them. “Several teams wanted to sign him the following spring, but all had plans to start him in High-A ball,” wrote Kevin Czerwinski in 2006 for *MinorLeagueBaseball.com*. But Bresnahan “realized that much of the interest in signing him was gimmick-oriented so he passed on all the offers.”³⁸ Little did he realize that the celebrations of his potato caper were only just beginning.

The Bills, who were a New York Mets affiliate in 1991, moved to Binghamton, New York, after that season.³⁹ Minor League Baseball returned to Williamsport in 1994 as a short-season A New York-Pennsylvania League affiliate of the Chicago Cubs. Bresnahan’s number was retired for a second time on August 29, 1997.⁴⁰

In 2000, The Baseball Reliquary, Inc. added the potato used in the game to its collection, but Bresnahan states it can’t be the right one because the actual one fell apart after left fielder Miguel Roman retrieved it. “I peeled the potato. When I threw it, it broke into ten pieces. If someone wants to [claim it’s the real thing]...I’m not saying that it isn’t, but it ain’t.”⁴¹ Bresnahan was also a 2002 Baseball Reliquary Shrine of the Eternals Candidate.⁴²

On August 18, 2007, the Williamsport Crosscutters, a short-season Class A New York-Pennsylvania League affiliate of the Philadelphia Phillies, celebrated the 20th anniversary of the potato incident with a Dave Bresnahan Bobblehead for the first 1,000 fans. Bresnahan attended the contest with family and friends. The celebration was sponsored by Professional Petroleum, Minor League Baseball Alumni, and WILQ Radio. Prior to the Crosscutters night game against the State College Spikes, he was interviewed on the field about the hidden potato trick and his life following the incident. He signed autographs (including the bobblehead) behind the stands after the interview. He later told Yahoo News: “They gave away bobbleheads [where] I’m holding a potato. There’s one on eBay right now. A couple sold for over a hundred bucks this week. For kicks and giggles, I looked up what Barry Bonds’s was selling for, and I’m crushing him. I really don’t understand.”⁴³ The Spikes defeated the Crosscutters, 4–1, in front of 2,434 fans.

He was inducted into the Bowman Field Hall of Fame on January 23, 2012, as “part of the Crosscutters’ sixth annual Hot Stove and Dinner & Auction with the Phillies.”⁴⁴

On August 31, 2022, the Crosscutters—now a Draft League member—announced that they, too, will “commemorate the 35th anniversary of Dave Bresnahan’s Great Potato Caper.” For that night, when they will

be playing the Trenton Thunder, “the Williamsport Crosscutters will be rebranding to the Great Potato Capers for the August 31 game.”⁴⁵ Furthermore, “The first 1,000 fans attending the game will receive a limited-edition “Potato Ball.” Special Great Potato Caper jerseys, all featuring Bresnahan’s name, will be available to fans in an online auction.”⁴⁶

Bresnahan’s Bills uniform also hangs in a Scottsdale, Arizona, restaurant. Following his playing career, Bresnahan held positions as a real estate salesman, stockbroker, and projects manager.⁴⁷ Now living in Tempe, Bresnahan has a wife, Julie, and three sons—Colin, Ryan and Matthew. “He’s told them about The Great Potato Caper, but stresses that they aren’t allowed to pull such stunts. ‘I’m trying to teach them life lessons and the potato thing was all in good humor,’” he told Czerwinski in 2006.⁴⁸ He added that he “meant no disrespect to his teammates, the opposition, his manager or the game.”⁴⁹ ■

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Notes

1. Grand Canyon’s first baseball season was in 1953. They were in the NAIA from 1968 through 1990 and NCAA Division II (1999–2013) and is currently NCAA Division I (1991–98, 2014–present). Bresnahan was voted to the *Arizona Republic* Class AA Central Division Football Team at Quarterback as a senior at Gerard Catholic in 1979.
2. Mark Bowden, “The Great Potato Pick-Off Play,” *Road Work*, New York: Penguin Group, 210.
3. Grand Canyon’s most notable draftee was 1993 American League Rookie of the Year Tim Salmon in the third round in June 1989.
4. “Timbers receive top Seattle draft choice,” *Daily Tribune*, June 18, 1985: 6.
5. Mark Bowden, 211.
6. Williamsport was returning to minor league baseball for the first time since 1976 when they were an AA affiliate of the Indians in the Eastern League.
7. Mark Bowden, 210.
8. Mark Bowden, 211. The team Bresnahan was demoted to was in Kinston, not Kingston. It was not clear which catching prospect Gomez was referring to on the Kinston roster. Kinston had three other catchers on its roster in 1987: Lew Kent, Peter Kuld, and Doyle Wilson.
9. Mark Bowden. It is not known the exact date of this game.
10. Mark Bowden. It is not known the exact dates when Bresnahan was demoted to Kinston and promoted back to Williamsport.
11. Mark Bowden, 212.
12. Mark Bowden.
13. Mark Bowden.
14. The Phillie Phanatic was scheduled to appear during the doubleheader.
15. Tschida was in his third season as a major league baseball umpire at the time. He umpired through the 2012 season.

