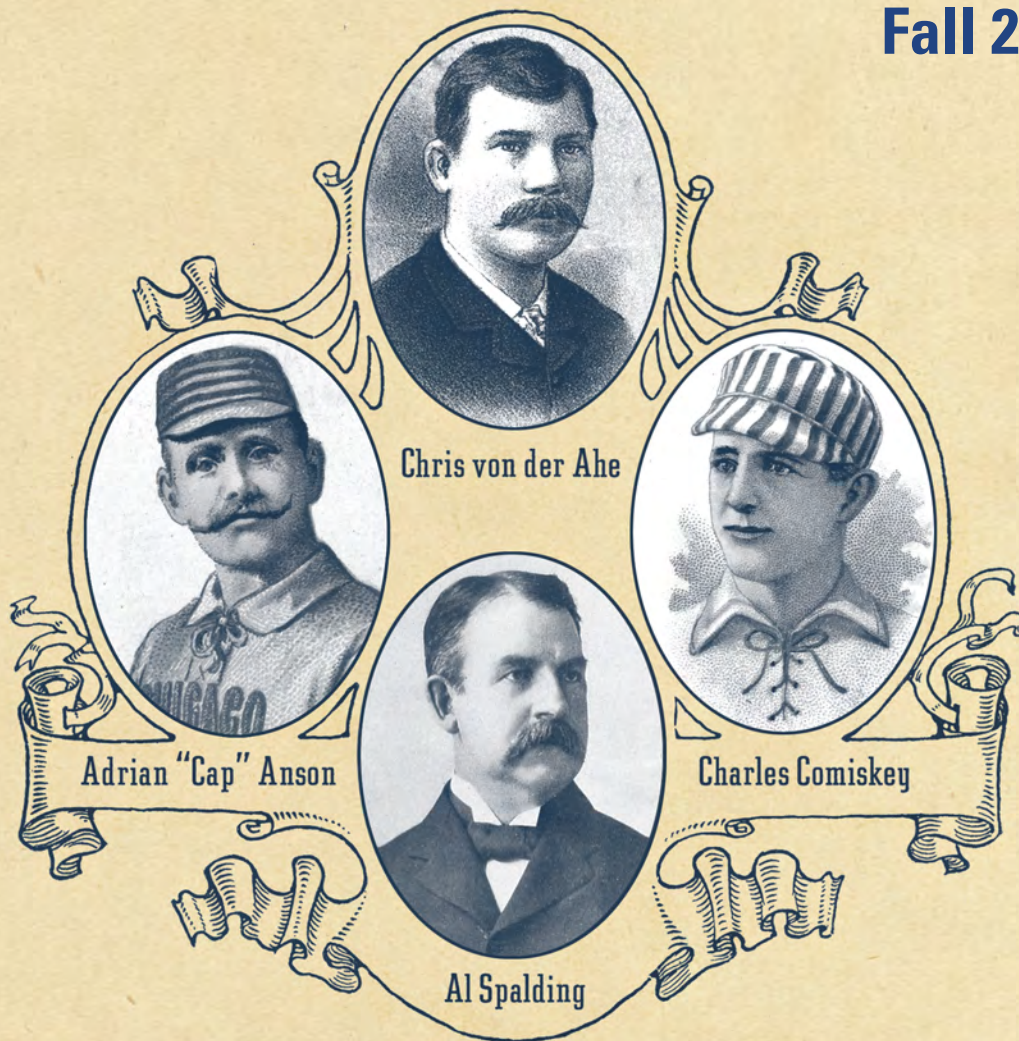




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THE BASEBALL RESEARCH JOURNAL, Volume 46, Number 2

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No existing program or scorecard for the 1885 postseason matchup between Chicago and St. Louis could be found, so in the spirit of vintage baseball reenactment, we created a facsimile of a publication by combining public domain photographs from the era (from 1887) with design elements from World Series programs of the Deadball era.

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Note from the Editor

Many of the best conversations I've had at SABR conventions—and at ballparks around the world—begin with the question “Did you know...?” Nearly every baseball fan knows some amazing story or fact about the game, the players, or the team. Some of them are even true. And no matter how well read or knowledgeable about the game I may be, there's always something I haven't heard before.

Sometimes it's because the story comes from the misty past. Check out the examples of early scorecards in Stew Thornley and Bob Tholkes's article on the evolution of the official scorer in this issue. Or Paul Doutrich's recap of the 1885 postseason series between Chicago and St. Louis, a precursor of the World Series. Did you know bad umpiring in that series provoked the fans to storm the field and umpire David Sullivan to need a police escort back to his hotel for his own safety?

Other times the novelty is because the story comes from the margins, from an unexpected source, like the Bush Library. Herm Krabbenhoft presents here an exhaustive study of former president George H. W. Bush's collegiate baseball career. Did you know that while he was Vice President, Bush played in an old-timers game with the likes of Warren Spahn, Tony Oliva, Ernie Banks, Moose Skowron, and Brooks Robinson? Then there are the tales from the bushes: Rich Arpi brings us inside a 1914 prison in Minnesota to see the birth of the “Sisal Sox,” and Bob LeMoine takes us to the farm where Cy Young retired. Did you know that at age 67 Cy Young went on a barnstorming tour?

And sometimes we learn something new about something we thought we knew. Sometimes we learn a new way of thinking about something old, or we re-think in the face of new information. Jose Luis Lopez and a team of researchers from Venezuela prove beyond much doubt that Andres Galarraga did indeed hit a homer well over 500 feet at Pro Player Stadium. Two Canadian researchers, Lori Livingston and Susan Forbes, challenge the notion that amateur umpires quit because of the negative image and verbal abuse heaped on them. Did you know that although hitting for the cycle is a rare feat, hitting for the “quasi-cycle” (like a cycle but replace the single with an extra-base hit) is even rarer? Herm Krabbenhoft is at it again, identifying all 88 instances of the quasi-cycle since 1876 (compared with 318 regular cycles).

I've arranged this issue roughly chronologically, from the nineteenth century to the present. Next time you go to the ballpark, you'll have plenty of *did-you-know's* to share, if you just keep turning these pages.

— Cecilia Tan
Publications Director

The Evolution of the Scorer in the Nineteenth Century

Stew Thornley and Bob Tholkes

Official scorers in baseball make judgments about the game—whether a play is a hit or an error—that influence individual statistics. This gives the official scorer more prominence in baseball than in other sports. The pay is greater, the attention more penetrating, the controversy often intense. Today's official scorers sit in the hot seat, but until the 1870s, hits and errors were not routinely distinguished in game summaries.

In most early cases, scorers were merely recorders, not judges—although in the era before leagues, the scorers for the club teams did keep track to an unknown extent whether a batter reached base with a clean strike or if he got on because of poor fielding. Such records could be used by a club captain or committee to determine which players earned first-team status. Figure 1 shows the simplest of scoresheets, from a Knickerbocker intra-squad game on October 6, 1845, two weeks after the Knickerbockers established their rules on September 23, 1845. The numbers of outs, either at the bat or on the bases, and runs scored by each player were all that were recorded. (Teams weren't required to have nine players; five per side were enough to get a game going.)

A scoresheet of a match game of the Knickerbockers vs. Empire October 6, 1858, contains greater detail. (See Figure 2.)¹ In match games, each team designated its own scorer, who kept a tally of what transpired. Such was the case in 1858 when selected players from New York and Brooklyn played a series of games on the Fashion Course Racetrack in Queens. The scoresheet from the second of these games survives.² It contains the familiar grid for batters and innings. Figure 3 shows the outcomes of the plate appearances for

Pos.	NAMES.	HANDS OUT.	RUNS.	REMARKS.
	Cashright	1 2	1	
	Honoring	2 3	1	
	Sevick	3	1	
	Incher		11	
	Smith	1 1		
	Birney			
	Redhead	2 2	1 / 8	

New York: *W. B. ...* 1945. *W. B. ...* UMPIRE.

Figure 1.

Match with *Empire*

Woolfords

August 2nd '12

KNICKERBOCKER BASE BALL CLUB.

Positions on the Field	NAMES.	Members from other Clubs.	HANDS OUT EACH INNING.												RUNS.	REMARKS.
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12		
			HITS. EACH INNING.													
			5	6	11	6	4	3	1	2	0	1	8			
1 st B	Norman		run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	1	6
2 nd B	Montgomery		run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	5	
3 rd F	Woodhull		run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	4	
1 st B	Leggett		run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	4	
2 nd F	Thomas		run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	3	
P	Belloni		run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	5	
2 nd F	A. Hote		run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	4	
C F	Florence		run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	2	
C	Botsford		run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	run	5	

game concluded and innings of being too dark. Innings made 15 runs in 9 innings with one hand out, when game was stopped

Byron Field, Hoboken.

Peter 60

1898

Jas W Davis

Figure 2. Note that the numerals on the right for the run totals don't match the number of hash marks in the column to the left. A note on the scoresheet indicated the events of the Knickerbockers' ninth inning were wiped out because the inning wasn't completed before the game was stopped by darkness, which explains the different totals.

Masten, Pidgeon, and Price, the first three strikers for the Brooklyn nine.

The shorthand and notations were not yet present. The description of Dickey Pearce's at bat in the fifth inning, is merely, "Ground Ball Right Field Made 1st Base." (See Figure 4.)

A game in which the Knickerbockers beat the Empire club, 59-33 on Wednesday, August 11, 1859, generated a game story that noted "unusually bad catching" and a section that included "Bad Misses

During the Game."³ Though such detail wasn't the norm at the time, this account in the *New York Sunday Mercury* included a list of players and their "bad misses," which totaled 15 for the teams combined. However, the main portion of the game summaries contained only outs and runs scored for each player in the batting order.

Scoresheets took on a different look in the 1860s as Henry Chadwick developed a new scoring system, which appeared in the 1861 *Beadle's Dime Base-Ball*

Player: A Compendium of the Game, edited by Chadwick. (See Figure 5.)

The numbers in the scoring grid note the sequence of a hand lost in an inning, as is the case for Masten, Creighton, and Pearce in the first inning. A number in the first line of an entry refers to the fielder, which is based on the batting order of the opposing team. The opposing team batting order in this case was as follows:

1. Leggett, catcher
2. M. O'Brien, pitcher
3. McKinstry, short stop
4. Price, first base
5. Brown, second base
6. Beach, third base
7. P. O'Brien, left field
8. J. Oliver, center field
9. Whiting, right field

The letters carry meanings: A for first base, B for second base, C for third base, H for home base, F for catch on the fly, D for catch on the bound, L for foul balls, T for tips, K for struck out, R for run out between bases, HR for home runs, LF for foul ball on the fly, TF for tip on the fly, TD for tip on the bound. Chadwick had a semblance of order for the letters: the first three letters of the alphabet for the first three bases; the first letter in the words Home, Fly, and Tip, and the last letter in the words Bound, Foul, and Struck (which, of course, gives us the K for strike out that remains today).

FIGURE 3 – 5. AUTHOR'S COLLECTION

Figure 3.

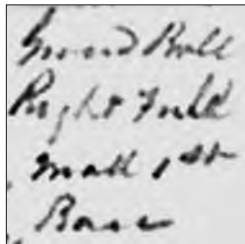


Figure 4.

DIAGRAM OF A SCORE BOOK.												
Base-Ball Club.												
INNINGS.												
PLAYERS.	POS.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	TOT'L H. L.	TOT'L RUNS.
1 Masten	C	8 F 1									1	1
2 Creighton	P	4 A 2									1	1
3 Pearce	SS	5 B 3									1	1
4 Pearsall	1 B		6 L D 1								1	1
5 Oliver	2 B		7 F 2								1	1
6 Smith	3 B		1 T D 3								1	1
7 Russell	L F			9 D 1							1	1
8 Manolt	C F			3 F 2							1	1
9 Grum	R F			hr K							1	1
Total runs in each in- nings.		0	0	9							1	1
Grand Total		0	0	9								
Passed Balls												
Umpire,												
Date of Match												
Where played.												
Winning Club												
Scorer.												

Figure 5.

In the scoresheet shown, Masten was put out when his fly to center was caught on the fly by Williams, the eighth batter in the order for his team. Creighton was put out at first by Price (assists were not tallied, so there is no indication if another fielder threw to Price). Pearce made his base but was out when he was not able to reach second safely on a batted ball by Pearsall.

Since Pearce was the final hand out in the first, Pearsall was the first striker in the second (even though he had been the final striker in the first) and was put out taken on the bound by Beach. Oliver was put out when his fly was caught on the fly by P. O'Brien. Smith tipped out on the bound to Leggett.⁴

Box scores of the period noted the number of hands lost (H.L.) and runs by each striker along with fielding statistics, such as the box score for the "Great Silver Ball Match" between picked nines from New York and Brooklyn on October 21, 1861. (See Figure 6.)⁵

When did the function of a scorer change from recorder to judge? It couldn't have been until the concept of hits and errors was developed.

"The history of how the error was scored is complicated and would drag on for decades," says nineteenth-century expert Richard Hershberger. "My suspicion is that the error's move from an occasional bit of opinionating in the summary to an integral part of the box score with a column of its own will relate to the idea of the base hit. Those early box scores copied from cricket, with a column for runs scored but none for base hits. This is because there is no such distinction in cricket between a run and a hit. 1868 is the breakout year for this, though not immediately universally accepted, of course. Once we are recording how many times the batter gets to first, it becomes more important to assign credit or blame."⁶

By the latter 1860s, hits and errors had worked their way into box scores and were acknowledged by Chadwick, who in 1869 wrote, "The scorer of a baseball match has either to perform a very simple task, or he has a duty to attend to which requires his close attention to every movement of the players in the field....To record the simple outs and runs of a match requires only the use of the figures 1, 2, and 3 for the purpose of recording the outs made by each player;... To score a game, however, in such a manner as to provide correct and reliable data for a true estimate of the skill of each player at the bat and in the field in a game, involves considerable [*sic*] more work....The only true estimate of a batsman's skill is that based on the number of times he makes his bases on hits, not by errors of the fielders, but by what is known as 'clean hitting.'"⁷

AUTHOR'S COLLECTION

BATTING.

NEW YORK.

BROOKLYN.

NAMES.	H.	L.	RUNS.	NAMES.	H.	L.	RUNS.
Yates, 1st b	2	2		Pearce, c	2		3
Brown, 2d b	3	1		Creighton, p	4		2
McKeever, p	3	0		Beach, s s	2		3
McMahon, s s	3	1		Price, 3d b	4		2
Cohen, c	4	0		Pearsall, 1st b	2		2
A. B. Taylor, 1 f	4	0		Manolt, c f	2		2
Wright, 3d b	1	1		Smith, 2d b	2		2
Harris, c f	1	1		Flanly, 1 f	4		1
Culyer, r f	3	0		Reach, r f	2		1
Total,		8		Total,			18

RUNS MADE IN EACH INNINGS.

	1st	2d	3d	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th
New York,	2	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	— 6
Brooklyn,	2	0	0	0	7	1	0	8	— 18

FIELDING.

NEW YORK.

BROOKLYN.

FLY	B'D	B'E	T O'L	FLY	B'D	B'E	T O'L		
Yates,	0	0	1	1	Pearce,	3	3	0	6
Brown,	0	1	2	3	Creighton,	0	0	0	0
McKeever,	2	0	0	2	Beach,	1	0	0	1
McMahon,	0	2	0	2	Price,	0	0	0	0
Cohen,	1	2	0	3	Pearsall,	4	1	4	9
A. B. Taylor	0	2	0	2	Manolt,	0	1	0	1
Wright,	0	5	1	6	Smith,	1	1	1	3
Harris,	1	3	0	4	Flanly,	1	0	0	1
Culyer,	0	1	0	1	Reach,	0	0	0	0
Total,	4	16	4	24	Total,	10	6	5	21

HOW PUT OUT.

NEW YORK.

BROOKLYN.

BASES.								BASES.							
F	T	R	D	1	2	3	F O'L	F	T	R	D	1	2	3	F O'L
Yates,	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	Pearce,	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Brown,	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	Creighton,	2	2	0	0	0	0	0
McKeever,	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	Beach,	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
McMahon,	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	Price,	1	0	0	0	0	0	3
Cohen,	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	Pearsall,	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Taylor,	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	Manolt,	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Wright,	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	Smith,	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Harris,	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	Flanly,	0	2	0	1	0	1	1
Culyer,	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	Reach,	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Total,	6	3	4	1	0	7		Total,	3	13	1	2	1	4	

Passed balls, on which bases were run—Pearce, 3; Cohen, 1; McMahon, 1.

Catches missed on the fly—Cohen, 1; Brown, 2; A. B. Taylor, 1; Yates, 1; Pearce, 1; Harris, 1.

Struck out—McMahon, 1; Yates, 1.

Catches missed on the bound—Brown, 2.

Run out between bases—McMahon by Creighton.

Times left on bases—McKeever, 1; Wright, 1; Harris, 1; Pearce, 1; Beach, 1; Pearsall, 1; Manolt, 1; Smith, 1; Reach, 1.

Time of game—Two hours and thirty minutes.

Umpire—Mr. J. B. Leggett, of the Excelsior club.

Scorers—For the New York nine, Mr. McConnell; for the Brooklyn nine, Mr. G. W. Moore.

Figure 6.

ATLANTIC.	BATTING.						FIELDING.					
	Outs.	Runs.	1st base by hits.	Total bases by hits.	Left after hits.	1st base by errors.	Put out on bases.	By fly-catches.	By foul b'd-catches.	Times assisted.	Total put out.	Total errors.
Pearce, s. s.	3	3	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3
Smith, 3d b.	2	4	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3
Start, 1st b.	0	5	5	6	1	0	15	2	0	2	17	4
Chapman, 1. f.	3	2	4	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Crane, c. f.	4	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mills, c.	3	3	3	8	0	0	0	3	2	2	5	7
Ferguson, 2d b. ...	1	4	1	1	0	4	2	0	0	8	3	3
Zettlein, P.	6	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	1	2	1
McDonald, r. f.	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Totals	27	22	20	38	1	6	17	7	2	15	27	24

Figure 7. A box score of a game between Atlantic and Mutual, which appeared in the 1869 Beadle's guide, contains columns for first base by hits and total bases by hits.

The following year Chadwick elaborated on the method for noting a clean hit for a batsman in a scorebook: "If the batsman hits a ball and makes his first base, or has his first base given him on three balls, then the scorer has to place his dots on the *left*-hand side, on a line with the batsman's name. Thus, if the batsman makes his first base by his hit, and not by a dropped fly-ball, an overthrow, or a palpable muff, a dot is placed under the head of "times first base on hits."⁸

By the time the National Association of Professional Base Ball Players took professional baseball to the next degree of development by launching a championship competition in 1871, errors were appearing in the game summary.

The concept of an official scorer with the power to influence statistics was becoming entrenched. Yet, official scorers were employed by the home teams, and how independent they were is questionable. The home-town influence may have even gone farther than added generosity in crediting a hit to a home-team batter. The scoring decisions, when made, were not known, leading to box scores in different newspapers containing differing statistics. The "official" statistics usually weren't known until published in an annual guide at the end of the season.⁹

Hits and errors joined runs as the primary numbers used for game summaries, and eventually a scoreboard line score concluded with the familiar R-H-E. However,

the National League tried to spare the feelings of fielders in 1880. "The *Enquirer* serves notice that it will not use the 'chances offered' or 'c.o.' column in its scores of League games this summer, but will retain the old 'error' column," reported the *Cincinnati Enquirer*. According to the new style the putouts and assists have to be added and the sum subtracted from the chances offered before one can discover how many errors have been made."¹⁰

On the eve of the 1880 season, the *Providence Evening Press* said the league edict was "evidently adopted to soothe the feelings of over sensitive players, who could not bear to see any number from one to half a dozen debit marks, as it were, opposite their names. There is no other earthly utility in

the innovation that we can see, and we have as yet seen but one paper adopt it."¹¹

Feelings aside, the role of an official scorer for a game, rather than a statistician from each team, was necessary to provide one account that distinguished a clean hit from a time reached base on a misplay.

"As statistics became an important part of baseball, a single person assumed the function of official scorer," wrote Peter Morris in *A Game of Inches: The Game behind the Scenes*. "It was not long before onlookers were second-guessing his decisions. The *Cincinnati Enquirer* [of May 3, 1878] noted in 1878, "The Cincinnati 'official scorer' gets more and more demoralized every day. His score of Wednesday's League game is full of errors."¹²

The scorers weren't necessarily independent, as they were often appointed by the teams. Eventually scorers became employees of the leagues (and now Major League Baseball). Although they are assigned to the team in their area, scorers are expected to be impartial and not favor the home team, as was often the case in the 1800s.

The role of official scorers has evolved in many forms over the last century-and-a-half. However, the distinction between hit and error remains subjective, and the decisions by official scorers still generate disagreement. ■

Acknowledgments

The authors thank Richard Hershberger, John Thorn, and Peter Morris for their support and assistance for this article.

Notes

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2. John Zinn, “Summer 1858: The Brooklyn-New York Baseball Rivalry Begins,” SABR Games Project, <http://sabr.org/gamesproj/game/summer-1858-brooklyn-new-york-baseball-rivalry-begins>.
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Champions, Tantrums and Bad Umps

The 1885 “World Series”

Paul E. Doutrich

For more than a century the World Series has been an integral part of American culture. It has become a final celebration of the more than 2,700 games that connect the early spring with the late fall. The annual ritual of the best team in the American League facing the best of the National League has taken place every season since 1903 except in 1904 when John McGraw refused to play his American League rivals and in 1994 due to a players’ strike. However, one of the earliest blooms of the World Series as we know it flowered eighteen years earlier, in 1885. Two strong-willed and fiercely competitive team owners—Christian von der Ahe, president of the St. Louis Browns, and his Chicago White Stockings counterpart, Albert Spalding—each ponied up \$500 and agreed to a winner-take-all series of games. The seven games that followed marked a significant step toward the institutionalization of today’s annual competition to determine which team and league carries the title as the world’s best.¹

In October 1885, Chris von der Ahe found himself on the verge of notable success. His American Association champion St. Louis Browns team was about to begin a series with the National League champion Chicago White Stockings that both club owners had agreed would be baseball’s world championship. Chicago was among the charter members of the National League, which was the premier professional baseball league. Most considered the American Association a distant second.

A year before, the National League champion Providence had agreed to play the American Association winner, the Metropolitans, in a hastily arranged series. Advertised as a “Championship of the United States,” the matchup was the first time that the two league winners had ever met for a championship. Though more games were initially considered, the three that were played did not turn out well for the American Association team. On three cold, late October afternoons, in front of disappointingly small crowds, the Grays demonstrated their superiority in all phases of the game and handily dispatched the Metropolitans. The games clearly established the National League’s superiority. Now it was the Browns’ chance to prove that wrong.²

No one loved winning more than Chris von der Ahe. His had been a success story from the time he first stepped onto a New York City dock in 1867. Then he was a German teenager, alone, with empty pockets and no prospects. The city fed on young, unsophisticated immigrants like him. But in just eighteen years, through luck and pluck (mostly pluck), he had climbed from grocery clerk to successful St. Louis entrepreneur and community leader. At the core of his enterprises was a very popular saloon and beer garden in the heart of his city’s ever growing German district.³

When he became the Browns’ president in 1880, von der Ahe knew little about baseball.⁴ What he did know was how to turn a profit, and he saw in his new endeavor an opportunity to make lots of profit. The Brown Stockings had been a professional team since 1878, but von der Ahe explored ways to make them a moneymaker. In 1881 he joined more than a dozen others in forming the Sportsman’s Park and Club Association and investing in a neighborhood sporting park (Sportsman’s Park).⁵ Encouraged by one of his bartenders and long-time professional ballplayer, Ned Cuthbert, Association president von der Ahe became a guiding force in rejuvenating professional baseball in St. Louis.

After reconstructing the park (including adding a beer garden in right field) in 1881 and enlisting the assistance of Alfred Spink, a local newspaper reporter and later a founder of *Sporting News*, von der Ahe made his next move in monetizing the Browns. Encouraged by a summer of numerous successful exhibition games, he and Spink joined five other baseball financiers in establishing the American Association the following winter.⁶ Composed of clubs from cities excluded by the National League, the Association sought to rival the National League if not in talent at least in entertaining patrons and in generating revenue. And eventually revenue would attract talent.⁷

During the league’s first three years von der Ahe’s club built a respectable record. After finishing a dismal fifth during the inaugural season, the Browns came within a game of the league championship the following season. In 1884 the team finished fourth, eight games back, in a league that had expanded to

twelve clubs.⁸ Despite his team's competitiveness, von der Ahe was not satisfied.

The Browns' president was not a particularly patient man. By 1885 he expected a championship. Fortunately an unforeseen change late in the 1884 season proved to be a crucial step in that direction. Throughout the season von der Ahe's relationship with manager Jimmy Williams had been fraying. In early September, Williams resigned. It was a scenario reminiscent of the previous season when Ted Sullivan—considered to be among the most knowledgeable men in the game—had quit as Browns manager during a roaring late-night argument with his employer. In both cases the source of the conflict was von der Ahe's insistence on making crucial decisions both on and off the field, even though he still knew little about the game. In 1884, as he had done when Sullivan left, the Browns' president shifted managerial responsibilities to his young first baseman, team captain Charlie Comiskey. This time, however, Comiskey retained his new duties.

When he officially became player-manager, Comiskey was only twenty-five years old—younger than most of his teammates. He had, nevertheless, earned their respect. A fierce competitor, he was ready to do whatever needed to be done to win games.⁹ As manager he relentlessly sought to pressure opponents into mistakes. He employed aggressive play on the base paths, pushing his players to take an extra base or steal a base whenever it was advantageous.

In the field Comiskey expected defensive excellence. He was also one of those who introduced a change that revolutionized the way his position was played. Previously first basemen had played close to the bag at all times. Comiskey instead played well off the bag and several steps toward second, enabling him to be more active defensively. Within several years Comiskey's style of play became the standard positioning for first basemen (and, of course, still is).¹⁰

Off the field he was a true student of the game who diligently studied opposing hitters, pitchers, and fielders, constantly looking for weaknesses that could be exploited. His tactics also included needling opponents and "kicking" (assertively disputing) umpire decisions. His club developed some of the era's most notorious bench jockeys. In terms of his personal demeanor, Comiskey was a disciplined ball player whose lifestyle was designed to prepare him for games. Postgame carousing, a standard endeavor of many ballplayers, was something he spurned—much to the satisfaction of von der Ahe, who considered off-the-field discipline essential for a winning team.

Von der Ahe got what he had hoped for with

Comiskey. In 1885 the Browns dominated the American Association. During the first two cold, dreary weeks of the season, the team won as many as it lost. However, as the St. Louis weather heated up in late April, so did the Browns. The team concluded its first home stand by splitting a pair of games with the Louisvilles and defeating Pittsburgh. The loss to Louisville was the last time Comiskey's crew would lose a home game until July 18, a streak of 27 games. By the time the Sportsman's Park winning streak ended, the Browns, despite winning only 17 of 31 games on the road, had built a comfortable 9½ game lead over the rest of the league. That lead grew to 16 games by the end of the season.¹¹

But the League championship was not enough for Chris von der Ahe. Eager to parlay his team's success into something bigger, he challenged Spalding and the White Stockings. The Metropolitans and Grays' three-game series the year before had not been sanctioned by their leagues and, therefore, was not considered a championship series by either league despite being advertised as such. The 1884 games were simply post-season exhibition games, arranged to generate a little extra revenue. Von der Ahe's motives were more encompassing. He proposed that the series would determine the best team in the world. He saw an opportunity to promote the American Association as well as his own status as one of baseball's preeminent executives. Spalding considered the proposal to be a brash challenge to his White Stockings and the National League, but he recognized it was a challenge that could not be dismissed. Smugly confident his team could not lose to the upstarts, he accepted von der Ahe's proposal. Later he would claim that he considered the games to be merely potentially profitable exhibitions from the beginning.

Unlike von der Ahe, Albert Spalding was a baseball man. He grew up in a fairly affluent family eighty miles west of Chicago—in Rockford, Illinois, where he learned the game as a youngster. His climb through baseball's hierarchy began when he was seventeen and pitched his local team to a notable victory over the Nationals of Washington, one of the better teams outside New York and the first eastern team to travel west. A few years later he was hired by the legendary Harry Wright to pitch for his Boston Red Stockings in the new National Association. Spalding became the game's preeminent hurler. With the creation of the National League in 1876, he jumped to the Chicago White Stockings where he became the team captain, later the team secretary, team president, and ultimately the team's principal owner. Meanwhile, he had begun

to build a sporting goods empire. By the time of von der Ahe's challenge, Spalding was among the most influential men in baseball.¹²

Aside from their entrepreneurial nature, the two team owners had sharply contrasting personalities. Spalding was a nativist Republican who intended for his game to help fortify core American moral principles. He advocated traditional family values, Christian ethics, and temperance while denouncing behavior he considered inappropriate. A German immigrant who wrestled with the English language, Von der Ahe was a staunch Democrat and a saloon keeper intent on entertaining his customers. The Browns' impresario was well suited for a population entranced by P.T. Barnum. Trumpeting a flamboyant personality, von der Ahe's trademark promotions included flashy pregame parades and postgame shows. Several weeks before challenging Spalding, von der Ahe had hired Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show to entertain patrons following two games with Cincinnati. And of course there was the beer garden in right field and tolerance for a bit of rowdiness in the stands. To Spalding such shallow diversions and untoward behavior were beneath the respectability that baseball ought to embody.

Spalding felt certain his team could easily dispatch von der Ahe's club and once again embarrass the upstart league. In 1885 most regarded the National League as far superior to the American Association; therefore the league champion White Stockings were considered the best team in baseball. Led by Adrian "Cap" Anson, Chicago had an even better year than the Browns, winning 87 games while losing only 25. George Gore's .313 and Anson's .310 topped a team batting average that was almost twenty points higher than the Browns. The White Stockings also hit more than three times as many home runs as their rivals. The only Brown to lead his league in any offensive category was shortstop Bill Gleason, who was hit by more pitches than anyone else.¹³

In the pitcher's box, the Browns' two hurlers, Bob Caruthers and Dave Foutz, combined for 73 wins, ranking first and third in their league.¹⁴ But Chicago's two regular pitchers did even better: Ace John Clarkson won an incredible 53 games and had an earned run average .22 runs lower than Caruthers. The other regular White Stockings pitcher, Jim McCormick, had a lower earned run average than did Foutz, and though he had won thirteen fewer games than Foutz, he had started twenty-two fewer. The White Stockings lineup also featured the player many considered to be the best in baseball, Mike "King" Kelly, along with several other acknowledged stars.

The one clear advantage St. Louis had was its fielding. Comiskey demanded excellence in the field and his 1885 Browns boasted what was arguably the best fielding team that had ever been assembled. Meanwhile, three Chicago infielders, first baseman Anson, second baseman Fred Pfeffer, and shortstop Tom Burns, led the National League in errors at their positions. Third baseman Ned Williamson was second at his position.¹⁵

The two owners hastily arranged a twelve-game barnstorming series that would open with a game in Chicago's impressive new Congress Street Grounds followed by three in Sportsman's Park.¹⁶ The final eight games were scheduled to be played in five other American Association cities.¹⁷ Adding spice to the contests, von der Ahe and Spalding each put up \$500 that would go to the winning team. It was also agreed that the teams would split all gate receipts.

Little did either owner expect what was about to follow.¹⁸ Rather than contests between the best two teams in baseball, the games were characterized by controversial umpiring, sloppy play, and increasingly disgruntled fans.

The series opened in Chicago with several pregame challenges, including a ball throwing contest and a foot race around the bases.¹⁹ In the game that followed, the Browns built a 5-1 lead through seven innings, but in the eighth Chicago scored four times, the last three on a home run by second baseman Fred Pfeffer, to tie the game. Because of the delayed start, by the time Pfeffer crossed the plate twilight had descended. Between innings, umpire David Sullivan—who had been hired to officiate the series after umpiring 69 National League games that season—decided it was too dark to continue play and ended the game in a 5-5 tie.

The next afternoon a disappointingly small crowd of only 3,000 St. Louis fans (known as "cranks" in the late nineteenth century) filed into Sportsman's Park for the second game.²⁰ A notable figure who was not in attendance was Chicago's leading hitter and star center fielder, George Gore. After the first game, team captain Anson was so upset with Gore's "indifferent playing and indulging too freely in stimulants" that he told Gore to stay in Chicago.²¹ Meanwhile there were rumors that "[Gore] has been playing for his release."²² Spalding denied the reports. Instead the team president contended that his center fielder was simply tired from a long season. After the series had concluded, Spalding implicitly referred to Gore, among other players, arguing that after winning the National League his club had been worn out and had not taken the Browns seriously.

Provoked by several controversial calls early in the second game, the home-town supporters raucously challenged umpire Sullivan. The complaints mounted to crisis proportions in the sixth inning. With a runner on third, White Stockings slugger “King” Kelly smacked a ball that shortstop Gleason bobbled before throwing to first. Sullivan, anticipating a close play at the plate, lost track of Kelly and called him safe at first when he was obviously out. Even the *Chicago Tribune* acknowledged that Kelly was out “by at least ten feet.”²³ The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* was more frank, labelling Sullivan’s call “...out-and-out robbery.”²⁴ Upon hearing the call, Comiskey instantly charged Sullivan, launching a blistering rebuttal and ultimately threatening to pull his club off the field. After fifteen stormy minutes during which Sullivan reversed his call several times, play was resumed with Kelly on first. Amid continuing hoots and hollers, Kelly immediately stole second, and a pitch later scored the tying run on a single by Anson.

Two batters later, the go-ahead run scored on yet another disputed call. With Fred Pfeffer on third, Ned Williamson chopped a pitch down the first-base line. Initially the ball landed in foul territory but then spun back onto the playing field. Though he thought it had been called foul by Sullivan, Browns first baseman Comiskey picked the ball up and casually tossed it to his second baseman who was covering first. However, Williamson had hustled down the line and beaten Comiskey’s throw. Sullivan called him safe. Angrily confronted by Comiskey, Sullivan reversed his call and ruled it foul after all. With that Anson, Kelly, and several of their teammates jumped off the bench to confront the umpire. Intimidated by the charge, Sullivan again changed his decision. With that, a couple hundred Browns’ partisans, enraged by the second reversal, surged onto the field and headed for Sullivan.²⁵

Fortunately for Sullivan, amid the swirl of protests security officers interceded and whisked the beleaguered umpire away. Later—from the safety of his hotel room—Sullivan declared the game a Browns’ forfeit because Comiskey had pulled his team from the field. Whether the Browns were pulled from the field or instead left at the same time as the White Stockings, Sullivan’s decision became the source of a heated debate throughout the remaining games of the series.²⁶

When the two teams met again the next day, umpire Sullivan was gone. Instead Harry McCaffrey, who had played for the Browns in 1882, took over the umpiring duties. This time the game was played with little controversy. In front of another disappointingly small crowd of only 3,000, the White Stockings immediately “went to pieces in the field” flubbing away the game in the first inning when a two-out error led to five unearned St. Louis runs.²⁷ From there on, the two pitching aces, Caruthers and Clarkson, dominated, with Caruthers and his teammates eventually prevailing, 7–4.

The last game scheduled for St. Louis included a new storm of protests. Before the first pitch Anson demanded that McCaffrey be replaced by an umpire with no ties to the Browns. After some discussion, Anson relented, but by that time the sting of his criticism had offended McCaffrey so thoroughly that he refused to officiate. After a 45-minute search, a local sportsman, William Medart—who apparently met Anson’s standards—was plucked from the stands to call the game.

It didn’t take long before the White Stockings’ manager regretted upsetting the apple cart. From the beginning every close call reflected the new umpire’s avid support for his hometown team. In the fifth, a Medart mistake cost Chicago a run. Even the St. Louis



Al Spalding



Cap Anson



Chris von der Ahe



Charlie Comiskey

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papers acknowledged Medart's bias.²⁸ Despite it all, the White Stockings were only down, 3–2, as they batted in the ninth. With one out and Tommy Burns on first, Chicago pitcher Jim McCormick lifted a pop fly to shallow right field that Comiskey dropped. Picking the ball up, the Browns' first baseman dashed over and tagged McCormick who had rounded the bag but was clearly back on first. Nevertheless, Medart called the runner out. Enraged, McCormick rushed the umpire. Fortunately Anson was able to block his path. At the same time, future evangelist Billy Sunday leaped up off the Chicago bench with fists clenched and charged toward the umpire. Reacting quickly, Mike "King" Kelly, not usually known as a peacemaker, grabbed his teammate just short of Medart. Once order was finally restored, the game ended on a pop foul.

During the scheduled four-day hiatus that followed, the umpiring controversy was resolved. John O. "Honest John" Kelly was hired to officiate the remaining games. Kelly combined experience in both leagues with an impeccable reputation and, most importantly, the respect of both Spalding and von der Ahe. Unfortunately the resolution did nothing to enhance the competition. The trip to Pittsburgh generated little interest among locals. Additionally, the fifth game was played on an exceptionally cold mid-autumn afternoon. Consequently only 500 paid to watch the contest. Rather than the hard-nosed play that had characterized the first four games, onlookers watched two sloppy teams lumber through the afternoon, during which Anson's crew methodically pecked their way to a 9–2 victory.