16. Mark Bowden, 214.
17. Potter umpired 89 games in the National League from 1991 through 1997.
18. Bresnahan was not the first baseball player to attempt the hidden potato trick in a game. In May, 1889 a Staten Island Athletic Club player named Small was one earliest known attempts in a game versus Yale University. A Lock Haven (Pennsylvania) player named Dunkle tried versus Williamsport in 1895. Another occurred by a Lafayette (Louisiana) catcher (Walter Stephenson or Ted Bubash) in a 1934 Evangeline League game. See Peter Morris, *A Game of Inches* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2010), 329.
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25. Mark Bowden, 218.
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29. "Potato Ploy Has Fans Rooting for Catcher," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 3, 1987: 73.
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Women in Baseball
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Back-to-Back Champions in Different Leagues

The 1997–98 Buffalo Bisons

Gordon Gattie

Winning a baseball championship is a challenging endeavor. Winning a single championship at the highest classification in the minor leagues (Triple-A)—with the added complexity of countless player transactions and few multiyear players as a stabilizing force—can be even more challenging. Winning back-to-back championships at Triple-A—while switching leagues because the first league folded—is an even more difficult achievement. The Buffalo Bisons accomplished that feat. The 1997 Buffalo Bisons were the last championship team from the third incarnation of the American Association (AA). After the 1997 season, the AA was dissolved, with AA teams reassigned to the International League (IL) and Pacific Coast League (PCL). The 1998 Buffalo Bisons won the Governor’s Cup trophy as International League champions, the only minor league club at the Triple-A or Double-A levels to win back-to-back titles in two *different* leagues.

The Buffalo Bisons joined the AA for the 1985 season when Bob Rich Jr. purchased the Wichita Aeros and moved them to Buffalo, New York. The Bisons enjoyed regular-season success during the 1990s, reaching the postseason in 1991, 1992, 1995, 1996, 1997, and 1998. In 1991, 1992, and 1995, the Bisons lost in the finals, while in 1996, they lost in the semifinals. During 1991, the Bisons won their first division title since joining the AA, winning the East Division by six games, though they lost to the Denver Zephyrs, three games to two, in the Championship Finals. Buffalo won the East Division during the following season by four games over the Indianapolis Indians, but were swept by the Oklahoma City 89ers four games to zero in the finals. In 1995, the Bisons returned to the Championship Finals, but lost the deciding fifth game to the Louisville Redbirds. In 1996, the Bisons won the East division by six games, but lost the first-round series to second-place Indianapolis three games to two.

The ballclub had high hopes for a successful 1997 season, especially considering the continued success of the parent Cleveland Indians. Several players contributing at the major-league level had recently had productive stops at Triple-A Buffalo, including Brian

Giles, Albie Lopez, and Jeromy Burnitz, and the major league pipeline was flowing well.

Buffalo started the season in exciting fashion, defeating the Nashville Sounds in extra innings and drawing the largest Opening Day attendance across the minor leagues (19,576).¹ After Opening Day the Bisons floundered, compiling a 10–10 April record. Their 16–11 May record moved them into second place, only three and a half games out of first place after a 14-inning win over Louisville. On June 20, Bartolo Colon made Bisons history when he became the first pitcher to throw a nine-inning no-hitter in North AmeriCare Park. Colon no-hit the New Orleans Zephyrs during Buffalo’s 4–0 win. He walked the second batter he faced, who was subsequently thrown out attempting to steal second base, then retired the next 25 consecutive batters. In his first start after a demotion from Cleveland, Colon struck out eight Zephyrs, with the outfielders recording only three fly outs. That same evening, the Bisons celebrated their 10-millionth fan to attend a Buffalo Bisons ballgame at North AmeriCare Park (formerly known as Pilot Field and the Downtown Ballpark) since its 1988 opening.³ As July arrived, a seven-game winning streak moved the Bisons into first place over Indianapolis, where they remained for the rest of the season.

Buffalo finished with an 87–57 record, winning the Eastern Division title. They led the AA with 711 runs, 182 home runs, and a team .782 OPS. Their 3.66 team ERA was the league’s third best. All-Star first baseman Richie Sexson paced the AA with 31 home runs and finished third with 88 RBIs. Outfielder Trenidad Hubbard finished third with a .312 batting average and tied for third with 26 steals, while outfielder Alex Ramirez led AA hitters with eight triples. Roland de la Maza led Buffalo pitchers with nine wins and a 2.90 ERA, fifth among qualifying AA pitchers.