Circumstances did not improve during the following two days in Cincinnati. Like their Pittsburgh counterparts, local Red Stockings fans showed little interest in games between the Browns and the White Stockings. The *Cincinnati Enquirer* described game six as "one of the bummiest games seen here this season."²⁹ The two teams committed a total of 17 errors, half of which "were what are known in baseball parlance as 'rotten.'"³⁰ Aside from another 9–2 win, the afternoon's saving grace for the White Stockings was Jim McCormick's two-hit pitching.

Amidst sagging attendance and players anxious to move on to postseason endeavors, the two owners agreed that the second game in Cincinnati would be the last game in the series.³² However, whether game two should be counted as a St. Louis forfeit remained an unresolved issue. If it counted, Chicago was up, 3–2. If not, the series was tied. In either case some—like the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*—lamented that without additional games "the question as to which club is

superior [remains] entirely in the dark."³³ Despite the concerns, the two team captains, Comiskey and Anson, came to an agreement. Chicago's leader, confident after two relatively easy victories, comfortable with the current umpire, and eager to boost attendance, agreed to drop the disputed game. The winner of the last game would be recognized as the winner of the series.³⁴ Anson would regret this decision.³⁵

The final game started well for the White Stockings, but the team fell apart quickly. Up two runs after an inning, Chicago's defensive woes reemerged in the third. Four hits, two errors, and a passed ball that allowed two runners to score, led to four St. Louis tallies. At that point the "slaughter" was on. Errors, misplays, and poor pitching marked the rest of the afternoon for Anson's crew. Six more Browns runs in the fifth put the game out of reach. The *Cincinnati Enquirer* called it "one of the worst games ever played in Cincinnati...yesterday's exhibition, on the part of the Windy City men, was simply disgusting."³⁶ In the end St. Louis came away with a 13–4 rout and a claim to being the world's best baseball team.

As expected, a very unhappy Albert Spalding wasted no time in snubbing the claim. The following day he explained to *Chicago Tribune* readers that "[it] is widely contended that the series just finished has been contested to decide the championship of the world. That is nonsense."³⁷ He stressed that the forfeited game should be considered a Chicago win and, therefore, the series ended with each team having won three games. Spalding insisted that he would never have agreed to play games in American Association cities using American Association rules and umpires had he considered it a world championship. Instead the games had simply been postseason exhibitions as in the previous year. Additionally, his players, who he acknowledged did not play well, didn't care about the games because they recognized that as a result of the poor attendance they were not going to receive much compensation for their efforts. Instead Spalding blamed "the enterprise of the newspapers" for promoting the games as a world championship.³⁸

Spalding's opinions were quickly echoed by several sources. In addition to *The Chicago Mirror*—which was acknowledged to be Spalding's media "organ"—*Sporting Life*, a weekly paper published in Philadelphia, seemed to share Spalding's assessment. However, several of the *Sporting Life* reports, filed under the pseudonym "Remlap," were submitted by Harry Palmer, who covered baseball for the *Chicago Tribune* and was quite sympathetic to his hometown team. At the beginning of the series, the weekly described the games

as merely a postseason exhibition between two champions. The paper argued that “the greatest difficulty usually is that it is hard to awaken enough interest on the part of the [National] League players to do their best” when playing games after the championship season.³⁹ Throughout the series, *Sporting Life* continued to downplay the games while at the same time acknowledging that “the Browns are without a doubt a very smooth organization and can play with the best of them. Had they been in the League instead of the American Association...[they] would quite likely have ranked other than last in the race.”⁴⁰

Immediately after the series, the paper concurred with Spalding. In rhetoric clearly influenced by Spalding, *Sporting Life* listed the various reasons that St. Louis should not be considered world champions. The paper’s conclusion was: “The St. Louis men were bound to win by hook or by crook for the glory of beating the League champions and the local umpires were bound to help them.”⁴¹ A week later, under a column titled “The World’s Championship,” the weekly modified its view a bit, reporting that “the Chicago Club is much chagrined...[about] the loss the ‘world’s championship,’ a title which amounts to little...”⁴² However, in the end *Sporting Life* came down solidly on Spalding’s side. In a final assessment, the weekly concluded that “Spalding is right...that Chicago is entitled to the so called drawn game in St. Louis [and] the series as originally arranged was not completed.”⁴³

Other papers were not as eager to embrace the Spalding defense. Even the *Chicago Tribune* introduced its account of the final game by announcing: “Chicago Badly Beaten By The St. Louis Browns—The Latter Now Champions Of The World.”⁴⁴ The following day, beneath Spalding’s defense, the paper reprinted an article from the *Cincinnati Commercial-Gazette* which defended the Browns’ right “to lay claim to the championship of the world.”⁴⁵

Not surprisingly, the St. Louis papers also described the Browns as world champions. The *Missouri Republican* agreed with the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* announcement that “the game to-day...was the decisive one in the series between these two clubs for the championship of the world, and resulted in an easy victory for the St. Louis team.”⁴⁶ Another to side with the Browns was the 1886 edition of *Reach’s Official American Association Baseball Guide*, which cites umpire Kelly’s pre-game announcement that the two managers had agreed that the winner of the seventh game would be considered the winner of the series.⁴⁷

A fitting assessment of the series came from Henry Chadwick. The most influential baseball writer of an

earlier era, Chadwick was still a voice to be considered. Writing in the *New York Clipper*, he commented that “as it stands the St. Louis Club team are unquestionably the champion team of the United States for 1885 and nothing can prevent them from legally claiming the honor.”⁴⁸ He also proposed that a championship series between the champions of the American Association and the National League ought to be made a regular closing series.

A month after the final out, *Sporting Life* returned to both Spalding and von der Ahe the \$500 prize money that each had promised to the series winner. Maintaining that the second game had been forfeited and therefore the series ended in a 3–3 tie, the weekly announced “The championship of the United States remains in abeyance.”⁴⁹ By accepting the return, von der Ahe was, in effect, acknowledging that his team could not conclusively claim victory. Instead he began preparing for the 1886 season, which he hoped would include another clash with the National League champions and an undisputed world championship.

Whether the Browns won the series or it ended in a draw remains unresolved even today. Most sources agree with Albert Spalding that the series concluded in a three-game tie.⁵⁰ Others hold to the argument that by winning the final game the Browns won the series.⁵¹ The real significance of that 1885 series, however, is not who won but rather that the series served as the second step toward instituting the tradition of a postseason world-championship series. Building upon the games played by the two league champions the previous year, the 1885 games further established guidelines toward the evolution of the World Series as it exists today.

A year later the same two teams again won their leagues and arranged another postseason series. This time, hoping to avoid some of the unresolved issues from the 1885 series, both teams agreed that the winner would be considered baseball’s world champion. Each year until after the 1891 season when the American Association folded, the two leagues continued to play an end of the season world championship series. Even after the demise of the American Association, the National League maintained the evolving tradition. Though the championship series was suspended during the early twentieth century while the National League wrestled with the new American League, the union of the two leagues in 1903 fostered the resumption of a world championship series which we continue to enjoy today as the pinnacle of baseball competition. ■

Notes

1. There are several sources that include a discussion of the 1885 series. The most thorough account can be found in Jon David Cash, *Before They Were Cardinals* (University of Missouri Press: Columbia, MO., 2011); Jerry Lansche, *Glory Fades Away: The Nineteenth-Century World Series Rediscovered* (Taylor Publishing: Dallas TX, 1991) provides a succinct game-by-game account of the series. David Nemec, *The Beer and Whiskey League* (Lyons Press: Guilford, CT, 2004) also offers a concise description of the series.
2. One of the questions about the series was what to call it. Variations of "the Baseball Championship of the United States" or "the World Baseball Championship Series" were used, often in the same article.
3. There are several good biographical accounts of Chris von der Ahe. The most thorough is J. Thomas Hetrick, *Chris Von der Ahe and the St. Louis Browns* (The Scarecrow Press: Latham Maryland, 1999). A concise and very informative article was written by Richard Egenreither's "Chris Von der Ahe: Baseball's Pioneering Huckster" (*Baseball Research Journal*, Volume 18, 1989).
4. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January, 15, 1884: 5. By 1884 the number of stockholders had been reduced to about twenty. At the time other notable investors who formed the Sportsman's Park Club and Association in addition to von der Ahe were newspaper writer Al Spink, fellow saloon-keeper John Peckington, brewer William F. Nolker, and Congressman John J. O'Neill.
5. Hetrick, page 6; Cash, page 59. The bartender was Ned Cuthbert, who began his professional baseball career with the Athletics of Philadelphia in 1871. By 1881 he had played for several professional teams.
6. Nemec provides a detailed description of the negotiations involved in organizing the American Association.
7. The other five charter members of the American Association were Baltimore, Cincinnati, Eclipse, Athletics, and Alleghenys.
8. Two of the twelve teams—Virginia and Washington—did not play enough games to be eligible for the league championship.
9. Comiskey made it clear: "I go on the field to win a game of ball by hook or crook." Quoted in J. Thomas Hetrick, *Chris von der Ahe and the St. Louis Browns*, 40.
10. Hugh Weir, "The Real Comiskey," *Baseball Magazine*, February, 1914: 24.
11. Baseball Almanac provides a game-by-game win-loss account of the Browns season. (See <http://www.baseballalmanac.com/teamstats/schedule.php?y=1885&t=SL4>, accessed on June 28, 2017.)
12. There are several good biographical descriptions of Albert G. Spalding, the best of which is Peter Levine's monograph: *A.G. Spalding and the Rise of Baseball: The Promise of an American Sport* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1985). Bill McMahon has written Spalding's entry in the SABR BioProject. There is also biographical information provided in Harold and Dorothy Seymour's *Baseball: The Early Years* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1960).
13. Baseball-Reference.com. See <http://www.baseball-reference.com/leagues/AA/History/1885-AA-batng-leaders.shtml> accessed on June 28, 2017.
14. Nemec, *Beer and Whiskey*, 107.
15. Baseball-Reference.com See <http://www.baseball-reference.com/leagues/AA/History/1885-AA-fielding-leaders.shtml> accessed on June 28, 2017.
16. The park, later called West Side Park, was located at the western end on a small block bounded by Congress, Loomis, Harrison, and Throop Streets. The elongated shape of the block lent a decidedly bathtub-like shape to the park, with foul lines reportedly as short as 216 feet. Capacity was roughly 10,000 spectators. A bicycle track encircled the baseball field at the height of the contemporary bicycle craze.
17. Games were scheduled in Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Baltimore, Philadelphia and Brooklyn.
18. *The Sporting Life*, October 21, 1885, 3.
19. *The Inter Ocean*, October 15, 1885, 5. Ned Williamson won the ball throw and his teammate, second baseman Fred Pfeffer, won the foot race.
20. *Chicago Tribune*, October 16, 1885, 2; Lansche, 67.
21. *Chicago Tribune*, October 16, 1885, 2.
22. *Sporting Life*, October 21, 1885, 1.
23. *Chicago Tribune*, October 16, 1885, 2.
24. *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, October 16, 1885, 8.
25. *Chicago Tribune*, October 16, 1885. The Tribune reported that 200 fans came onto the playing field.
26. Lansche, 61–63; Cash, 111–113; *Chicago Tribune*, October 16, 1885. The *Tribune* incorrectly reported that Billy Sunday rather than Fred Pfeffer scored the go-ahead fifth White Stockings run.
27. *Chicago Tribune*, October 17, 1885, 2.
28. *Missouri Republican*, October 18, 1885; *Sporting Life*, October 28, 1885. A National League official who witnessed these games (in St. Louis) said they were simply robberies. "The St. Louis men were bound to win by hook or by crook for the glory of beating the League champions, and the local umpires were bound to help them."
29. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, October 24, 1885, 2.
30. Ibid.
31. Local correspondents in Pittsburgh and Cincinnati wired game accounts to newspapers in St. Louis and Chicago. The accounts in those papers were therefore very similar.
32. *Chicago Tribune*, October 23, 1885, 2.
33. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, October 24, 1885, 9.
34. *Chicago Tribune*, October 26, 1885, 2. The *Tribune* published a copy of an article in Cincinnati's *Commercial-Gazette* in which Cap Anson is quoted as having agreed that the winner of the final game would be the world's champion. However, above the reprint is a statement from Albert Spalding declaring the series a 3–3 tie.
35. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, October 25, 1885, 10; *Chicago Tribune*, October 25, 1885, 11.
36. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, October 25, 1885, 10.
37. *Chicago Tribune*, October 26, 1885, 2.
38. Ibid.
39. *Sporting Life*, October 14, 1885, 5. Palmer signed his pieces "Remlap" which is Palmer spelled backwards.
40. *Sporting Life*, October 21, 1885, 1. "Remlap" is the author.
41. *Sporting Life*, October 28, 1885, 4. "Remlap" is the author.
42. *Sporting Life*, November 4, 1885, 1.
43. *Sporting Life*, November 18, 1885, 3.
44. *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 25, 1885, 11.
45. *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 26, 1885, 2.
46. *Missouri Republican* October 25, 1885; *St. Louis Globe Democrat*, October 25, 1885.
47. *Reach's Official American Association Baseball Guide*: 1886, 11–12.
48. *New York Clipper*, November 7, 1885, 9.
49. *Sporting Life*, November 25, 1885, 4.
50. Cash, 122.
51. John Thorn, *Baseball in the Garden of Eden* (Simon and Schuster: New York, 2011) 202–03; Lansche, 66.

Broadcasting Red Sox Baseball

How the Arrival of Radio Impacted the Team and the Fans

Donna L. Halper, PhD

In the early years of the American League, Boston fans had a lot to smile about—World Series victories in 1903, 1912, 1915, 1916, and 1918—but after that, everything changed for the worse. Not only was Babe Ruth infamously sold, but the Red Sox began a string of losing seasons. Faced with teams that seldom left the cellar, fans tried to find reasons for hope—occasionally, the team would get timely hits or win a double-header¹—but with no chance of a pennant in sight, attendance at Fenway Park suffered.²

But even in good times, only a small number of fans could watch a game in person. During the team's winning years, the games at Fenway Park were often sold out (although not in the 1918 World Series)³ and even when there were seats available, many fans couldn't get the day off from work to attend, or couldn't afford the tickets. Although ticket prices cost far less in 1918 than today, they were still an extravagance for many working-class people. Day-of-game box seats for the 1918 World Series were being sold for \$3.30, grandstand seats for \$1.65, and pavilion seats \$1.10.⁴ To put those prices in perspective, the average annual family income in Boston around that time was \$1,477, or about \$28 a week.⁵ The City of Boston's Official Record showed that stablemen, watchmen and janitors were making \$3 a day, while plumbers and machinists received \$3.50 to \$4 a day.⁶

Whether rich or poor, fans all had the same problem: if they couldn't be at Fenway Park—or if the team was on the road—getting up-to-the-minute information was nearly impossible. In the 1910s, there were a limited number of ways to find out what was going on. Fans had to rely on their local newspaper, which would publish multiple editions throughout the day and into the evening as they received reports by telegraph from the ballpark. During the World Series, as each game progressed, the latest score was posted on the front page, at the top, in bold type.

The most enthusiastic fans in the Boston area would make a pilgrimage to lower Washington Street's "Newspaper Row." One of Boston's busiest thoroughfares, Newspaper Row was home to the *Boston Globe*, the *Boston Evening Transcript*, the *Boston Post*, the *Boston Daily Advertiser*, the *Boston Evening Record*,

and, until it went out of business in 1917, the *Boston Journal*. Herbert Kenny worked for two of the papers (the *Post* and the *Globe*). In his 1987 book about Newspaper Row, he compared lower Washington Street to the ancient Greek *agora*, an open meeting place that served as the center of public life.⁷ Fans would gather to socialize and talk sports while eagerly awaiting the scores, or hoping one of the sportswriters might come by and chat. As soon as any information became available by telegraph, newsboys would write it on chalkboards, which were positioned in front of the offices of the *Globe*, the *Post*, and several others. Sometimes results would be announced by megaphone. Fans would cheer loudly each time the news was good.⁸

But although the Red Sox teams of the 1920s weren't giving fans many reasons to cheer, an easier way to find out what was happening at the ballpark was emerging. An amazing technology called radio made its debut in the summer of 1920, a life-changing invention for anyone who loved sports. (Even though many textbooks have perpetuated the myth that KDKA in Pittsburgh was the first radio station, and that its November 2, 1920, broadcast of the presidential election returns was the first broadcast, neither of these claims is true.⁹ There were stations on the air months before KDKA, including one each in greater Boston, Detroit, Montreal, and Madison, Wisconsin.)

In 1920 and 1921, greater Boston only had one radio station—its name was 1XE (the X meant the station was considered experimental, which is what most people thought radio was back then). 1XE only had about fifty watts of power. Owned by a local company called AMRAD, its studios were located at Medford Hillside, near what is today Tufts University, about five miles from downtown Boston. The far bigger and better-known WBZ, owned by Westinghouse, would go on the air in mid-September 1921 in Springfield, about 85 miles from Boston. WBZ did not open a Boston studio until early 1924.

In 1921, radio wasn't even called radio—most newspapers called it either the "wireless telephone" or the "radiophone" and there were only a handful of stations nationwide—no more than fifteen commercial stations on the air in the entire United States. But despite the

fact that only about 2000 people in greater Boston owned radio sets in 1921, radio was already doing amazing things for baseball fans.¹⁰ In October, the World Series was broadcast; KDKA was one of the stations that provided listeners with the opportunity to hear this important sporting event.¹¹ For the first time, fans who lived far from New York, where the games were taking place, could follow the play-by-play in real time, as if they were actually there, and not merely following a recreation. Radio was the first mass medium to provide real-time access to an event as it was happening. For those unable to receive the game from the few stations broadcasting it, ham radio operators stepped up, relaying the scores from the ballpark to anyone who wanted them.¹²

By the summer of 1922, the radio craze was sweeping the country, and several hundred new stations went on the air. Among them was WNAC, owned by Boston department store owner John Shepard III. He installed a studio for his new radio station in the Shepard Department Store in downtown Boston. His brother Robert ran the Shepard Department Store in Providence, which became the home of station WEAN. Many stations provided up-to-date sports scores on a regular basis.¹³ A small number of stations also experimented with remote broadcasts, occasionally putting sporting events on the air live, including boxing matches and the 1922 World Series.

The games were once again on the air from New York, but this time the Series had a much larger radio

audience. By some accounts, about five million people tuned in, and fans on three continents heard the broadcasts.¹⁴ Radio was also a democratizing influence, bringing the same broadcast to listeners regardless of race. Unfortunately, not only were all the major league teams segregated, so were some of the ballparks. White fans often received far better seating than black fans, some of whom were only allowed to sit in the bleachers.¹⁵

Though only a limited number of baseball games were broadcast in 1922, a few baseball stars were beginning to do radio interviews, and even give talks. Among them was Babe Ruth, who spoke on Denver station KFAF in late October 1922.¹⁶ (Ruth also gave a radio testimonial during the 1928 presidential election—he was an enthusiastic supporter of Democratic candidate Al Smith. The Babe took part in a broadcast on behalf of the New York governor, whom he called “the greatest friend of American sports.”¹⁷ Despite the Babe’s kind words, Smith lost to Herbert Hoover.)

The public’s love affair with radio put the newspapers in an awkward position: as interest in radio expanded, many print publications worried that the new mass medium would take people away from reading the paper. Editors were unsure what to do about radio—should they ignore it or should they embrace it? Some tried to pretend radio didn’t exist, refusing to write about it or mention it. Others hired someone with ham radio experience to write columns of a mainly technical nature, and occasionally comment



The offices of greater Boston’s first radio station, 1XE, Medford Hillside. In early February 1922, the station became WGI.

about what was on the air at a local station. But a few newspaper editors saw real potential in aligning their publication with a radio station; they wanted to use radio to promote their reporters, the way the *Detroit News* did with their pioneering station 8MK/WWJ. In greater Boston, the *Boston American* was the first to make such an agreement. In mid-February 1922, reporters from that newspaper began working with WGI (formerly 1XE), making it possible for listeners to hear daily news reports, sports scores, and other information.

The newspapers needn't have worried about losing readership; sports fans wanted more, not less, information. Baseball fans still wanted to read their favorite baseball writers, to get analysis, and they still enjoyed their favorite sports cartoonists—every major newspaper had at least one. The *Boston Traveler* was the sister paper to the *Boston Herald*, and one of the first of the dailies to enthusiastically embrace radio, providing coverage of the new mass medium beginning in February 1921. The *Traveler* hired its own radio editor, Guy Entwistle, and he wrote a column about it three times a week. (Three years later, both the *Herald* and the *Traveler* would become even more involved with radio: they entered into an agreement with WBZ, when the Westinghouse station opened a Boston studio in early 1924.) The *Traveler* was known for its hard-working sports staff. Among the writers who covered baseball was Augustus J. Rooney—better known as Gus, but using the byline “A.J. Rooney” at that time. He covered college sports when baseball was not in season. And the *Traveler* had two sports cartoonists—Abe Savrann, who signed his work SAV, and Charles

(Charlie) Donelan, who also wrote an occasional sports column. Both Gus Rooney and Charlie Donelan would soon become very important in the history of baseball on the radio in Boston, while Abe Savrann would play a part in (perhaps) solving a long-time mystery: who was the play-by-play announcer of the first baseball game to be broadcast on Boston radio?

Some of the earliest interactions between the Red Sox and radio occurred in 1923. No, the games weren't on the air (which, given yet another losing season, was probably a good thing), but for perhaps the first time, the manager was. That courageous gentleman was the newly hired Lee Fohl. A former catcher who had only played five major league games, Fohl had managed successfully in the minors, as well as for the Cleveland Indians and St. Louis Browns, before being named Red Sox manager for the 1924 season, succeeding Frank Chance.

Fohl was optimistic about his new job in Boston—in fact, not long after he was hired, he was scheduled to give a radio talk about the upcoming season, via the Shepard station, WNAC. On November 7, 1923, not long after he arrived in Boston, he was introduced to the local baseball writers. His talk was called “The Red Sox Prospects for 1924.”¹⁸ Unfortunately for modern-day historians, no recording exists of the broadcast; in fact, there are very few recordings from broadcasting's first decade. Audiotape had not yet been invented and even electrical transcriptions did not make their debut until 1929.¹⁹ Some newsmakers, such as an influential member of Congress or the president, might have made a phonograph record of an important speech, but it would not have been cost-effective or easy to do this for a baseball game (or most other sporting events of that time). Thus, while you may hear some (allegedly) early broadcasts online, many of them are reenactments, since few if any actual 1920s sports broadcasts were ever recorded or preserved.²⁰ Fohl's willingness to go on the air was somewhat out of character for him, and not just because radio was new.²¹ By most accounts, Fohl didn't like the limelight.²² It was probably exciting for the fans to hear from Fohl, in his own voice—in an era when access to newsmakers was limited. Under Fohl's leadership there was a slight improvement in how the team did: the Red Sox left the cellar and finished seventh in 1924.

There were still no local broadcasts of Red Sox games in 1923 or 1924. In early October 1924, Boston's newest station, WEEI (owned by the Edison Electric Illuminating Company), had arranged to link up with New York station WEAJ to broadcast the first game of the World Series from Washington, as the Nationals

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Gus Rooney broadcasting for WNAC in 1926.

battled the Giants.²³ The play-by-play announcer would be Graham McNamee, a name and voice very familiar to fans in many cities, Boston among them. Because the 1920s were a time when DXing (listening for distant stations) was a popular pastime for anyone who owned a radio, it was not uncommon for fans in one city to listen to broadcasts from other cities. WEAf's signal was easily heard in Boston. Local baseball fans had discovered WEAf broadcasting some New York Giants games, and even though they weren't supporters of that team, they enjoyed hearing a ballgame on the radio. And they especially enjoyed Graham McNamee's announcing; reporters and fans alike praised him.²⁴ McNamee was already a radio veteran by 1924, having announced the 1923 World Series along with sportswriter William McGeehan. Despite not being local, McNamee became so popular as a sports broadcaster that greater Boston charities invited him to be their guest speaker.²⁵ The versatile radio star also came to Boston to perform as a vocalist. A talented baritone, he sang at Symphony Hall in December 1925 before a large and appreciative audience.²⁶

For those eager to hear local baseball on the radio, things progressed in 1925. The Red Sox still weren't winning, and the games still weren't being broadcast, but something new came to Boston radio: baseball talk. Earlier, I mentioned a popular sports cartoonist for the *Boston Traveler*, Charlie Donelan. But he was more than a cartoonist and an occasional sports columnist, he was also a story-teller and a comedian. Donelan had brought his comedy act to many local vaudeville theaters and civic events, and he had even performed on several Boston radio stations. (He was known for his fictional character "Russett Appul.") In early April 1925, Donelan received a new opportunity: he got his own sports-talk radio program on WEEL. Twice a week during much of 1925, Charlie would talk baseball and give fans inside tips, as well as discussing people he had met while covering all the teams.²⁷

By most accounts, WBZ seems to have aired the first live baseball in Boston, but it wasn't a Red Sox game. Rather, the station broadcast the opening game of the Boston Braves season from Braves Field on April 14, 1925. As I mentioned earlier, one of the mysteries about that game is who did the announcing. I am WBZ's unofficial historian and I was given some of the station's archival notes compiled by the late Gordon Swan, whose long career with the station included being an announcer and production manager at WBZ Radio, and later a program director during the early years of WBZ-TV. But while the notes list WBZ's accomplishments year by year beginning in 1921, and state that

WBZ's Boston studio was first to broadcast a baseball game, the announcer's name is curiously omitted. It is also omitted from the few newspaper mentions of the event—including the *Herald* and *Traveler*, the two publications aligned with WBZ back then.

Some people have suggested that the announcer might have been Charlie Donelan, but I have found no evidence to support that theory. Donelan did broadcast Braves games later that year, but over station WNAC.²⁸ And that brings me to SAV, *Boston Traveler* sports cartoonist Abe Savrann. Born in Russia as Abraham Savransky in 1898, he and his family emigrated to the United States in 1902. A talented illustrator even in his teens, he graduated early from Rindge Technical High School in Cambridge, and was immediately hired by the *Boston Post* in March 1916.²⁹ He then joined the *Traveler* circa 1918, covering news and sports, and he was still there when the baseball season opened in 1925.

Fast forward to 2016, as I pored over microfilm of the *Traveler* in preparation for a talk about sports cartoonists (much of the *Traveler* still isn't digitized). I found a cartoon of SAV's from April 15, 1925, showing the highlights of the Braves home opener. In that pre-television era, sports cartoonists often provided these highlights for those who couldn't attend the game in person. The last panel of the cartoon praised Joe E. Brown for having announced the game on WBZ. Brown was a big name at that time, a popular vaudeville and film comedian who had played baseball prior to his entertainment career; he wasn't a local to Boston nor a WBZ employee, but at a time when there was no official play-by-play announcer for either Boston team, it would not have been unusual for a celebrity, a businessman, or a local print reporter, to give broadcasting a try.

Could Brown have been that mystery announcer? Abe Savrann knew Brown personally, and the Elks Lodge to which SAV belonged was about to honor Brown; in fact, SAV was on the committee that arranged the event.³⁰ Also, Brown was in the Boston area during the week of that Braves game—he was starring in the live stage performance of "Betty Lee," which opened on April 11, 1925 at the Majestic Theatre. Thus, the last panel of SAV's April 15, 1925, *Traveler* cartoon about the Braves game may have solved the mystery. The caption reads, "the inimitable Joe E. Brown broadcast the game for WBZ." It's not definitive proof, but circumstantially at least, it does look like Brown was the person who did the play-by-play.

When WNAC got permission to air other Braves games in 1925, this was considered very controversial

by some of the teams, who feared that making baseball available on radio would cause attendance at the games to decrease. As with the fears of newspaper owners that radio would make fans lose interest in reading the paper—which did not happen—the fears of team presidents were equally overblown; fans who could attend did so, and everyone else appreciated being able to follow the game. (In fact, in the decades since the portable radio was invented, fans have done both, bringing a radio to the park to listen to the play-by-play during the game.) Once the details on permission to broadcast were worked out, the first announcer WNAC used was Benjamin R. Alexander (newspapers incorrectly said Benjamin H). Alexander was not an announcer per se—in fact, he had a long career working for the Chamber of Commerce, which sponsored the first game on WNAC. Subsequently, the Braves games were announced by Charlie Donelan. Like McNamee, Donelan was praised by local reporters for being knowledgeable and enthusiastic. Fans seemed to agree, and attendance at his talks and appearances continued to increase.

Red Sox fans were still waiting patiently. Those who had a good radio tuned in to stations in other American League cities, because sometimes those stations broadcast a game where their team was playing against the Sox. WRC in Washington, DC, then affiliated with the *Washington Times* newspaper, broadcast some of the Washington Nationals' road games, and that included a three-game series versus the Red Sox at Fenway Park in early October 1925.³¹ The Nationals had already won the pennant, and didn't play like champs.³²

It is not surprising that WNAC got permission to broadcast the Red Sox games in 1926. Station owner John Shepard III loved sports, and he loved radio; he also loved being in the limelight. Once again, when seeking an announcer, Shepard turned to the *Boston Traveler*, where Gus Rooney still worked. Gus had tried his hand at broadcasting when he announced a boxing match, so Shepard asked if he wanted to be the announcer for the Red Sox opener on April 13, 1926. Gus agreed, but had he known what he just signed up for, he might have asked for combat pay. The weather was windy and cold, and the Red Sox were just as miserable, trailing early 11 to 1, causing many fans to head for the exits. But Gus persisted in trying to make the game interesting for the WNAC audience. He told stories of the old days, he discussed baseball strategy, and in the late innings the Sox began to

mount a comeback. While they came up short in the end—losing 12–11 to the Yankees—it turned out to be an exciting game after all. Unlike today when a play-by-play announcer has assistants and sidekicks, Gus Rooney had nobody; the game dragged on for three hours, during which he was the only person talking. His colleagues at the *Traveler* noted that the next day, he was so hoarse he could barely speak at all.³³ That didn't stop him from doing several other ballgames in subsequent weeks; throughout much of 1926 he could be found doing play-by-play, although more often for the Braves.

Back on Newspaper Row, newspapers were still trying to figure out how to integrate the public's interest in listening to the games with reading about sports. By the time of the 1926 World Series, radio coverage had continued to expand. That year, the games could be heard on a 21-station chain which covered much of the East and Midwest: WEEI in Boston, WTAG in Worcester, and WJAR in Providence, through the courtesy of flagship station WEAf in New York. The announcers were Graham McNamee and Phillips Carlin.³⁴ With no Boston team in the Series, and the games being broadcast on radio, crowds were smaller on Newspaper Row, and as a *Globe* reporter noted, fans seemed "quiet" and "apathetic," even though about a thousand still gathered. The *Globe* had its own radio studio, and it re-broadcast the game; but the newspaper also had Frank Flynn, an experienced telegrapher, ready to step in, just in case WEEI's signal failed (signals that faded in and out were a constant problem in early broadcasting). An employee with a megaphone was also ready to shout out the scores. Megaphone and telegraph weren't necessary—the



Fred Hoey at the WNAC Microphone, circa 1930.

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“modern” technology worked fine, although the crowd was as fascinated by how quickly the telegrapher could send and receive information as they were with the game itself.³⁵

Meanwhile the Red Sox continued to lose. Lee Fohl’s tenure as manager continued through 1925 and ’26, two more years in last place. Fohl was then replaced by Bill Carrigan. This was a very popular decision with the fans, who remembered Carrigan’s successful tenure managing the Sox 1913–16. Carrigan had left baseball and gone home to Lewiston, Maine, where he had an equally successful career as a banker, but Red Sox owner Bob Quinn lured him out of retirement.³⁶

Of course, the Red Sox lack of improvement had been a constant topic in all of the Boston newspapers, and by 1927 hearing the manager or a well-known sportswriter opining on the season was becoming a radio staple. On April 13, 1927, *Boston Globe* sportswriter Melville E. Webb Jr., who had been covering baseball for several decades, gave a talk about the Red Sox via WNAC. He acknowledged that Carrigan had “no easy task” ahead of him; in fact, Webb noted that it was unclear what Carrigan could do to improve the Red Sox’ fortunes. He was unfortunately correct. Carrigan didn’t do much better than Fohl—in 1927, the Sox finished *fifty-nine* games out of first (and would continue in last place 1928–29 under Carrigan).

There is little debate among Boston media historians that the first local baseball announcer to gain a huge following was Fred Hoey. However, there is some debate about when he first began broadcasting the games—some sources say 1926, although I have found little evidence of that. Most modern scholars, including Curt Smith, believe that he was on the air doing Boston Braves home games beginning in 1927; it would be a few more years before road games would be broadcast.³⁸ Hoey was not the only sports announcer at WNAC that year. Gerry Harrison also did play-by-play for some of the Braves games, and announced some Red Sox baseball too.³⁹ Harrison had worked at WLEX in Lexington, Massachusetts, and was experienced at announcing hockey, boxing, football, and even professional wrestling.⁴⁰ (WLEX is long since defunct, and its call letters eventually ended up in Lexington, Kentucky.) Harrison went to work for John Shepard III, who, by that time, owned other stations; Gerry Harrison later became general manager of radio station WLLH in Lowell, Massachusetts.

But by 1928, it was Fred Hoey who was usually behind the microphone whenever there was a baseball game at either Fenway Park or Braves Field. Hoey was already becoming Boston’s best-known and most



COURTESY OF STAN HARRISON

Gerry Harrison, broadcasting from WLEX, a suburban station about 20 miles from Boston.

trusted baseball announcer, even though as a young man, his passion had been hockey.⁴¹ He played forward for a local amateur team, and later did some managing; he also wrote about schoolboy sports for the *Boston Herald*, before finding a new career doing baseball play-by-play on radio. During the 1928 season, he announced both the Braves and Red Sox home games on WNAC, while Gerry Harrison focused on broadcasting college sports, especially football and hockey.

Whether the Red Sox were winning or losing (and in the 1920s, they were usually losing), Hoey made the games come alive. Fans adored him—especially female fans, who found his explanations of baseball’s finer points both understandable and interesting. Some reporters believed it was thanks to Hoey that more women were coming to the games.⁴² Given his popularity, Fred was asked to expand his role at WNAC, the way Charlie Donelan had done in 1925. Donelan by this time had gone back to reporting and cartooning, and he was still a popular guest speaker. His grandson noted, when I spoke with him in early January 2016, that Charlie’s eyesight was never very good; perhaps he realized he would be more effective as a cartoonist and an entertainer, rather than sitting in the press box trying to report on what was happening down on the field. As for Gus Rooney, whose eyesight was fine, he too had returned to print journalism—interestingly, he would eventually go into the public relations field. When the new Suffolk Downs racetrack opened in 1935, Gus was their publicist.⁴³

Fred Hoey debuted his own sports-talk program on WNAC on May 10, 1928. One of his first guests was Sox manager Bill Carrigan, who discussed the outlook for the season. Carrigan was no stranger to radio. He was a big fan, and back home in Maine, he and his

family enjoyed listening to their favorite program. In December 1926, he had been part of a charitable event that was broadcast by WEEI, raising money for disabled veterans.⁴⁴ Hoey told the press that he planned to have weekly interviews with other members of the teams and his next one, the following week, was with Red Sox pitcher, and Massachusetts native, Danny MacFayden.⁴⁵

But as mentioned earlier, while we can read the newspaper and magazine accounts of that era, it is disappointing that few of these early programs have survived. We have no idea how most of the early announcers sounded. Some audio of a few 1930s baseball broadcasts are found on YouTube. One recording features Fred Hoey announcing the 1936 All-Star game, along with the Yankee Network's Linus Travers. Although the quality is poor by today's standards, it provides an inkling of how the games sounded. Curt Smith has interviewed several veteran broadcasters who grew up listening to Fred Hoey. Ken Coleman recalled that his name recognition was very high—it seemed just about everyone, fan or not, knew who he was; Coleman also remembered Fred's ability to convey a love and respect for the game, even though he used an understated style that was never flamboyant or showy.⁴⁶ Hoey's player interviews also seem to have been well-received, and soon he was interviewing members of the Boston Braves, in addition to the Red Sox.⁴⁷

Newspaper Row was still a gathering place for big news events throughout the 1920s, but there were fewer times when baseball brought out the large crowds. People gathered to find out election results and in September 1926 the *Globe* broadcast updates from the heavyweight championship boxing match between Jack Dempsey and Gene Tunney. Locally, the match was heard on both WBZ and WEEI, but many fans (some estimates said as many as ten thousand) still preferred to gather in Newspaper Row to listen to the updates as they were broadcast by the *Globe's* radio service, with reporter Willard DeLue doing the local announcing, augmenting network coverage by Graham McNamee.⁴⁸ Perhaps with the Red Sox doing so badly, and the Braves not doing well either, few baseball fans were motivated to make the trip to Newspaper Row. It was sufficient to listen at home to the broadcasts that could be heard from various cities, enjoy the speculation and the interviews, and wonder when, if ever, the team would turn things around.