In the Eastern Division playoff series, the Bisons defeated the Indianapolis Indians, three games to two, with the deciding game highlighted by a five-run fourth inning sparked by a Hubbard three-run triple.⁴ In the Championship Series, Buffalo finally savored a

championship by defeating the Iowa Cubs in three straight games. The final game was filled with dramatics as the Cubs tied the game with two ninth-inning runs. A caught stealing sent the game into extra innings. Sean Casey, who had joined the club less than a month earlier, hit a tenth-inning solo home run to give Buffalo the lead, and David Weathers pitched the final two innings to earn the series-clinching victory.⁵ Torey Lovullo was named playoff MVP. Following the series, seven players—Brian Anderson, Bruce Aven, Sean Casey, Einar Diaz, Richie Sexson, Dave Weathers, and Enrique Wilson—were called up to Cleveland for the stretch run.⁶ As of May 2022, the AA championship trophy still remains with the Bisons.

Following the 1997 season, the AA ceased operations, citing increased travel costs and expansion at the major league level. Buffalo joined the Indianapolis Indians and Louisville Redbirds from the AA, along with an expansion Triple-A franchise, the Durham Bulls, in the expanded 14-team IL. The Bisons had played in the IL from 1901 to 1970, and were eager to rekindle their in-state rivalry against Rochester and Syracuse. The Bisons would have ample opportunities to meet their rivals, as the team moved into the North Division, joining Ottawa, Pawtucket, Rochester, Scranton-Wilkes Barre, and Syracuse.

Although the Bisons switched leagues, they maintained their affiliation with the Cleveland Indians. There were some personnel changes; manager Brian Graham joined the major-league Cleveland Indians for the 1998 season and was replaced by Jeff Datz, who had guided the Double-A Akron Aeros. Pitching coach Gary Ruby was replaced by Bud Black. However, hitting coach Dave Keller and trainer Lee Kuntz remained with the Bisons.

The 1998 Bisons started the season with little fanfare. Although they defeated Rochester, 4–0, on Opening Day, they compiled an 11–9 record in April and 14–16 in May. On June 14, the Bisons were sitting in the North Division’s fourth place with a 30–33 record, 11½ games out of first.⁷ But after reeling off two six-game winning streaks during July and compiling a 21–11 August record, the Bisons found themselves competing for the North Division title. On September 6, Buffalo trailed the Syracuse SkyChiefs by a half-game. That evening, Jeff Manto’s ninth-inning three-run home run propelled Buffalo to an 8–7 win over the Scranton-Wilkes Barre Red Barons, while Pawtucket defeated Syracuse.⁸ The following day’s rainouts allowed Buffalo to win the division crown with an 81–62 record, only a half-game ahead of second-place Syracuse. Buffalo and Syracuse were the two



BOWMAN/TOPPS

Bartolo Colon was a member of the 1997 championship Bisons and pitched a no-hitter on June 20 in North AmeriCare Park.

winningest clubs that season, as measured by winning average.

Buffalo boasted the league’s best offensive club that season, leading all teams with 837 runs, .282 team batting average, and 206 home runs. This squad featured more power than speed, as their 27 triples and 94 stolen bases were among the league’s lowest. Three Bisons finished among the IL’s top ten in batting average among qualifiers: Lovullo (.326), Jolbert Cabrera (.318), and Diaz (.313). Ramirez was one shy of sharing the league lead in home runs (34), with Phil Hiatt finishing fourth (31). The Bisons’ pitching staff finished in the middle of the pack with a team ERA of 4.51; the staff’s combined strikeouts, walks issued, and hits allowed were also relatively mediocre. However, Jason Jacome was clearly the staff ace, leading Bisons pitchers with a 14–2 record, 154⅔ innings pitched, 3.26 ERA, and 109 strikeouts. Jacome’s wins total was the IL’s second-highest while his ERA was third-best. The team struggled defensively, finishing with the league’s lowest team fielding average at .969.

The Bisons swept the SkyChiefs during the first-round series in three games, with Alex Ramirez becoming the first player to hit for the cycle at North AmeriCare Park in the series opener.⁹ In the IL Governor’s Cup Series, Buffalo faced the expansion Durham Bulls. Buffalo won the first two games at home, then Durham rebounded to win the next two in Durham. In the deciding fifth game at Durham Bulls Athletic Park, Buffalo scored three early runs while starting pitcher Jacome pitched seven shutout innings and Jeff Sexton pitched 1⅓ scoreless relief innings in the Bisons’ 3–1 win.¹⁰ Buffalo defeated the Durham Bulls three games to two and advanced to the inaugural Triple-A World Series, which New Orleans won three games to one.