In late 1926, the National Broadcasting Company (today known as NBC) made its debut—the first national radio network. By September 1927, there was

a second when the Columbia Broadcasting System (today known as CBS) got up and running. This was wonderful news for baseball fans, since there were now two equally good options for hearing the 1927 World Series. NBC went with its well-tested and much-loved duo of Graham McNamee and Phillips Carlin, heard in Boston on both WEEI and WBZ, while CBS utilized their own veteran sports announcer J. Andrew White, heard in Boston on WNAC. Radio sports were now well accepted. By some estimates, more than twenty million people tuned in for the first game of the 1927 World Series, listening via the fifty-three network-affiliated stations that carried the games (forty-three on NBC and ten on the much newer CBS).⁴⁹ It was a far cry from the 2,000 listening in greater Boston back in 1921, and further proof of how important radio had become in a relatively short time.

Being able to hear a few games on the air did not discourage fans from coming out to Fenway Park; a losing team did that. Low attendance meant the Sox lost money throughout most of the 1920s.⁵⁰ One thing the Red Sox hoped would boost attendance a little was the arrival of Sunday baseball. Boston's influential clergy had long opposed allowing baseball to be played on the Sabbath, even though many in the public would gladly have attended on their day off from work.⁵¹ Just before the start of the 1929 season, both the Red Sox and Braves received the okay to play on Sunday.⁵² Fred Hoey was scheduled to broadcast when the Braves played the Giants on Sunday, April 21, but the game was rained out; he later broadcast several other Sunday Braves and Red Sox games. Unfortunately, being on the air on Sundays didn't help either team's fortunes. The Red Sox ended up 58–96, and the Braves, 56–98. And as it turned out, despite Sunday baseball, attendance went down in 1929.

From the perspective of the devoted Red Sox fan of the 1920s, it may have been a decade to forget; but from the perspective of media historians, it was truly a transformational decade. Thanks to the arrival of radio, fans who could not get to the ballpark could still enjoy a game in real time, from the comfort of their home; they could also hear their favorite players being interviewed, and listen to analysis from baseball experts. The arrival of the National Broadcasting Company and the Columbia Broadcasting System, the first national networks, meant the great announcers from various cities could also be heard in Boston, as could the World Series, no matter where it was being played. During the 1920s, play-by-play announcing became an art form, appreciated in cities from coast to coast. Whether it was a local announcer like Fred Hoey, or

nationally-known network announcers like Graham McNamee, Major J. Andrew White, or Edward “Ted” Husing (two veteran broadcasters who worked for CBS), experienced professionals could describe the scene at the ballpark so realistically that listeners felt they were there. Graham McNamee became so well-known nationally that he made the cover of *Time* magazine. Years later, his distinguished career, which included broadcasting the World Series for twelve consecutive years (1923–34) and being the network announcer during such major news events as Charles Lindbergh’s transatlantic flight, earned him the 2016 Ford C. Frick Award.⁵³

The growth in availability of baseball broadcasts throughout the 1920s meant one other thing changed—the expectations of the audience. In 1921–22, baseball broadcasts were a novelty, offered by only a handful of stations, and heard by very small numbers of listeners. No one expected a smooth and professional sound; the announcers were as new to it as the listeners. Ongoing technical difficulties were also part of the radio experience in those early years. Listeners were often frustrated by static caused by atmospheric interference, or distant signals suddenly fading out (usually at a critical time in their favorite program). Even the best engineers of the early 1920s were unsure whether this could be prevented.⁵⁴ But while these problems were annoying, they were bearable, and most listeners were grateful for the entertainment and information their radio provided. By 1929, the technology had improved considerably. And the existence of two national radio networks, along with hundreds of local stations, meant listeners from coast-to-coast regularly had access to the biggest newsmakers and most famous performers. Baseball fans grew accustomed to hearing the games broadcast by talented and experienced announcers.

But what hadn’t changed was the fans still appreciated being able to read about their favorite players in the local newspapers. In fact, it was still a golden age for sports journalism, and every city had its own well-regarded reporters. In Boston, as elsewhere, baseball cartoons were popular; by the end of the 1920s Gene Mack of the *Boston Globe* and Bob Coyne of the *Boston Post* were receiving the most acclaim. Many popular baseball reporters provided thorough analysis of every game, including Jim O’Leary of the *Boston Globe*, Paul “Herbie” Shannon of the *Boston Post*, and Burt Whitman of the *Boston Herald*. There was little if any animosity between the sportswriters and the broadcasters. In fact, in 1931, when Fred Hoey was honored, Bob Coyne created a cartoon tribute to Fred’s career, and several sportswriters praised his outstanding

work.^{55,56} Fans of the late 1920s still made the pilgrimage to Newspaper Row now and then, hoping to meet one of the writers and talk some baseball. But by this time, standing out on Lower Washington Street had been replaced by sitting in the comfort of the “radio room” and waiting for the game to begin. ■

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Fanatic Fatality

One of the Most Violent Baseball Arguments In History

Matthew M. Clifford

The underlying aggressiveness in rivalries between baseball teams has been recorded in the annals and burned into our memories for decades. Fans hear yarns about Ty Cobb's boiling temperament and witness bench-clearing brawls. When that explosive competitive spirit spreads from the field to the fanatics in the streets, the result can be drunken fist-fights at the local pubs as fans defend their favorite teams and players. The most serious and deadly fracas of its kind took place in 1931.

On a warm October evening, in a back-alley speakeasy buried in the borough of Brooklyn, two baseball fanatics vocally and physically defended their opinions regarding the 1931 World Series. For those readers above the riff-raff culture of the 1930s, a "speakeasy" was a place where one could locate alcoholic beverages during Prohibition. Patrons were warned to speak "easy" while occupying the bar, in order to avoid drawing the attention of the police.

The quiet clanking of whiskey glasses and beer bottles echoed in a dark corner of Sunset Park on October 5, 1931. The Sunset Park neighborhood was a hectic sector of Brooklyn, settled by young families and older adults. The tenants had their domestic problems and usual complaints of vandalism, theft, and violence. Owners of un-muzzled dogs were given citations, peddlers with no licenses were pinched, and the local youths accused of stealing crates of live chickens were sentenced with fines. Between these common crimes and the occasional bootlegger brawl spiced up with Thompson automatics (a.k.a. "Tommy Guns"), the coppers from Brooklyn's 66th Precinct of the New York City Police Department had their hands full.

As October 4 bled into the wee hours of Monday, October 5, Brooklyn lost one of its residents and the borough gained notoriety as the stage for a terrifying tale that would be perpetually linked to the National Pastime. Four days earlier and about one thousand miles away in the State of Missouri, the St. Louis Cardinals welcomed a visit from the Philadelphia Athletics for Game One of the 1931 World Series at Sportsman's Park. Philly's Robert "Lefty" Grove defeated the Cardinals with a 6-2 victory on October 1. The following day, St. Louis returned the favor to Connie Mack's Athletics

with a 2-0 win awarded to the Cards' speedy southpaw, "Wild" Bill Hallahan.

The tied teams spent the next two days planning their strategies to take victory in Game Three on October 5. The evening before the game, St. Louis manager Charles "Gabby" Street spent most of his night pacing the floor of his suite at Philadelphia's Benjamin Franklin Hotel. The boss flipped a Buffalo nickel in his hand to calm his decision-making pressures. As the coin rotated in the air several times, the Cardinals boss decided to let fate choose his starting pitcher for Game Three. Street limited his choices to spitball hurler Burleigh Grimes or reliable right-hander Sylvester "Syl" Johnson. As reported in the *Syracuse Journal*, "Before tossing the coin, Gabby said to himself; if it comes down heads I'll use Grimes, if tails, Sylvester Johnson will get the pitching assignment. It was heads after rolling around the floor a bit and that settled Street's mind whom he would pitch."¹

Meanwhile, a 35-year old carpenter named Gustave A. Johnson was seated comfortably at a table in a Brooklyn speakeasy. The Swedish laborer shared identical tensions with Gabby Street, as he spoke boisterously to fellow patrons about the Cardinals' pitching plans. Gustave boldly insisted that Street should have no second thought to choose Sylvester "Syl" Johnson, Gustave's favorite pitcher. The saloon's clientele clearly understood that Gustave shared not only a surname but Swedish heritage with Sylvester. Gustave adamantly proclaimed that his blood and namesake, Syl Johnson, should be chosen as the Cardinals' starter for Game Three.

Also in the speakeasy that night was a 32-year-old man named John Leonard, who did not enjoy hearing his fellow bar attendee sing Johnson's praises. Leonard yelled at Gustave, "I'm tired of hearing you talk about that Swede, Johnson! Connie Mack is a good Irishman and can beat St. Louis any time he wants to!"² Gustave quickly stood up from his table to retort. The brawl began around two AM. The speakeasy bartender, Michael Grillo, made attempts to stop the fight but the verbal argument turned quickly to fisticuffs between the two men. Leonard threw a closed right-handed fist that crashed into the side of Gustave's face.



Syl Johnson

The Swedish customer lost his balance and his 175-pound body fell backwards. During the fall, the left side of Gustave's skull slammed against a cold marble table. Leonard looked down at his opponent, who lay lifeless on the speakeasy's filthy tile floor. The bar filled with silence as Grillo stared into John Leonard's eyes.

The iron-fisted Athletics fan panicked and fled, disappearing into the shadowed alleys of Brooklyn. A customer ran to a public phone nearby and called the police anonymously to report a homicide at 813 41st Street. The coppers from the 66th Precinct and a Brooklyn ambulance arrived at the address moments after receiving the call.

Johnson was declared dead at 3:15AM by the ambulance surgeon, and NYPD Detective George McGowan entered the scene. The small, first floor apartment included three marble tables, six chairs, and a 25-foot bar counter. Patrolman David Harris spoke with Grillo about the incident. The bartender agreed to provide a statement of what he witnessed, which was dictated as: "Deponent is informed by Michael Grillo and verily believes that the said defendant did on the 5th day of October 1931 in the County of Kings, at 813 41st Street, feloniously strike one Gus Johnson (deceased) a violent blow with his fist upon the body and as a result of said blow effected the death of said Johnson. On violation of the penal law of New York."³

Steel handcuffs were drawn by Patrolman Harris as Grillo provided details of the homicide he had witnessed. The silver bracelets were slapped on Michael Grillo's wrists since he was in obvious violation of the Volstead Act. Three bottles of whiskey were seized from Grillo's speakeasy, chased by the confiscation of seventy-six bottles of homebrew beer. But Grillo didn't

ride solo to the slammer in NYPD's paddy wagon. John Leonard's moments of freedom were short-lived when he was found walking nearby. The police pinched him for the crime of killing Gustave Johnson and Leonard denied any misdoing. When asked for his residential address, the accused fibbed and gave his brother-in-law's home address, which was conveniently located at a nearby Brooklyn gangway.

The lie was quickly discovered, with the assistance of Grillo's testimony. Leonard was a popular fixture at the 41st Street speakeasy and his accurate address was also on 41st Street, just a few doors down from Mr. Grillo's illegal bar. A search of police records proved that this wasn't John J. Leonard's first tango with the NY lawmen. On September 20, 1926, he had been arrested for petit larceny. His sentence for the property theft conviction was suspended on January 11, 1929, by the New York City District Attorney.

Leonard was taken to the 66th Precinct with Grillo and both were booked for their criminal acts. Leonard was held without bail. Gustave Johnson's body was taken to the United Israel Zion hospital.

A few hours later, the Philadelphia Athletics met the St. Louis Cardinals at Shibe Park to resume the 1931 World Series. Burleigh Grimes took the mound for St. Louis. Gabby Street told the press that he had intentions of putting Johnson in Game Three since Sylvester had been unable to work in Games One and Two due to a rash he had developed on his arms after brushing against the poison ivy while picnicking with his wife and their four-year-old daughter Beverly in St. Louis. Street proudly spoke of the fateful coin that put Burleigh Grimes on Shibe's pitching mound while Syl patiently sat on the visitors' bench and itched his wings. The Buffalo nickel proved its superstitious magic as Grimes pitched a masterpiece. The Cardinals defeated the Athletics 5-2, on October 5, 1931. The late Gustave Johnson's pitching opinions were proven... dead wrong.

The Brooklyn newspapers printed the box scores of Game Three along with details of the violent baseball argument. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* shared the headline story: "Speakeasy Row Over Series Cost Life Of Bay Ridge Man. According to Detective McGowan of the Borough Park station, Johnson and a group of friends were seated at a table in the speakeasy, discussing the game at Philadelphia. Johnson is said to have maintained loudly that Street would be crazy to start any pitcher except his namesake, Sylvester Johnson. Leonard was seated with friends at a nearby table. According to witnesses, he arose and approached Johnson. He swung a right to Johnson's jaw, which

broke it and Johnson, in falling fractured his skull against a table.”⁴

The police investigation continued while John Leonard waited in a jail cell for his court call. He claimed his innocence by pleading not guilty to the criminal charge of murder. Detectives identified the address of the deceased and they made contact with Gustave’s wife, Ella Johnson, to inform her about the argument and its horrific outcome. The widow identified her husband, noting the romantic tattoo on his right forearm that consisted of a shield incorporating calligraphy of the words “True Love” with a pair of clasped hands and a five pointed star. New York’s Deputy Chief Medical Examiner Emmanuel E. Marten began the autopsy of Gustave Johnson on October 6, 1931. Dr. Marten’s report noted that Gustave Johnson had been born in Finland to Swedish parents, John and Wilhelmina Johnson, and had lived in the State of New York since 1911. The deceased stood approximately five foot-nine inches tall, weighed 175 pounds, had copious light chestnut-brown hair, blue eyes, and Nordic facial features.

The hype over the Brooklyn speakeasy brawl fell quiet as another headline began captivating the New York papers. On October 4, 1931, the NYPD concluded a two-month manhunt for an Irish gangster named Vincent Coll. The coppers discovered the hood hiding out in a Bronx hotel. The hunt had begun on July 28, 1931, when Vincent’s submachine gun was involved in a drive-by shooting of Joseph “Tough Joey” Rao. Coll’s mark on Tough Joey stemmed from a long time clash with Rao’s boss, Arthur “Dutch” Schultz. Vincent opened fire on Tough Joey on the hot July afternoon as the bootlegger walked fearlessly on a public sidewalk also occupied by four small children. Coll opened fire and one of his bullets killed a five-year-old boy named Michael Vengalli. New York City mayor Jimmy Walker heard the news of the deranged shooting and immediately tagged Coll with the nickname “Mad Dog.”

The New York press ran with the sensational story concerning the manhunt and capture of Vincent “Mad Dog” Coll while Brooklyn’s “World Series murder” faded away. The press coverage turned to Game Four of the World Series. On October 6, 1931, Gustave’s favorite pitcher, Syl Johnson, opened for St. Louis and was defeated by Athletics’ hurler George “Moose” Earnshaw. The fans at Shibe Park screamed in joy as Philadelphia scored three runs off Johnson while the Cardinals produced blank scorecards. The ’31 Series was tied, two all.

While the Philly fans were cheering, the community of Brooklyn’s Sunset Park was outraged. On

October 7, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* noted the unrest. Similar to today’s Neighborhood Watch groups, Brooklyn’s “Sunset Civic Association” voiced a gripe against the 66th Precinct’s captain, Bernard Rourke. They were adamant that the captain realize the severity of the recent speakeasy homicide. The group reported that Michael Grillo’s bar was open for business on October 6, despite a patron dying there a day earlier. Speakeasies and their problems were a perennial subject of columns in the Brooklyn newspapers throughout 1931, especially during the month of February. At that time, the police authorities had requested assistance from the federal government to help with locating, investigating, and permanently closing speakeasy establishments.

Seven speakeasies in Brooklyn and six in Queens were in serious trouble during the late weeks of February 1931. As the police had done with Michael Grillo the night of the murder, the coppers confiscated whatever alcohol was discovered and each bartender was hit with a hefty fine. But with the addition of federal assistance, the New York courts added the ornament of a steel padlock to the door frames of all thirteen properties. The message of the federal padlock order spread loudly to the owners and residents of Brooklyn and Queens: “We’ll take your booze and your building.”

The 1931 Sunset Civic Association attempted to sway Captain Rourke to make contact with the Feds and get a padlock affixed to the doorway of 813 41st Street, especially since a man had recently been killed there. The press announced: “Capt. Rourke Seeks Federal Aid After Murder in 41st. Place. Following protests made Monday night by the Sunset Civic Association that an alleged speakeasy at 813 41st St. had been permitted to operate in spite of the fact that a man had been murdered there less than 24 hours before. Capt. Rourke of the 66th precinct declared last night that he had requested the Federal authorities to padlock the premises.”⁵

As Michael Grillo read about the neighborhood ordering his new doorknocker on October 7, the Series continued. St. Louis defeated Philadelphia in Game Five, 5–1. The fans at Shibe Park were saddened as Gabby Street sent “Wild” Bill Hallahan to defeat Philly’s Waite Hoyt and take the lead in the Series, 3–2. The two teams took the next day off for travel and relaxation. The Series continued on October 9 at Sportsman’s Park in St. Louis. Many miles away in Brooklyn, Dr. Marten’s autopsy report citing the details of Gustave Johnson’s death was finalized and the documents were sent to the courts. The report explained that poor Gustave’s morbid demise was

blamed on more factors than a debilitating blow to the head.

Dr. Marten's report declared: "I hereby certify that on the 5th day of October 1931, I made an autopsy of the body of Gustave A. Johnson now lying dead at the morgue and upon investigation of the essential facts concerning the circumstances of death and history of the case, I am of the opinion that the cause of death was cerebral apoplexy; acute alcoholism."⁶

The doctor's report also stated that there was no external evidence of injury, implying that the severe crash his skull suffered from the edge of the marble table didn't leave any external cuts or bruising. The accused, John Leonard, remained incarcerated in his Brooklyn jail cell while the courts reviewed the details of the case. Meanwhile, Game Six began at 1:30 in the afternoon on October 9. The Cardinals' Paul Derringer dueled against Philadelphia's Lefty Grove and the first four innings produced blank scorecards for both sides. In the fifth inning, the Athletic trounced Derringer and delivered four runs. In the sixth inning, the Cardinals third baseman Jake Flowers hit a double. With the assistance of second baseman Frankie Frisch and right fielder Wally Roettger, Flowers scored the only run in St. Louis's favor. In the top of the seventh, the Athletics' bats kept swinging to collect four more runs. Game Six ended with an 8-1 victory for Philadelphia. The Series was deadlocked again at three games apiece.

Hours after the game was completed, the evening edition of the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* were thrown in bundles at the corner newsstands, containing the following regarding New York's States Attorney: "United States Attorney Howard W. Amell has promised immediate consideration of the complaint against the alleged speakeasy at 815 41st St., where a murder was committed on Monday. When asked what his office would do about it, Amell declared that he would call the matter to the attention of the proper authorities without delay."⁷

The next day, October 10, the morning edition of the *Daily Eagle* printed the details of the World Series tie in addition to an update of the borough's sensational homicide court case: "Hearing Set In Fatal World Series Fight. John Leonard, 32, a laborer, who gave a fictitious address at the time of his arrest last Sunday morning, following the death of Gustave A. Johnson, 36, in a restaurant at 815 41st St., is to have a hearing in homicide court Tuesday."⁸ Leonard was scheduled to appear in court on October 13 before the Honorable Judge George M. Curtis Jr. Dr. Marten's detailed autopsy report would be included as evidence. At half-past one PM on October 10, the final game of the 1931 World

Series began at Sportsman's Park in St. Louis. Cardinals' spitball pitcher Burleigh Grimes opened for the home team while George Earnshaw defended the Athletics. The seven-game series ended in St. Louis' favor with the final score 4-2.

John Leonard's October 13 court case was continued to October 19, 1931. The court records noted that Dr. Marten was absent and his medical report was suppressed. Dr. Marten's report reflected that Gustave Johnson's cause of death was a stroke linked to acute alcoholism. It was clear that poor Gus's clock was already ticking short before he stepped in the ring with John Leonard on October 5. The autopsy notes reflected that the marble table was merely the accessory to the death that was scheduled to commence regardless of the fist fight that had occurred.

Whether he was punched that night or not, Mrs. Ella Johnson was going to be meeting with an undertaker to discuss funeral arrangements for her husband sooner rather than later. The fight and the result of a blow to the head merely advanced Gustave's lethal medical condition. Since Dr. Marten's autopsy proved that Leonard was not responsible for the death of Gustave Johnson, the case was dismissed by the grand jury on November 13, 1931. Leonard was declared not guilty and was set free. When he made his way back to 41st Street, he discovered that his favorite tavern was closed for good. As the October 28 edition of the *Daily Eagle* reported, Grillo's bar was shut down permanently: "Announcement was made that the alleged speakeasy at 813 41st St., in which a man was killed several weeks ago, had been closed. At a recent meeting of the Association, the charge was made that the resort had continued to operate after the murder had been committed there, and the immediate padlocking of the place was demanded."⁹

When the homicide charge initially ran in the New York newspapers, it was recognized as a sensational headline. But with the exciting publicity of Mad Dog Coll's capture, arrest, and trial, the details of one of the most violent baseball arguments in history fell to the wayside. The press neglected to mention any further details about the homicide and the status of the case after October 10, 1931. The end of the story was determined by examination of copies of the original autopsy report, the original police reports, and the original court records.

Not before or since the unfortunate death of Gustave Johnson has any other aggressive baseball argument made such a morbid news story. However, thirty-three years (and five days) later, the New York was the stage for another horrific incident tied to a World

Series contest and a homicide. In 1963, a Central Park neighborhood resident named Mark Fein placed a hefty \$7,000 bet on the Yankees to beat the Los Angeles Dodgers in the 1963 World Series. After Fein lost the wager, his Brooklyn bookie, Reuben Markowitz, went to see Fein to collect.

On October 10, 1963, when Reuben arrived at Fein's address, Mark decided to reach for a firearm instead of his wallet. Markowitz was shot dead and his remains were dumped into the Harlem River. After the body resurfaced, the police authorities caught up with Mark Fein for questioning. The gambler was convicted of second-degree murder and sentenced to thirty years in prison. He filed fourteen appeals of his conviction while he was housed at Sing Sing Correctional Facility in New York. Some of Fein's appeals were concocted by the expensive and popular attorney, F. Lee Bailey. Fein was paroled in 1977.

St. Louis pitcher Sylvester "Syl" Johnson passed away in Portland, Oregon, in February 1985. According to a 2012 interview with Syl's surviving children, the pitcher had never told them about the 1931 Brooklyn brawl that was initiated by his name, his heritage, and his career as a baseball pitcher. Johnson's eldest daughter, Beverly, upon being told of the events, said, "What a story! My daddy never told me about that. I'll bet he never knew that it happened. He would have told us about that. Who wouldn't? A man got killed for bragging about him. I just can't believe it."¹⁰

Although Gustave A. Johnson expired due to his own poor health, the story of two baseball fanatics

fist-fighting to the death to defend their baseball opinions was a memorable headline. Gus had used his final breaths to defend the name, heritage, and talents of his favorite pitcher. Sadly, he would never know that the crux of his most deadly argument was settled by a flipped coin in a Philadelphia hotel suite. ■

Acknowledgements

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Notes

1. Syracuse (NY) *Journal*, October 6, 1931 "Toss of Coin Put Grimes In Box For Cards."
2. *Brooklyn Standard Union*, October 5, 1931 "Speakeasy Row Over Series Costs Life Of Bay Ridge Man."
3. Taken from the original Felony Report for the City Magistrates' Court of the City of New York completed and signed by Detective George J. McGowan on October 5, 1931.
4. *Brooklyn Standard Union*, October 5, 1931, "Speakeasy Row Over Series Costs Life Of Bay Ridge Man."
5. *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, October 7, 1931, "Asks Padlock For Alleged 'Speakie.'"
6. Taken from the original Autopsy Report created by Chief Medical Examiner Dr. Emmanuel E. Marten.
7. *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, October 9, 1931, "Home Talk."
8. *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, October 10, 1931, "Hearing Set In Fatal World Series Fight."
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Baseball Before a Captive Audience

The Minnesota State Prison's Sisal Sox, 1914–72

Rich Arpi

One aspect of amateur baseball that is largely unexplored is the baseball played in our nation's prisons. Prison games are easily overlooked by historians because few in the general public witnessed these games and they are seldom documented. One exception is the Stillwater State Prison in Stillwater, Minnesota, whose prison newspaper—*The Prison Mirror*, managed and edited by the prisoners—documented nearly 1,300 games between the prison team and outside opponents between 1914 and 1972. Most of these games were played against amateur teams from Minneapolis, St. Paul, and neighboring towns in Minnesota and Wisconsin, but as the years wore on, high school and American Legion teams peppered the schedule, as did an occasional appearance by the professional St. Paul Saints and Minneapolis Millers of the American Association.

The first territorial prison was awarded to Stillwater in February 1851 by the Minnesota Territorial Legislature, which simultaneously awarded the capitol to St. Paul and the University of Minnesota to St. Anthony.¹ At the time, it was uncertain whether any of the three cities had a compelling case for hosting any of the institutions, all three being small frontier towns. Nonetheless, Stillwater was thrilled to get the prison.

Stillwater, about fifteen miles east of St. Paul, is situated on the St. Croix River, which forms the boundary between Wisconsin and Minnesota. Stillwater is often referred to as the birthplace of Minnesota, because it was the site of the territorial convention of 1848, which paved the way to territorial status a year later. The town was incorporated on March 4, 1854 (the same day as St. Paul), and much of its early history was dominated by the lumber industry. Several lumber mills cut millions of board feet of lumber per year there for decades. Even so, the city never grew very large; the 1900 census figure of 12,818 was the highest population until 1990 when the figure reached 13,882. The prison was coveted since it would add jobs to the local economy in security, food preparation, and administration.

Construction on the prison commenced in the spring of 1851, carved into the limestone hills just north of downtown and a stone's throw from the St. Croix. The prison was completed in 1853 and began taking

prisoners. A house for the warden and his family was also completed in 1853 on a ledge of the hill overlooking the prison.

When Minnesota became a state in 1858, the Stillwater prison became the Minnesota State Prison, and as the years passed, buildings were added and the capacity expanded. But the prison was hemmed in by the hillside, which formed a natural barrier, and the few acres east of the prison that led down to the St. Croix River were owned by the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad. In 1890 a twine factory, which relied exclusively on prison labor, was built inside the prison walls. Quickly the prison became crowded, with the prisoner's cells small, cold, and damp. Ventilation was poor and cockroaches and bedbugs were everywhere. The prison courtyard was a small space that had no room for recreation other than a few yards for walking.

Need for a new prison was recognized as early as the 1880s, but it was not until just before World War I that a new prison was built and ready for use. The new facility was built three miles south, on the flat plain above the river bluffs in Bayport. The first prisoners were transferred to the new prison in January 1909. However, population at the new facility remained at 60–70 prisoners for the next four years. Possibly these men helped to build the prison, but more likely they were employed by a department of a valuable prison industry whose new facilities were ready for use. The new prison population did not exceed 200 individuals (only about one-fifth of the total prison population) until December 1912. Most of the prisoners were transferred in 1913 and the early months of 1914. By early summer of 1914 the entire population of around 1,000 men and about a dozen women had been transferred. While the new buildings were close to one another, as in any other prison, room was left for a ball field in the north part of the complex. Warden Henry Wolfer granted some new rules and privileges, which included:

- 1) Inmates will be permitted to talk to those sitting beside them at Sunday dinner.
- 2) Music will be furnished by the Prison Orchestra during the noon meal every Sunday.

- 3) Two picture shows will be given in the auditorium each week—on Tuesday and Friday afternoons.
- 4) Baseball and athletic events will be played on the prison Green every Saturday afternoon.²

Henry Wolfer, a trained penologist, started his career at the Joliet state prison in Illinois in the 1870s before coming to Stillwater in the mid-1880s as deputy warden. On June 7, 1892, Wolfer became warden at the Stillwater State Prison, and except for a 15-month period in 1899-1901, he held that post through October 1914. Wolfer continuously advocated for reforms that would make prison life more civilized and would provide opportunities for inmates to have a chance in the outside world upon release.

The prisoners wasted little time implementing the new rules, as the prisoner newspaper reported in the next issue, “The crack of the bat as it struck the ball; the yell of the umpire and the enthusiastic cheers and yells of the fans, was heard for the first time within prison walls in Stillwater last Saturday when over six hundred delighted inmates of the new prison gathered on the prison green to enjoy the new rules recently announced by Warden Wolfer. It was a grand sight, one never to be forgotten by those beholding it. Men who have been prisoners here for long terms—some of them who have seen thirty and thirty-five years of penal servitude, could not repress the tears that coursed over their cheeks; and all they could say as they went about clasping the hands of their fellows, was ‘Aint it grand –oughtn’t we be thankful.’”³

While the guards had occasionally played baseball with other teams from outside the prison walls beginning in 1908, allowing the prisoners to play baseball was a new privilege, as was permission to be outside in open air for any extended period of time. The prisoners quickly divided themselves into teams. One team represented the prison newspaper employees and another the band and orchestra members. Another team, The Green Sox, soon became the dominant prison team, and by September challenges went out to outside teams. Local clubs from Stillwater who faced the Green Sox included the Starkels, a team of bakery employees, and Simonet’s, a furniture and carpet company. Clubs from as far away as LeSueur and Hinckley, Minnesota, came in for games. The season, which ended in November, left the prison team with a 3-6 record against outside clubs.⁴

A successful 1914 season laid the groundwork for the baseball program at the prison to continue. The biennial

reports of the warden from 1916 through the late 1940s provide snippets of information on the baseball program, usually only a few sentences, but illuminating nonetheless. Warden J.J. Sullivan, in the 1923–24 report, writes, “During the baseball season the score and standings of the major league clubs is posted daily on the large scoreboard in the dining room. The men are appreciative and it is no question but that these weekly diversions have a tendency toward good conduct.”⁵ Warden after warden repeated the thought that baseball improved morale and conduct because only those prisoners who were in good standing could participate on the teams or watch the games, which were held between three and six o’clock on Saturday afternoons and on holidays.

Dorothy and Harold Seymour in their book, *Baseball: The People’s Game*, devote the following paragraph to baseball at the Stillwater prison:

Baseball became incorporated into the unwritten by-laws at the Stillwater, Minnesota, State Penitentiary with the appointment of Charles S. Reed as warden in October 1914. Although inmates had played one or two games before his arrival, Reed encouraged the baseball spirit supposedly “inherent in every man”. He put up a huge scoreboard at the front of the dining hall, where everyone could see it. Each day before the noon meal he had the scores of all major-league and double-A minor league games posted. The men received permission to converse at the table every other day, and comments on the deeds of Cobb, Speaker, Johnson and other stars filled the air. In an even more radical move, Reed continued the pay of Stillwater men working in the prison industries when the shops shut down for the ball games. Although this policy cost the prison an estimated \$1,200 per game, or from \$5,000 to \$6,000 a month, Reed believed the money well forfeited. “We try not to forget,” he said, “that the purpose of the industries is not to make goods and revenue for the state, but to make better men of the inmates, while at the same time protecting society.” Inmates at Stillwater fielded both a first and second team, and the prison’s weekly newspaper published accounts of games, played every Saturday afternoon and on holidays, and attended by all inmates except those deprived of the privilege for misconduct. High walls and buildings bound the field, and balls hit over them were lost. Although four iron lamp posts stood in the outfield no accidents ever occurred. An outsider, usually a Stillwater citizen, umpired

games. All costs of uniforms and equipment came from a quarter admission fee charged visitors.⁶

The monetary amounts stated by the Seymours in the above paragraph may overstate the financial loss somewhat. Prison industries probably worked at least a half day on Saturday and possibly up to a half hour before game time, and since most industries during this time worked a five-and-one-half-day week, the prison industries were not at a competitive disadvantage. Also the twine factory had a virtual monopoly, since there wasn't a private firm locally that provided this product needed by farmers of the upper Midwest. The prisoners, like other private industries, wouldn't have worked on holidays, either. Continuing the nit-pick: probably just the American Association, the league of the nearby St. Paul Saints and Minneapolis Millers, and the American and National League scores were posted; balls hit over the fence or on the roofs of buildings could easily be retrieved; and evidence of an active second nine that played outside teams regularly does not exist, although there were plenty of players ready to step in and play the prison nine when a visiting team cancelled at the last minute.

Although the prison ball team was mentioned occasionally in the *Stillwater Gazette*, the town's daily newspaper, and the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, comprehensive coverage of each game was recorded in the *Prison Mirror*. Established in 1887, the *Prison Mirror* is the oldest continuously published prison newspaper in the country. It was published weekly on Thursdays between 1887 and 1955, biweekly between 1956 and August 1993, and monthly September 1993 to date. While prison newspapers are not unusual, significant runs of prison newspapers have not been widely archived, cataloged, and made available, but the *Mirror* is an exception and is available on microfilm at the Minnesota Historical Society. Managed and edited by the prisoners, its masthead stated, "It aims to be a home newspaper; to encourage moral and intellectual improvement among the prisoners; to acquaint the public with the true status of the prisoner; to disseminate penological information and to aid in dispelling that prejudice which has ever been the bar sinister to a fallen man's self redemption."⁷

Prisoners received copies delivered to their cells and were expected to place it at the foot of the bed the next morning for disposal. Each prisoner was also allowed to send one copy home to family members or to a friend for free. The paper was not shy in critical commentary or analysis of each ballplayer's performance on the field. Weekly columns, bearing bylines of

"Bobbles," "Diamond Dust," or "A Fan," on events in the major leagues and the American Association were as detailed and informative as any newspaper, including the daily *St. Paul Pioneer Press* or *Minneapolis Tribune*. Rosters of the Federal League teams were provided, as were news of player transactions. In the days before photographs became commonplace in newspapers, humorous artwork peppered the game accounts.

While the 1914 prison team was known as the Green Sox, that name quickly faded, and for the next twenty years the prison team was known as the Greys, the Stars, or just the Minnesota State Prison (MSP). In 1936, the prison officials decided to hold a contest among the prisoners to come up with a new name for the team that had more color and meaning. Hundreds of suggestions poured in, and among the names considered were these: Hermits, Spinners, Minnesota Binders, Rebels, Interstate Comets, Fagans, Walled City Gophers, Racqueteers, Sinners, and Jaybirds. Names of birds, beasts, and insects were also popular as were names of such natural disasters as hurricanes and cyclones. Several entrants adorned their entries with clever drawings, and one entry was a poem indicating the valor and ability of the local nine. Officials set up a convoluted voting procedure to weed the suggestions down to a popular few. The name Sisal Sox was chosen, in nod to the twine factory which used sisal as a raw product. Sisal Sox became the name of Stillwater prison's all-star team that played outside teams and pickup prison teams until its demise after the 1972 season.⁸ For the rest of this article, I will refer to the Stillwater prison team as the Sisal Sox, even if years prior to 1936 are under discussion.

Between 1914 and 1972, the Sisal Sox played 25 to 30 games per year, and results of nearly 1,300 games against outside opponents are recorded in the *Prison Mirror*. Playing as an independent club for most of their history, the Sisal Sox compiled a 689–546–43 record against outside clubs. For a few years in the late 1950s and 1960s, the Sisal Sox were a member of the Friendly Valley League, and played a 14-game league schedule in addition to numerous non-league games. The most common opponents were the Bayport—or South Stillwater—town team and the Stillwater town team, the prison's closest neighbors. The Sisal Sox compiled a record of 66 wins, 60 losses, and one tie between 1915 and 1954 against the Bayport-South Stillwater team and a record of 31–17–2 between 1931 and 1947 against Stillwater, with a 7–10–1 record against the Stillwater Loggers between 1948 and 1960.

Other local opponents were Oak Park 1915–19 (9–2) and the Omaha Railroad Shops from Hudson,

Wisconsin, 1921–41 (25–19–1). Common St. Paul opponents were the St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Company team 1922–37 (5–7), the Knights of Columbus (15–3) 1923–29 and the Lorence Recreation Club 1946–58 (5–10). Frequent Minneapolis opponents were the American Linen Supply Company 1916–59 (24–23–2) and the West End Athletic Club 1926–35 (14–8). The most common college opponent was the River Falls, Wisconsin, Teachers College, who faced the Sisal Sox 1915–52 (9–12–2 record for the Sox).