The 1998 Bisons established an IL season attendance record at 768,749 patrons, which included postseason games.¹¹ The Bisons had smashed attendance records 1988–97 in the American Association, and, as of May 2022, still hold eight of the nine highest single season attendance marks in minor league history, including six of seven seasons surpassing one million fans.¹²

Table 1 illustrates noteworthy similarities and differences between the two Bisons championship teams. Overall, the 1997 squad was 5½ games better than the 1998 team (87–57 versus 81–62). The 1997 Bisons compiled better records for games at home, one-run games, and doubleheaders while the teams attained similar records when scoring first and during extra-inning games. Both squads played .500 baseball during April; the 1997 team peaked during the early summer while the 1998 team played better during July and August. The 1997 championship squad was arguably more balanced, finishing either first or second in several team offensive and pitching categories while the 1998 champions were more offensive-minded, outslugging their opponents more often than beating them with pitching and fielding.

Table 1. Noteworthy Comparisons Between the 1997 and 1998 Buffalo Bisons

Category	1997 Bisons	1998 Bisons
Overall record	87–57	81–62
Home record	51–21	44–29
Road record	36–36	37–33
Bisons scored first	56–23	54–24
Opponent scored first	31–34	27–38
One–Run games	29–22	17–20
Extra innings	11–10	8–5
Doubleheaders	5–1–8	1–1–3
April	10–10	11–9
May	16–11	14–16
June	22–10	14–14
July	21–11	18–10
August	17–15	21–11
September	1–0	3–2
Batting Average	.268	.282
Earned Run Average	3.66	4.51
Fielding Average	.973	.969

The team experienced some expected turnover between the 1997 and 1998 seasons. Of the 15 players who collected at least 350 plate appearances in at least one season, listed in Table 2, 13 reached the majors, and 11 played for the parent Cleveland Indians. Four of the top 10 finishers in plate appearances for the 1997 Bisons did not appear for the 1998 Bisons. Conversely,



BOWMAN/TOPPS

Richie Sexson was one of 13 players on the 1997 or 1998 Bisons squads who would later play in the major leagues.

four players amassed at least 350 plate appearances in both Bison seasons: Einar Diaz, Torey Lovullo, Alex Ramirez, and Richie Sexson. Interestingly, no pitcher threw at least 90 innings in both the 1997 and 1998 seasons for Buffalo.

Table 2. Players With at Least 350 Plate Appearances for Either the 1997 or 1998 Buffalo Bisons.

Player	1997	1998	Majors	Indians
Aven, Bruce	500	21	x	x
Cabrera, Jolbert	0	585	x	x
Candaele, Casey	351	0	x	x
Diaz, Einar	365	444	x	x
Hiatt, Phil	0	503	x	
Hubbard, Trenidad	441	0	x	x
Jackson, Damian	311	0	x	x
Lovullo, Torey	380	393	x	x
Miller, David	0	485		
Norman, Les	489	0	x	
Ramirez, Alex	453	546	x	x
Selby, Bill	0	375	x	x
Sexson, Richie	472	402	x	x
Wilson, Brandon	0	378		
Wilson, Enrique	506	245	x	x

The pitching staff experienced significant turnover between the two championship seasons, as no Bison hurler threw a minimum of 75 innings in both seasons. All eight pitchers who threw at least 90 innings in at least one of the two seasons reached the major leagues, four pitching specifically for Cleveland.

Table 3. Pitchers With at Least 90 Innings Pitched for Either the 1997 or 1998 Buffalo Bisons

Pitcher	1997	1998	Majors	Indians
Blomdahl, Ben	104.0	70.0	x	
Clark, Terry	94.2		x	x
De La Maza, Roland	115.0	0.0	x	
Driskill, Travis	147.0	6.0	x	
Jacome, Jason	37.0	154.2	x	x
Matthews, Mike	21.0	130.1	x	
Nichting, Chris		96.1	x	x
Rakers, Jason	7.0	126.0	x	x

The Bisons were well-represented on the respective All-Star teams, with three on the 1997 Bisons (Richie Sexson, Damian Jackson, and Bruce Aven), and a different trio from the 1998 club (Jolbert Cabrera, Alex Ramirez, and Einar Diaz). All six played at the major-league level with the parent Cleveland Indians, with pitcher Jaret Wright starting two games during the 1997 World Series, including Game Seven. Two players, who are still local fan favorites, won team awards during both the 1997 and 1998 season: Torey Lovullo won the Frank J. “Fremo” Vallone Community Service Award (though he split the ’98 honors with Ben Blomdahl) and Einar Diaz won the Bisons Booster Club Award for Unsung Hero.

While all minor league teams experience significant personnel changes within and across seasons, having a team win back-to-back championships while switching leagues remains a unique accomplishment. ■

Acknowledgments

The author thanks Cecilia Tan for her editing, Cliff Blau for his fact-checking, and Lisa Gattie for her article recommendations.