When an outside team would cancel, the Sisal Sox would play a prison all-star team. Their record between 1915 and 1966 against the “second string” team was a stellar 19–1–2, implying the Sisal Sox truly did recruit the best baseball talent in the prison.⁹

Among the managers who brought teams to the prison, Bill “Sully” Sullivan is notable. He managed the American Linen team and numerous all-star teams from Minneapolis from 1922 through 1972. Umpires were often prison guards or officials, but quite often mayors and businessmen of neighboring Stillwater and Bayport performed yeoman service. The field at the Minnesota State Prison at Stillwater was dedicated as Swanson Memorial Field on August 17, 1957, in memory of Roy G. “Swanny” Swanson, a man who had devoted twenty years to scheduling baseball, football, basketball, and softball games at the prison as well as taking his turn as the plate umpire every Saturday. Sisal Sox center fielder Jim “Nellie” Nelson, when asked about the dedication said, “I think it is a heck of a good idea. I know of no one else who has worked as hard to bring sports to this institution, and certainly no one ever donated as much time to the athletic program as Swanny did.”¹⁰

At least one Hall of Famer played against the Sisal Sox at the Minnesota State Prison. Bud Grant, a 1994 inductee to the Professional Football Hall of Fame, played against the Sisal Sox in 1954 and 1955. Grant, a nine-time letterman in football, basketball, and baseball at the University of Minnesota, is best known for spending ten years as head coach for the Winnipeg Blue Bombers of the Canadian Football League, and 18 as the head of the Minnesota Vikings. In the summers of 1950, 1951, and 1952, Grant played for the Osceola, Wisconsin, semi-pro baseball club and in 1954 and 1955 for the Stillwater Loggers. Grant was absent during the September games between the Sisal Sox and Osceola, being otherwise occupied at football training camp, but was able to play

for the Loggers against the Sisal Sox in June and July. In the 1954 game Grant played in left field and in 1955 he pitched for a few innings and added a home run.¹¹ Minneapolis Laker greats Vern Mikkelsen (now there is a big strike zone) and Whitey Skoog, were on the Excelsior, Minnesota, club roster for a 1955 game but did not play at the prison, much to the disappointment of the prisoners.

The Sisal Sox were not shy about scheduling tough opponents; at least eight opponents were or became state amateur champions, including the St. Paul Armours, sponsored by the Armour meat packing company (state champions in 1924 and 1926). The Sisal Sox played the Armours seven times between 1925 and 1929 (1–5–1 record for the Sox). Other champions included the St. Paul Milk Company (1932 champions), J.J. Kohn of St. Paul (1935), The Commission Row officers of Fort Snelling (1936), Northern States Envelope (1938), Soderville (1951–52), Bloomington (1965), and Columbia Heights (1967–68). While the Sisal Sox’s record against these top amateur clubs was not good, the Sox were competitive and the prisoners enjoyed watching good quality baseball. The J.J. Kohn team of St. Paul that they played six times between 1938 and 1944 (1–6–1 record for the Sox) had won the national amateur tournament in Battle Creek, Michigan, in September 1937.

Special treats were five games between the Sisal Sox and the top professional teams in the area, the Minneapolis Millers and St. Paul Saints of the American Association. The Millers beat the Sox on October 28, 1916, 10–7. The Millers out-hit the Sisal Sox 18 to 14 with Dave Altizer and George Capron of the Millers each collecting four hits.¹²



PHOTO COURTESY OF MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The courtyard at the original prison which obviously had little room for baseball.

The first game against the St. Paul Saints was played on October 18, 1924, an 8–2 win for the Saints that featured four hits by Bruno Haas, including a home run and a triple.¹³ The St. Paul American Association champions had just defeated the Baltimore Orioles five games to four in the Junior World Series and were on their way to the West Coast to play a series with the PCL champion Seattle Indians. Other Sisal Sox–St. Paul Saints games were played on July 1, 1940, August 29, 1941, and September 4, 1942. The Saints won all three games, 15–5, 10–5, and 7–2. The 1940 game featured 17 strikeouts by Saints reserve pitcher Howie Belknap.¹⁴

The 1941 game was interrupted by a torrential rain, and the Saints were good sports by waiting the rain out and playing ten innings to boot rather than cancel and go home. The regulars—as announced by the WTCN radio voice of the Saints, George Higgins—were replaced after play resumed, and several players took their shirts and shoes off and had a jolly good time sliding in the mud, much to the amusement of the crowd.¹⁵

The 1942 game featured Saints pitcher George “Slick” Coffman clowning around while umpiring the bases, and he also took a turn on the clarinet with the prison band.¹⁶ Another professional game was a July 26, 1944, game between the Saints and Millers, or more accurately the reserves of the Millers and Saints played at the prison, a game won by Minneapolis, 9–4.¹⁷

The Sisal Sox actually played several road games in their history. The first game was a local game with the Stillwater Interstate League club on April 27, 1918. Between 1938 and 1942 the Sisal Sox played a series of twenty games against the prison team of the St. Cloud Reformatory in St. Cloud, Minnesota. Their team was known as the Red Tops and at least three games were played in St. Cloud: September 17, 1938, and June 28 and July 26, 1941, with the Red Tops winning two of the three games. Overall, the Sisal Sox won 16 of the 20 games played, and the series was discontinued after several years. In 1960, when the Sisal Sox were members of the Friendly Valley League, at least one playoff game was played outside the prison walls.

Road games were infrequent not because prison officials had serious issues with them. The security and logistics were not insurmountable; after all, prisoners were transported all the time. The overarching reason was that the baseball game on Saturday and holiday afternoons became part of the routine of prison life. Most of the prisoners looked forward to the games, and attendance figures, when given, were usually over 95% of the prison population and occasionally topped 1,000 individuals. Bleacher seating was limited so

many prisoners stood three or four deep behind the plate and down the foul lines. Jack Junker, who played for the Stillwater Loggers against the Sisal Sox in the 1950s, recalls the prisoners betting cigarettes on the outcome of at-bats (hit or not) and prisoners rooted avidly for the other team.¹⁸ While much of the cheering was probably good-natured razzing, there is a possibility some of the men really didn’t like each other and were openly rooting for the visitors.

Dave Junker, who played football and softball against prison teams in the 1970s and 1980s (thus missing the Sisal Sox) recalls the experience all visiting teams went through between 1914 and today. In addition to being searched upon entering and leaving the prison, visitors’ hands were stamped with invisible ink as a precaution against prisoners trying to sneak out with the visiting team. Teams would have to march through the cell block to the field, a requirement that might have unnerved more than one young player. Dave recalls the baseball field being ringed by a running track and weight lifting stations, with some prisoners otherwise occupied during the game. Afterwards, the visiting teams were fed a meal with the prisoners in the mess hall. Fresh vegetables from the nearby prison farm were plentiful.¹⁹

For many years, baseball was the only sport mentioned in the *Prison Mirror*, but other sports and diversions eventually were added. Kittenball, or softball, was first mentioned in the 1929–30 biennial report of the Warden, but it would take thirty years or so before interest in the Sisal Sox was eclipsed by softball and other sports. Horseshoes were mentioned in the 1933–34 biennial report and again in the 1951–52 report. The early 1940s saw the staging of several boxing matches and wrestling bouts at the prison. Radio broadcasts of University of Minnesota Golden Gopher football games began in 1937 and amazed several lifers who had no idea what a radio was. The prison football team, the Colts, began in the late 1950s. Unlike the prison football team in the Burt Reynolds–Eddie Albert film “The Longest Yard,” they did not play the guards but outside teams. While films were mentioned in the *Mirror* as a weekly activity as early as 1908, the 1933–34 biennial report added that the films were censored and that “no crime or gangster pictures are permitted.” Some lifers thus were culturally deprived in not being exposed to the talents of one Edward G. Robinson.

Using box scores and game accounts from the *Prison Mirror* 1914–72, I have attempted to compile an all-time roster for the Sisal Sox. This work is made more difficult by the fact that nicknames or abbreviations of names are used and that nicknames, being rather fluid, change

from year to year, depending on the correspondent. Roy Austin was referred to as “Speedy” in some reports and “Rabbit” in others. Freckles, Schnozz, and Bobby Brown all played for the Sox at the same time in the 1950s and are easily confused for one another and possibly with several other Browns without listed monikers. Other nicknames listed were Robert “Moose” Morris, John “Water Buffalo” Northrup, “Yogi” Zelmer, Mel “Linus” Waltz, and Ernie “The Monster” Verdick.

The Stillwater prison’s most infamous residents were Jim, Cole, and Bob Younger, who were incarcerated on November 18, 1876, for their participation with Jesse James in the Northfield, Minnesota, bank raid on September 7, 1876. During this bank robbery—which has spawned numerous books and a number of movies and has passed into folklore—four people were killed. Bank clerk Joseph Lee Heywood, citizen Nicholas Gustavson, and raiders Clell Miller and William Chadwell lost their lives. Cole, Jim, and Bob Younger were captured several days later in Madelia, Minnesota, after an approximately four-hundred-mile chase. Jesse James eluded capture for a few years before being shot in 1882. Bob Younger died in prison in 1889 and Jim and Cole Younger were paroled in 1901, well before sports became a fixture at the prison. While I haven’t found any inmate with major league experience, either previous to or after their sentences at Stillwater, I will not be surprised if further research will uncover a few individuals with some minor league experience. Many of the Sisal Sox played at least some amateur ball before finding themselves behind bars, some playing high school or college ball only a few years before. Whatever the situation, I feel it is important to acknowledge the ball players at the Stillwater State Prison with an all-time roster that is as accurate as possible.²⁰

The Sisal Sox baseball club ceased after the 1972 season after playing only a handful of games over the preceding three years. Possibly one of the reasons for the decline of the Sisal Sox was that over time more and more of the prison population became involved in intramural teams in basketball, broom hockey, softball, and volleyball. Most prisoners would rather play on their own team rather than watch the Sisal Sox. It became more difficult to schedule games for the Sisal Sox as amateur baseball declined in the 1960s. More and more high school teams filled the schedule in the 1960s compared to earlier eras. The constant turnover of prisoners—some dying, some being released, and some just getting old—was a factor in the team’s decline as was the prison’s all-star softball team,

which was more competitive, taking players and interest away from the Sisal Sox. Possibly not having a take-charge guy like Roy Swanson leading the way could have been another factor. Even though the crack of the bat is no longer heard at the Stillwater prison, it is undeniable that baseball was the sport that led the way to a full athletic program and a dramatic change in prison life, especially when compared with the conditions at the original prison. ■

Sources

Numerous sources can be found at the Minnesota Historical Society, including the following.:

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- Dunn, James Taylor. “The Minnesota State Prison During the Stillwater Era, 1853–1914.” *Minnesota History*. December 1960. 137–51.
- Genoways, Ted, editor. *Hard Time: Voices from a State Prison, 1849–1914*. Foreword by Ted Conover. Introduction by James Taylor Dunn. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2002.
- History of the Warden’s House Museum*. Stillwater, Minnesota: Washington County Historical Society, 2017.

Notes

1. Minneapolis, on the west side of the Mississippi River across from St. Anthony, was not incorporated until 1867. The two cities merged in 1872 and today the name St. Anthony is used only by locals to designate a neighborhood on the east side of the Mississippi River.
2. *The Prison Mirror*, Thursday, June 4, 1914. Microfilm copies of the Stillwater prison newspaper are located at the Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota.
3. *The Prison Mirror*, June 11, 1914.
4. Most of the buildings at the original prison were demolished in 1936. One factory building existed until 2002 when it was destroyed in a fire. Condominiums now occupy the old prison site. The Warden’s House, built in 1853, is the only original building at the old prison site still intact. It is operated as a museum by the Washington County Historical Society.
5. *Biennial Report of the Stillwater State Prison, 1923–1924*. Located at the Minnesota Historical Society.
6. Dorothy Seymour Mills and Harold Seymour, *Baseball: The People’s Game* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 404.
7. *The Prison Mirror*, November 1914.
8. *The Prison Mirror*, May 21, 1936.
9. Spreadsheet compiled by the author, entitled SisalSoxOverall, listing games won and years played against each opponent and yearly records as compiled from game accounts in the *Prison Mirror*.
10. *The Prison Mirror*, August 9, 1957.
11. *The Prison Mirror*, November 2, 1916.
12. *The Prison Mirror*, June 23 and July 7, 1956.
13. *The Prison Mirror*, October 23, 1924.
14. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, July 2, 1940.
15. *The Prison Mirror*, September 4, 1941.
16. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, September 5, 1942.
17. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, July 27, 1944.
18. Jack Junker, telephone interview, November 10, 2016.
19. Dave Junker, telephone interview, November 9, 2016.
20. Excel spreadsheet, Sisal Sox Roster, compiled by the author from box scores and game accounts from the *Prison Mirror*.

“But I’m All Alone, and This May Be Sort of Fun”

The Ageless Cy Young on the mound in 1934–35

Bob LeMoine

The reader probably knows that Cy Young is baseball’s all-time winningest pitcher with 511 victories and that his 22-year career ranks as one of the greatest in baseball history. Even a casual baseball fan knows the annual award given to the best pitcher in each league is named in honor of Young’s greatness. His legendary status is without doubt. This baseball star was also a human being, however. Few know of Young as a senior citizen who suffered like most Americans during the Great Depression. He also suffered the grief and loss of outliving his spouse. He was an old farm boy at heart before he was a baseball star, and he spent his latter years doing what he would have done if baseball had never come along: farm chores. You could see him on his farm near Newcomerstown, Ohio, raising sheep and vegetables. “I enjoy farm life for the reason one can keep busy, whether it be fox hunting or sawing wood,” Young said.¹ This article explores the little-known life of Cy Young in the years 1934 and 1935, when the baseball legend in his late sixties found himself again on the mound.

His dear wife Robba died in 1933 when he was 65 years old. Having no children and a farm to tend to, Young found a lot of empty time to fill.² As he took the hill for the local County All-Stars against the Cleveland Indians at the Tuscarawas Fair in September that year, perhaps the roar of the crowd stirred something inside him. If not the crowd, then striking out the side probably did.³

As the calendar turned to 1934, Young was active in local politics, spoke at picnics and other gatherings, and threw out the first pitch at a junior baseball game.^{4,5,6} He fought hard to save the Peoli post office from being closed, taking the fight all the way to Washington. He didn’t claim the business was needed, but that he and his buddies needed a place to gather and gab: “The boys won’t have any place to loaf!”⁷ The Postal Service decided to stay open and preserve their get-togethers, and also deliver mail, based on his plea. It was Cy Young, after all. The post office burned down six months later, but the fellas needed it, so it was rebuilt.⁸ Where else can a geezer loaf, after all?

The transitions of life seemed to stir restlessness in Young’s geriatric bones, and soon he would be on a

mound once again, if only for a third of an inning. An old-timers game was played at League Park in Cleveland between the games of a double-header on the last day of the season in 1934. It was a “cold and miserable day” according to the *Plain Dealer*. The game actually ended in a brawl. The contest was a two-inning affair between the Antiques and the Has-Beens. Young was hailed as “an old man in brilliant red socks...who warmed up by giving the ball an underhand toss.”⁹ He had nothing on the ball but “the good will of 10,000 fans.” The game included some of Cleveland’s baseball heroes of yesteryear, with faint resemblances to their former selves. Red Nelson “seemed about to pop out of his uniform,” while Paddy Livingston “stretched his suit.” Bill Bradley was hit by a pitch, but fortunately “in a fairly well padded section of his anatomy.”¹⁰

The game ended when an outfielder for the Has Beens (they had five, so no one could be sure who it was) “sneaked in from deep center field in an attempt to get Larry [Napoleon] Lajoie off second base.”¹¹ The lone umpire, working behind the plate, called the runner safe on the pickoff attempt. Roger Peckinpaugh, playing shortstop for the Has Beens, rushed the umpire with other players behind him. The umpire went down amidst this crowd of literal “has beens.” The police interceded and escorted the umpire from the field. The official scorer ruled the game a no-contest. Some believed the entire incident was staged, but apparently other fans took the whole thing seriously. “That Rog Peckinpaugh always was a scrappy son of a gun,” the *Plain Dealer* remarked.¹²

Young left the Has Beens and a week later was playing on a team of “hope to be’s” called the Peoli All-Stars. This was a group of boys aged 12 to 15 who were looking for a pitcher, and they asked old Cy. He agreed to it, “for dear old Peoli.” The image of a battered 67-year-old pitcher among a team of testosterone-filled teenagers is a bewildering one. But it happened. “Those kids we played,” Young boasted to the Associated Press, “took a hefty cut at everything I tossed to ’em, but the old arm had plenty of stuff left in it and I won a couple of games.” Things went downhill quickly, however, when the youngsters exploited a weakness. In the fourth inning of a game, a batter

accidentally bunted the ball back to Young. "I tried to bend over to field it, but couldn't reach it," Young bemoaned. Those kids were quick learners. "I'm telling you," the senior citizen said, "no pitcher ever had so many bunts poked at him as those youngsters rolled at me." Baseball's all-time leader in wins was paid a visit to the mound. "The freckle-faced 14-year-old manager of our team waved 'enough' and to the showers I went," Young described. "In all my baseball experience I never had one that made me feel quite as washed up as that one did."¹³

He didn't feel washed up for long. Over the winter months he was alone in a big farmhouse filled with memories. Robba was the girl next door, and the couple had lived together for decades in the farm where Cy had grown up. Now the memories were piercing him. "Somehow after she died, I didn't want to live there anymore," Young said in 1944. "So I sold the place and moved down the road."¹⁴ His farm sold in March 1935 and his chattel property sold at public auction on April 4, where a crowd of 2,000 turned out.¹⁵ Someone even bought Cy's rake for \$1.50.¹⁶ He also sold his personal library of about 400 volumes to the Brewster, Ohio, High School Library.¹⁷

Before he "moved down the road," Young joined an old-timers barnstorming tour. "I'll come back to Peoli from time to time," he optimistically exclaimed, "to visit my friends and hunt rabbits."¹⁸ He was off to Augusta, Georgia, for spring training at age 68. While it seems utterly ridiculous, it was all Young had left. "I'm all alone, and this may be sort of fun," he said just prior to leaving.¹⁹

The tour was advertised as a "Traveling Baseball School" and was organized by Walter J. Foley of Framingham, Massachusetts. Baseball old-timers would barnstorm the country to the delight of nostalgic crowds

everywhere. That was the plan at least. Boys under 16 were eligible for instruction classes prior to the game, gaining admission by simply having *The Sporting News* in hand. These boys would receive training from some of baseball's all-time greats. Five weeks of spring training in Augusta helped get the guys in shape. A 19-game schedule was planned for the summer with opponents being major, minor, independent, and college teams. The planned locations for the ambitious tour included Milwaukee, Chicago, Toledo, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Kansas City, Des Moines, Albany, Baltimore, Danville (West Virginia), New York City, St. Stephen (New Brunswick), and Bangor (Maine).²⁰

Young was contracted to pitch one inning per game and receive \$250 per month.²¹ Players arrived in Augusta and found lodging at the YMCA.²² Besides Young, the expected players included Jimmy Archer, Sam Agnew, Jess Orndorff, Rube Marquard, Hap Collard, Paul Zahniser, Rube Bressler, Al Bashang, Eddie Miller, Larry Kopf, Jimmy Collins, Bob Veach, Rolla Mapel, Zack Wheat, Dick Loftus, Bob McGraw, Pat Duncan, and Bob Meusel. Many of those stars of yesteryear never appeared, or, if they did, only briefly. Instead, we see box scores with names of lesser-known major leaguers and others from who knows where: Dick Cox, Frank Oberlin, Chet Nichols, and Jack Smith. "The trouble was," Young said later, "that there were only half a dozen of the boys who really were former major leaguers, and I was the only one who was well known. We traveled by bus, as economically as possible."²³

Their reported first game was April 26 against the Bona-Allen Shoe Company from Buford, Georgia. The "Shoers" got the better of the old-timers, 12-2, before several hundred fans. Young started and saw "successful wallops" by the opposition, whose players decided

Cy Young left the quiet of his Ohio farm to become a barnstorming pitcher at the age of 68.