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Finding Your Voice

The Search for the Voice of the Beloit Sky Carp

Matthew R.C. Bosen

The city of Beloit, Wisconsin, has been home to minor league baseball every summer since 1982 when a group of residents successfully purchased a franchise to serve as the Class A affiliate of the Milwaukee Brewers in the Midwest League. In their history, the team has had three names (Beloit Brewers, 1982–94; Beloit Snappers, 1995–2021; Beloit Sky Carp, 2022–present) and four major league team affiliations (Milwaukee Brewers, 1982–2004; Minnesota Twins, 2005–12; Oakland Athletics, 2013–20; Miami Marlins, 2021–present). This article details the unique approach that the Beloit Sky Carp took to finding the team’s “voice,” through the Dream Job competition.

As the former general manager of the Beloit Snappers and current director of sales at Visit Beloit, I experienced firsthand the number of aspiring broadcasters searching for a press box to call home at the annual Baseball Winter Meetings. After personally witnessing the strong demand for broadcasters to enter the baseball industry, I spent nearly a decade conceptualizing an event that could both capitalize on the interest of broadcasters and attract visitors to Beloit. After discussing my idea with a former Vice President of Alumni Relations at Beloit College, I was introduced to Beloit College alum and current Los Angeles Dodgers

broadcaster, Joe Davis. That introduction sparked the event to happen, as Davis could connect me to a plethora of professional broadcasters. The final piece of the puzzle was getting the Sky Carp on board to make the winner of the Dream Job contest the 2022 radio broadcaster for the team.

The Visit Beloit team created the inaugural Broadcast Symposium and Dream Job Competition, a first of its kind event, held January 7–9, 2022, at ABC Supply Stadium in Beloit, Wisconsin.¹ The venue, a brand-new state of the art home to the Beloit Sky Carp (High A affiliate of the Miami Marlins), served as the perfect site for a broadcasting event with a baseball twist.² The weekend featured a combination of networking, educational opportunities, and a live competition with a chance to be named the 2022 radio broadcaster for the recently rebranded team. The event had originally been slated for January 2021, but was postponed due to safety concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic.³

I collaborated with several nationally recognized broadcasters who enthusiastically signed up to assist the next generation of aspiring broadcasters. As I mentioned, the first broadcaster to throw his support behind the concept was Joe Davis of the Los Angeles Dodgers and FOX Sports.⁴ Davis had graduated from

The seven finalists with the two keynote speakers (L–R): Joe Davis, Jacob Toepfer, Ryan Christofferson, Ryan Zimmerman, Jacob Norling, Brennan Mense, Mitchell Speltz, Larry Larson, and Wayne Randazzo.



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Beloit College in 2010 and happily jumped on board to bring the concept to life in late 2019. Through his personal introductions and outreach to others, an impressive collection of broadcasters started to coalesce, including Jeff Levering (Milwaukee Brewers/Big Ten Network/FOX Sports), Elise Menaker (Big Ten Network/Marquee Sports Network), Cory Provus (Minnesota Twins), Adam Amin (Fox Sports/Chicago Bulls), Lisa Byington (Fox Sports/Big Ten Network), Jon Chelesnik (Sportscasters Talent Agency of America), Robert Ford (Houston Astros/ESPN), Mike Hall (Big Ten Network), and Matt Lepay (Badger Sports Network/Learfield IMG College). All of them contributed to the event in one way or another.⁵

Additionally, the list of broadcasters that signed on who had ties to Beloit proved to be lengthy and impressive as well. Davis and K.C. Johnson (NBC Sports Chicago) both attended Beloit College; Santoria Black (Grambling State University) and Nate Metz (Stove Leg Media) both grew up in Beloit; and Wayne Randazzo (New York Mets/Big Ten Network/FOX Sports) and Brett Dolan (Touchdown Radio/ESPN) both spent time in the press box at Pohlman Field, the previous home of the Beloit Snappers, early in their careers—Randazzo with the Kane County Cougars and Dolan with the Snappers.

Registered attendees for the event hailed from 17 different states. A total of 50 colleges and universities were represented between the broadcasters and attendees. Regular registration for the event was \$285 and included entry into the Dream Job Competition and access to all speaker sessions during the Broadcast Symposium.⁶ Attendance was limited to the first 200 individuals to register.⁷

The first component of the event was an opportunity for all entrants to submit a demonstration of their broadcasting work in the areas of play-by-play, sports update anchoring, interviewing, and sports talk show hosting/podcasting. To accommodate the busy schedule of the judges, the submissions were due on September 30, 2021, and then were reviewed by the panel of professional broadcasters from October through December. After all reviews were returned, the scores were calculated and the top seven submissions were identified as finalists for the Dream Job Competition. Each judge provided constructive feedback for the entrants and those comments were shared with each registrant following the event.

The in-person portion of the event kicked off on Friday, January 7, with a welcome reception for all registered attendees.⁸ The event included live music, a collection of industry job postings, appetizers, and



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Eventual “Dream Job” winner Larry Larson being judged following his performance. Facing him, left to right, are Nate Metz, Santoria Black, Wayne Randazzo, Joe Davis, Brett Dolan, and Maria Valentyn.

networking opportunities for the attendees. The evening gave attendees their first view of the playing surface at ABC Supply Stadium from the comforts of the Beloit Health System club which served as the primary venue space for the event. Attendees also got an up-close look at behind the scenes components of the stadium with a tour of the clubhouses and other team facilities.

Education and networking were kicked into high gear on Saturday, when eight broadcasters conducted seven sessions detailing their broadcasting climb, college experiences, and advice for beginning a career in broadcasting. The tone for the event was set by Beloit natives Black and Metz with their morning keynote session “Planting the Seed.” The pair detailed their personal stories and winding paths to their current positions, kicking off the day by enthraling all attendees. The second session of the day featured Randazzo from his New Jersey hotel room as he prepared to broadcast the NCAA men’s basketball game between Rutgers and Nebraska. The session focused on experiences with the New York City media and fans, as well as the lengthy climb from the Mobile BayBears broadcast booth to the New York Mets.

The final presentation of the morning featured Menaker (“Baseball In My Blood”) where she shared stories from her experiences behind the microphone that shaped her career. Following lunch, Levering energized the attendees with a fun presentation focused on some of the less glamorous and challenging times required to make your way in the broadcasting world. The presentation also featured a couple of behind-the-scenes stories from working in the press box with the legendary Bob Uecker.

The two sessions following Levering were both delivered via Zoom due to scheduling conflicts for

Johnson and Provus. Johnson joined from his home between Bulls games against the Wizards (Friday) and Mavericks (Sunday) while Provus joined the event from his car on the side of the road immediately following his broadcast of the NCAA men's basketball game between Purdue and Penn State as he drove to College Park to cover the NCAA men's basketball game between Wisconsin and Maryland on Sunday. Johnson talked about the path he followed through the newspaper side of the business and the challenges later in his career with the emergence and prevalence of social media breaking all major sports news. Provus delivered a Q&A style session about his Chicago upbringing and the path to Minneapolis, as well as the challenges and excitement that come with calling basketball in addition to his duties with the Twins.

The final session of the day on Saturday featured Dolan, who hit his presentation out of the park with his technical skill advice and delivery refining conversation with attendees. Dolan put his 25-plus years of experience to great use in providing insights that improved the ability of all broadcasters in attendance. The consensus of attendees was that Dolan provided the most impactful presentation of the weekend in terms of real-world advice that could be employed immediately the next time they found themselves behind the microphone.

The culminating day of the event took place on Sunday, January 9, with the two most anticipated events of the weekend. The seven finalists for the Dream Job Competition got the chance to show off their vocal cords in front of a panel of judges that

included Davis, Randazzo, Dolan, Black, Metz, and Maria Valentyn of the Beloit Sky Carp to win the team's radio broadcasting job for the 2022 season.⁹ Each contestant would have the opportunity to call one half-inning of a past Major League Baseball game. All attendees learned on Saturday afternoon that the series featured in the final competition would be the 2016 World Series between the Chicago Cubs and Cleveland Indians. The contestants were provided team rosters and told they would learn their assigned game and inning when they entered the press box on Sunday.

The seven finalists were sequestered from the other attendees until it was their turn to call an inning. One by one the contestants were brought to the press box they hoped to be working from the following summer and were handed a packet of information. The packet included their assigned game and inning, the box score to that point in the game, and the play-by-play recap up to that inning. Each contestant had ten minutes to compose their thoughts and prepare for the call. They were then shown a recorded version of the FOX broadcast of the game with no audio, and they were to call the game as if they were providing the live radio broadcast call.

Immediately following their turn at the microphone, each contestant was taken to the Beloit Health System suite where they received feedback from the judging panel on their performance. Once all seven contestants were done, their scores were tallied, and they were ranked from first to seventh. The results were announced following the closing keynote. Larry

Larson of Bradley University edged out Brennan Mense of Kansas State University for the top spot and secured the 2022 job with the Beloit Sky Carp.¹⁰ Larson received the great news from Davis which made the moment even more surreal for the aspiring broadcaster.¹¹ Larson said, "The biggest thing that jumped out with the Dream Job Contest was the immense pressure you were under. I've done enough broadcasts to this point in my career where I don't really get nervous before hitting the air. I'll get butterflies sometimes, but I know how to use those to create positive energy. This was completely different, knowing who's not just listening to you, but judging you and nitpicking you. Fortunately, I was able to move past that. It was a unique challenge that I'm very grateful for."

COURTESY OF MATTHEW R.C. BOSEN



Joe Davis and Wayne Randazzo answering questions during their keynote session, with host Matt Bosen.

Larson continued, “It’s always been my goal to get into professional baseball directly out of college, and winning the competition locked up that goal for me. I couldn’t be more grateful to the Beloit Sky Carp organization and Visit Beloit for creating this opportunity. I can’t wait to not only broadcast in a brand-new, state of the art ballpark, but also travel the full schedule and get to tell the stories of all the talented players on the roster.”

Between the contest and the announcement of the winner, the inaugural event provided an opportunity for attendees to hear from two of the best in the business in a casual fireside chat style when Randazzo and Davis dazzled the crowd with their personal experiences. Both got their baseball starts in the Southern League with the Montgomery Biscuits and Mobile Bay-Bears, respectively. That is where Randazzo and Davis formed a friendship that has lasted more than a decade and seen both rise to prominence with Major League Baseball teams on opposite coasts. Following the presentation, both broadcasters spent ample time with attendees networking and answering questions of those who hope to one day reach the same heights.

Visit Beloit is already working on the second version of the event slated for early January 2023. The conference will again feature presentations from professional broadcasters, as well as a job competition to receive professional feedback and a chance to compete for a yet-to-be-determined broadcasting job. Information about the event will be available at www.visitbeloit.com/symposium. ■

Notes

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3. Joe Davis, “Broadcast Symposium Message,” Visit Beloit, September 3, 2020, video, 1:28, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vBR54Bf1CFU>.
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11. Bill Vilona, “Rockford Native Wins Dream Job Competition As First Radio Voice Of Sky Carp,” Beloit Sky Carp, 2022, <https://www.milb.com/beloit/news/sky-carp-radio-competition>.

Contributors

MARSHALL ADESMAN spent a dozen years as an assistant general manager, general manager and business manager for teams located in Florida, Texas, Iowa, New York, Virginia, and North Carolina. He also worked for 21 years at Duke University as an administrator in such diverse departments as Public Policy, Development, Medical Center Administration, and Integrative Medicine. Now happily retired in Northeast Tennessee, he has also co-authored one book about baseball, contributed to two others, served as an associate editor on a third, and written an (as yet) unpublished historical novel about integrating the minor leagues in the early 1950s.

BOB BAILEY is the author of *History of the Junior World Series* (Scarecrow Press), a finalist for the 2004 Casey Award and Baseball Burial Sites (St. Johann Press). He has contributed over a dozen articles to various SABR publications on topics ranging from Louisville nineteenth-century baseball history to playing managers to Negro League championships. He is co-chair of SABR's Nineteenth Century Committee. He resides in Gainesville, Florida.

MATTHEW R.C. BOSEN is the younger of two brothers and was born and raised in Collinsville, Illinois. He attended Southeast Missouri State University and earned a degree in sport management with a minor in business administration. He has called Beloit, Wisconsin, home since December 2007. After spending seven years in minor league baseball, he transitioned to the Convention and Visitors Bureau, Visit Beloit, in October 2013. A lifelong baseball fan, he resides in Beloit with his wife, Kelly, and dog, Astro. He has only nine of the current MLB stadiums left to complete the circuit.

ROBERT BOWLING is a lifelong Baltimore Orioles fan. As a local historian, he has written history articles for various publications and the local newspaper. He is a contributing writer for *Officer Magazine* focusing on law enforcement history and serves as an historical researcher for the Officer Down Memorial Page. Bowling has recently authored the book *Wicked Fishers*. A retired police officer, he now teaches high school in Indianapolis. His website is robbowling.com.

WILL CHRISTENSEN is a professional journalist, avid researcher, and minor-league baseball nut. He has been a member of SABR since 1986 and finally is paying back all the benefits he's received over the years by copyediting bios for the SABR BioProject.

ALAN D. COHEN has been a SABR member since 2010. He chairs the SABR BioProject fact-checking committee, serves as Vice President-Treasurer of the Connecticut Smoky Joe Wood Chapter of SABR, and is a datacaster (MiLB stringer) with the Hartford Yard Goats, the Class AA Eastern League affiliate of the Colorado Rockies.

WOODY ECKARD is a retired economics professor living in Evergreen, Colorado, with his wife Jacky and their two dogs Petey and

Violet. During his academic career he published over 50 papers in refereed academic journals, with several focused on sports economics. Five of these papers relate to Major League Baseball, including three on the nineteenth century game. He is a Rockies fan, both the ball club and the mountains, and a SABR member for over 20 years.

BRIAN C. ENGELHARDT is a native of Reading, Pennsylvania, where he resides with his wife, Suzanne, a good sport about any number of things. Their three daughters, now grown, continue to be Phillies fans (although the daughter in Pittsburgh seems to have a picture of Bill Mazeroski in her family room). The author of *Reading's Big League Exhibition Games*, Brian has written several SABR biographies together with articles appearing in other SABR publications. He is also a regular contributor to *The Historical Review Berks County* with his subjects covering various local matters of historical note, including baseball.

JOHN FREDLAND, an attorney and retired Air Force officer, grew up in a suburb of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. As an undergraduate at Rice University, he covered Rice's nationally ranked baseball teams for the school newspaper, the *Rice Thresher*. John received his law degree at Vanderbilt University, then served as an active-duty attorney in the Air Force's Judge Advocate General's Corps for 20 years. He currently lives in San Antonio, Texas, and chairs SABR's Baseball Games Project Research Committee. John's fascination with Rick Wolff's *What's A Nice Harvard Boy Like You Doing In The Bushes?* dates to inheriting a copy from his grandfather, a high school baseball coach and true student of the game, at age 12.

GORDON J. GATTIE is a lifelong baseball fan and SABR member since 1998. A civilian US Navy engineer, his baseball research interests include ballparks, historical trends, and statistical analysis. Gordon earned his PhD from SUNY Buffalo, where he used baseball to investigate judgment performance in complex dynamic environments. Ever the optimist, he dreams of a Cleveland Guardians World Series championship. Lisa, his wonderful wife who roots for the New York Yankees, and Morrigan, their beloved Labrador Retriever, enjoy traveling across the country visiting ballparks and other baseball-related sites. Gordon has contributed to several SABR publications, including multiple issues of *The National Pastime* and the Games Project.

STEVEN M. GLASSMAN's article, "The Hidden Potato Trick," will be his eighth article for *The National Pastime*. He previously wrote on "Philadelphia's Other Hall of Famers," "The Game That Was Not—Philadelphia Phillies at Chicago Cubs," "Walking it Off" on Marlins postseason walk-offs, "A Hall of Fame Cup of Coffee in New York," "Padres' Near No-Hitters," "The Baltimore Orioles' 1971 Japan Trip," and "The Future of Baseball Cards." Steven has been a SABR member since 1994. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Sport and Recreation Management from Temple University. Born in Philadelphia, Steven currently lives in Warminster, Pennsylvania.

HOWARD HENRY is a lifelong fan of '50s baseball and '40s music, a retired Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Credentialed Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Counselor, a retired adjunct faculty professor (SUNY University at Buffalo; SUNY Buffalo State), and an active and ongoing church choir member (bass/baritone), opera supernumerary (one paid chorus gig) and actor, volunteer peace and justice advocate and international educator (including 30+ years in southern border mission work) and author.

FRANCIS KINLAW has contributed to 20 SABR convention publications and has attended 25 SABR national conventions. A member of SABR since 1983, he resides in Greensboro, North Carolina, and writes extensively about the history of baseball, football, and college basketball.

HERM KRABBENHOFT, a SABR member since 1981, is a retired organic chemist. His baseball research efforts have included: ascertaining the complete details of major league triple plays (in collaboration with Jim Smith and Steve Boren), ultimate grand slam homers; minor league double-duty diamonders, quasi-cycles, determining the accurate RBI records of Lou Gehrig, Babe Ruth, and Hank Greenberg, and Detroit Tigers uniform numbers. Herm's baseball articles have appeared in several SABR committee newsletters, including *The Inside Game*, *19th Century Notes*, and *By The Numbers*. He is the author of *Leadoff Batters* (published by McFarland in 2001). Krabbenhoft has been the recipient of three SABR Baseball Research Awards (1992, 1996, 2013).

DAVID KRELL is the author of *1962: Baseball and America in the Time of JFK* and *Our Bums: The Brooklyn Dodgers in History, Memory and Popular Culture*. He edited the anthologies *The New York Mets in Popular Culture* and *The New York Yankees in Popular*

Culture. David's book about 1966 will be published next year by Rowman & Littlefield. David is the chair of SABR's Elysian Fields Chapter (Northern New Jersey).

THOMAS MERRICK is a retired North Dakota District Court judge, and an Air Force veteran, currently living in Buffalo, Minnesota. He attended his first major league game on July 9, 1961, at Briggs Stadium with his father and brother, and watched his father's beloved Detroit Tigers sweep a doubleheader from the Los Angeles Angels. He has been a SABR member since 2000 and frequently contributes essays to the SABR Games Project. His article, "Swede Risberg's journey to Jamestown," appeared in the June 2019 *Black Sox Scandal Research Committee Newsletter*. Among his many blessings are his wife Pamela, their three children, and their two granddaughters.

JOEL RIPPEL, a Minnesota native and graduate of the University of Minnesota, has contributed as an editor or writer to two dozen books published by SABR. He is the author or co-author of 11 books on Minnesota sports history and has worked for newspapers for more than 50 years.

DENNIS SNELLING is a three-time Casey Award finalist, including for *The Greatest Minor League* and *Lefty O'Doul: Baseball's Forgotten Ambassador*. He was a 2015 Seymour Medal Finalist for his biography of Johnny Evers, which was also a Casey finalist. He is recently retired as the Chief Business Official for a school district in Roseville, California, has been a Certified Fraud Examiner since 2005, and is beginning his 49th year as public address announcer for Downey High School in Modesto, proud alma mater of George Lucas and Joe Rudi. He is an active member in both the Lefty O'Doul and Dusty Baker SABR chapters in Northern California.