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Young said he didn't have the speed he once had but could still "lob a hook up there."

to have mercy on their elders and "deliberately popped up or rolled out," to get the game over with.²⁴ The legends lost a rematch the next day, 7-6.²⁵ On April 30 they defeated a team in Barnwell, South Carolina, 3-2.²⁶

Their bus rolled into Greenville, South Carolina, for a matchup with Furman University on May 2. Despite beating the college kids, 7-1, Scoop Latimer of the *Greenville News* said the extent of Young's work that day was "a vigorous assault on a plug of chewing tobacco as he sat on the end of the player's bench." The team was also described as 6 of 9 young fellows, as "there were no footprints of the presence of" Bressler, Wheat, Archer, Bill Wambsganss, or Sam Crawford, who were all advertised to appear. The result was a paltry \$12 from 48 paying customers, which Latimer said kept Young from pitching because he was too busy "figurin' on his supper."²⁷

A crowd of 600 turned out in Rowland, North Carolina, on May 3 to see the old-timers play a local team, with Rowland winning, 5-3. The old-timers' runs were the result of eight Rowland errors, while they themselves committed three. Paul Zahniser and someone named Muzlick pitched for the old-timers, while Young "pitched to five Rowland batters not counting as a part of the game, and then coached third base."²⁸ On May 8 they defeated a team in Ehrhardt, South Carolina, 11-7.²⁹ They played Rowland again on May 9, defeating them, 6-1.³⁰

On May 28, Young and his team lost, 3-2 to Danville, Virginia, a team of the Bi-State League. The old-timers had reportedly won 13 of 14 games before losing to the Leafs, although prior newspaper accounts would say otherwise. The Leafs lineup included future major league infielder Red Barkley and a local guy

named Guy who came in to pitch a scoreless inning although he was "far advanced in years."³¹ Young, perhaps not the oldest pitcher that day, threw a scoreless first inning.

On May 29 the old-timers defeated Washington and Lee University, 7-3, when Rolla Mapel scattered ten hits and struck out five. Young pitched a scoreless ninth.³² A crowd of 500 came out on May 30 at McCurdy Field in Frederick, Maryland, as the hometown Hustlers won, 8-2, over the legends. Many of the advertised players failed to show, but Young, "the noblest old-timer of them all" according to Frederick's *The News*, "was on hand to give an exhibition of his former mound prowess by pitching to three batters." Young pitched a scoreless inning and "stepped from the peak with the applause of the fans ringing in his ears."³³ "It is still just as loose as it used to be," Young said when asked about his arm. "The only trouble is I haven't any speed," but could still "lob a hook up there."³⁴ Fans saw Young and his "strands of gray hair escaping from beneath his blue cap, and his ruddy face and light blue eyes radiating enthusiasm."³⁵ The picture of a boy at heart.

A game in Baltimore against an all-star team under the direction of Joe Cambria yielded only \$8.75 to split between the players. That money was needed to fix the team bus when it broke down.³⁶ A May 31 game in Alexandria, Virginia, ended when the old-timers refused to play when they didn't receive a \$25 guarantee. The game was to be with the St. Mary's Celtics, whose manager, Theodore Beach, offered 75% of the gate receipts, but only \$20 had been taken in when the game was about to begin. The old-timers made their request and "when it was refused they filed off

the field amid the boos of the spectators," wrote the *Evening Star*.³⁷

On June 3, the old-timers were in Hagerstown, Maryland, to play against the local Hoffman-Chevies team, presenting Hagerstown with "the most colorful array of baseball players ever offered in this city," wrote the *Daily Mail*.³⁸ A children's baseball clinic was held, and any child with a ticket could attend the instruction free. "Plenty of future Ruths, Youngs, Gehrigs and other stars in the making are expected to be on hand to be instructed by these old veterans," the *Daily Mail* wrote.³⁹ However, the team encountered "financial difficulties," and the old-timers left.⁴⁰

A June 5 contest in Cumberland, Maryland, also didn't happen. Cumberland manager Eddie Eichner had warned local fans that the old-timers being advertised often did not appear.⁴¹ A June 7 game in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, against the Shade A.C. team was also cancelled for what was reported as injuries on the team.⁴² The tour was on its last legs, and within days was scrapped when they were in Parkersburg, West Virginia. Young was back in Ohio on June 11.⁴³

"Now the one-time great hurler," lamented the writer of the "Sport Snap Shots" column in the *Xenia Daily Gazette*, "is described as a tired, shabby old man, who traveled around the country in a clattering second-hand car, living from hand to mouth with the Old-Timers."⁴⁴

Young took up residence in a Newcomerstown hotel and found a job working in a five-and-ten, creating rumors that he was in poor financial shape. "Shucks, that doesn't amount to anything," he said. "I wasn't doing anything, and the manager said 'Cy, why not come in here and give us a lift,' and so I did." Young told this story to John Dietrich of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, who tracked down the pitching legend as he was on his way to buy a train ticket. "I was just going down to the railroad station to buy a ticket to Bangor (Maine) when you came along," Cy told him. The scrapped tour was resurrected for one more game. "That was one of the stops arranged on our tour and I guess the promoter has decided to go through with it there. Anyhow, he sent me expense money, and I'm leaving tonight."⁴⁵ A Fourth of July game in Bangor was his next adventure.

The old-timers, or in the words of the *Bangor Daily News*, the "immortal troupe of stars," met in Boston at noon on July 3 and boarded a bus for Bangor, getting there by early evening. The event was made possible by the VFW, and Earl Heal of the Bangor Police Department had organized a team of "leading players in this locality."⁴⁶ This would definitely be a

highlight for the Maine town. "For the first time in a batch of years," boasted the *Bangor Daily News*, "the sports fraternity of Bangor will not have to leave town for their entertainment on the joyous, powder-scented 'Fourth of July.'"⁴⁷

The game would be played at the "recently beautified" Bass Park, and was preceded by horse racing. At 3:20, the legends hosted a mentoring session to "baseball minded youngsters" and answered questions until 4:30. The ball game began an hour later. Besides Young, this group of legends included players with brief careers and others not identified: Nick Altrock, Billy Jones, Barney Friberg, Buck O'Brien, Freddy Parent, Ed Walsh, "Big Jeff" Pfeffer, Roy Rock, Chet Nichols, Bucky Burke, Morrie Baschang, Frank Fahey, Joe Casey, Jack Ryan, Gene Demoe, Joe Cole, and Tom Connelly. "Judging from the brisk demand for tickets during the past week, the Veterans of Foreign Wars will run their sparkling sports program off before a capacity holiday crowd this afternoon," the *Bangor Daily News* excitedly announced.⁴⁸

"The time-yellowed pages of baseball history were thumbed back some twenty years," wrote Bill Geagan of the *Bangor Daily News*, describing the unique outing. "Old Cy Young and his immortals of the diamond stepped from between its musty covers, to once again wear the spangles and spikes of the game they love."⁴⁹ Fans at Bass Park were delighted to see the "time-taxed, yet surprisingly capable veterans from the upper crust of the National Pastime," including Young, "a wrinkled remnant of his once great self" who still "showed fleeting flickers of his old form."⁵⁰

Young retired the young whippersnappers in a scoreless first inning, and then took a seat to watch the rest of the game. It was a far cry from his performance on the Fourth of July 30 years earlier when he threw 20 innings in a 4-2 loss. Even so, Young "served with flashes of the same vigor that made him one of the game's most outstanding hurlers in his prime," wrote the *Bangor Daily Commercial*.⁵¹ Big Ed Walsh, whose 1.82 ERA in a 14-year pitching career still ranks number one all-time, followed Young and it was said "time has been kind" to him, "touching him but lightly."⁵² Walsh "steamed his deliveries down the groove and across the plate with the power and accuracy of top flight youth," the *Daily News* summarized.⁵³ The same could not be said for the youthful local pitcher, Jimmy Vanadistine, who gave up five runs in the first and three each in the second and third innings. More entertainment was found when Nick Altrock, the clown of baseball at the time, did his usual routine of silly antics and jokes, than in the old-timers

12-5 win. Altrock, "served to keep the small crowd of fans in good humor," wrote the *Daily Commercial*.⁵⁴

"The attraction was unique," the *Daily News* reported, "the ball playing was good, the weather man smiled brightly and the day was a big success except for the very poor attendance, which totaled only a few hundred people."⁵⁵ Such was the story for Young and his barnstormers. "We had a good time but didn't draw near enough to pay our expenses," Sam Dungan, one of the old-timers on the tour, said in an interview later that summer. "Young and I were the only real veterans. Zach Wheat and Bob Meusel, originally booked, dropped out. We got as far as Alexandria, Va., paying most of our own traveling and living expenses. Then we decided to call off the schedule which was to have taken us into major league cities this summer."⁵⁶

Young's swan song was anything but memorable. Cy Sherman in the *Lincoln Star* looked upon Young as a victim of "an ambitious eastern promoter, a misguided chap who figured that the public would pay substantial money for the privilege of seeing the heroes of 30 and 40 years ago in action on a diamond. He knows better now--knows it because of the dent in his bankroll."⁵⁷

Young returned to the five-and-ten store in Newcomerstown.⁵⁸ He seemed to have enjoyed the senior baseball experience despite its flaws. "As it turned out," Young said, "we found out the promoters had no money to start with. They had a big payroll to meet, and couldn't do it. So finally I told the boys there was no use going on. I think the idea was pretty good, and with good backing, would have gone over. Anyhow, I had a good time. I wanted to see how the country had changed since I was down south last, 25 years ago, and I enjoyed it." Young had also reached into his own pocket to help out his fellow ballplayers. "The boys had to eat," he said modestly.⁵⁹

Young's disappointment with the tour didn't quash his enthusiasm for life, however. He regularly fought to keep the Peoli post office open, right up until his death at 88 in 1955. The volume of fan mail Young received mainly kept it open, to the delight of the 11 other families in the area. Probably most of his fan mail was from fans who remembered the Cy Young of 50 years before, who threw hard and won more games than any other pitcher in history. It is doubtful anyone remembered his 1935 barnstorming tour, when old legends in a beat-up bus failed to spark the public's imagination. Young didn't complain, however, or ask for sympathy. He was first and foremost a pitcher.

"They didn't get a run off me in five games," the old veteran beamed.⁶⁰ ■

Acknowledgments

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The Complete Collegiate Baseball Record of President George H.W. Bush

The Numbers, the Awards, and the Honors

Herm Krabbenhoft

George Herbert Walker Bush began the first year of his term as the 41st President of the United States of America on January 20, 1989. Then, just seventy-three days later (on April 3, 1989), he carried out one of the most esteemed traditions for the Chief Executive—throwing the ceremonial first pitch on Major League Baseball’s Opening Day.¹ However, unlike his Oval-Office predecessors—dating to April 14, 1910, when President William Howard Taft became the first President to initiate a brand new major league season by throwing out the ball from a front-row seat in the stands—George H.W. Bush became the very first President to perform that venerable deed by actually hurling the ball *from the pitcher’s mound*.² That day at Memorial Stadium in Baltimore, prior to the 1989 season opener between the Orioles and Red Sox, Mr. Bush used his own baseball glove. The first baseman’s mitt—a Rawlings George McQuinn model “Trapper” (also referred to as “The Claw”)—was the very mitt he used while playing on the varsity baseball teams of Yale University in the late 1940s—including the 1947 team that took part in the very first College Baseball World Series, played between the University of California (Berkeley) Golden Bears and the Yale Bulldogs.

Because of the prominence Bush achieved in the history of the United States (and the world), his life is notable—including his collegiate baseball record at Yale. This article presents an in-depth look at his college baseball career, including: (1) a review of Bush’s diamond performances in each of the three years he played for the Elis, including the box score lines for each of the games in which he participated, (2) details for some specific games in which Bush’s performance had significant impact, and (3) brief synopses of related topics such as Bush’s Bulldog teammates who pursued professional careers in baseball.³

BACKGROUND

Yale University was founded in 1701 as the “Collegiate School” in Saybrook, Connecticut, before moving to New Haven in 1716 and being renamed Yale College in 1718 (in recognition of a substantial gift from Elihu Yale). The institution has had an enduring and distinguished association with the sport of baseball. Yale

began playing intercollegiate baseball in the 1860s. Series with archrivals Princeton and Harvard commenced in 1868. A number of major league players were Yale men, including Hall of Fame outfielder James Henry “Orator Jim” O’Rourke (Yale Law School 1887, NL 1876–93, 1904) and Craig Breslow (Yale 2002, B.A. molecular biophysics/biochemistry, MLB 2005–17).

George Bush entered Yale University in November 1945, shortly after his honorable discharge (on September 18) from active duty with the United States Naval Reserve (USNR) as a lieutenant, junior grade. He had enlisted in the Navy on June 12, 1942 (his eighteenth birthday), just a few days after his high school graduation from Phillips Academy (better known simply as Andover, the Massachusetts city in which it is located). At Andover he had been the president of his senior class, secretary of the student council, and captain of both the varsity baseball and soccer teams.^{4,5} Bush had already been accepted for enrollment at Yale while a senior at Andover, but decided to join the military because of the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941. Bush reported for active duty on August 5, 1942, at the Navy Pre-Flight Training School at the Horace Williams Airport on the Chapel Hill campus of the University of North Carolina. (Other notable people who trained at Horace Williams included Gerald Ford, Ted Williams, Paul “Bear” Bryant, Doc Blanchard, and Otto Graham.) On June 9, 1943, Bush was commissioned as an ensign in the USNR; he was the youngest aviator in the Navy at that time. At the conclusion of his active military service Bush had flown 58 combat missions for which he received the Distinguished Flying Cross, three Air Medals, and the Presidential Unit Citation.

Bush commenced his college studies in the Fall of 1945. In addition to his time in the classroom (in an accelerated program that allowed him to graduate with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics in just two and a half years) Bush also played on Yale’s 1945 varsity soccer team (captained by Francis Brice), which achieved an undefeated record (8–0–2) to win the New England Intercollegiate Soccer League championship. His first collegiate baseball season came in the spring of 1946.

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

In order to compile the complete record of George H.W. Bush's Yale baseball career, I obtained batting and fielding statistics for each of the games he played for Yale from 1946 through 1948 by scrutinizing the box scores and game accounts. Yale played 17 collegiate baseball games in 1946, 28 games in 1947, and 31 games in 1948. The following newspapers were examined to obtain the requisite information from the box scores and text descriptions of the games: *Yale Daily News*, *New Haven Evening Register*, *New Haven Register*, *New Haven Journal-Courier*, *The New York Times*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, *Washington Post*.

RESULTS

1946

Red Rolfe was the coach of the varsity baseball team when Bush arrived. Rolfe had been at the helm since 1943, having taken over from Smoky Joe Wood, who had guided the Eli-nine since 1924. However, after the completion of Yale's 1945–46 basketball season, Rolfe—who was also the varsity hoops coach—left to return to the pros, joining the New York Yankees as their third base coach and right-hand man to manager Joe McCarthy. Before becoming an Eli, Rolfe, a Dartmouth University alumnus, had guarded the hot corner for the Bronx Bombers (1934–42). So, when the 1946 baseball season commenced, Bush and his teammates had a brand new coach—Ethan Allen, an alumnus of the University of Cincinnati, who had achieved a lifetime .300 batting average during a 13-year major league career (1926–38) as an outfielder (primarily center and left) with six teams (Reds, Giants, Cardinals, Phillies, Cubs, and Browns).

For Yale's 1946 baseball campaign, 74 candidates turned out for the first practice sessions in early March; twenty-five of the candidates had worn Eli varsity or freshman uniforms in previous years.⁶ The top men for first base were a trio of discharged service officers—Bill Howe, Vinny Lynch, and George Bush, who had played first base during his high school years at Andover and went by the nickname “Poppy” at Yale.⁷ Six other men were also vying for the initial sack—Joseph Bower, Kleber Campbell, Russell Candee, Donald Prior, Hugh Sinclair, and Clinton Vose. After a week, the number of candidates had been pared down to 34, including five for first base—Howe, Lynch, Bush, Vose, and Sinclair.⁸

Following another two and a half weeks of practice, the tentative starting lineups had been decided by Coach Allen, with Bush and Howe the final two in

contention for first-string first-sacker.⁹ On April 12, the starting lineup for Yale's April-15 season opener versus the University of Connecticut was announced by Coach Allen and Bush had won the job:¹⁰

- Mike Stimola (second base)
- Frank “Junie” O’Brien (third base)
- Art “Peewee” Moher (shortstop)
- Harry Reese (left field)
- Bolt Elwell (catcher)
- Bob James (center field)
- Bob Rosensweig (right field)
- George “Poppy” Bush (first base)
- Frank Quinn (pitcher)

One last-minute change was necessitated because Rosensweig went on the sick list; his place was taken by Bob Simpson.

As Yale's 1946 season proceeded, a total of twenty players, including four pitchers, saw action for the Bulldogs, who played a total of 17 official collegiate games. Table 1 presents the batting records of Yale's principal players, those who participated in at least eight of Yale's 17 games. Appendix A (available on the SABR website) provides the game scores and the game-by-game batting and fielding lines achieved by Bush (who typically batted seventh or eighth). Yale also had one unofficial “exhibition” game (not included in Table 1 or Appendix A).¹¹

Table 1. Batting Records of Principal Players on Yale's 1946 Baseball Team

Player	POS	G	AB	R	H	RBI	AVG
Harry Reese	LF, CF	12	36	9	14	10	.389
Art Moher	SS	17	49	19	19	8	.388
Bob James	CF, LF	17	65	13	24	9	.369
Walt Gathman	P	8	18	4	6	3	.333
George Sulliman	2B	11	27	10	6	8	.272
Frank O'Brien	3B	16	64	8	17	5	.266
Bolt Elwell	C	17	61	9	16	14	.262
Bill Howe	RF	11	33	2	7	5	.212
George Bush	1B	17	52	9	11	6	.212
Mike Stimola	2B	12	31	6	5	1	.161
Jack Heath	RF	12	36	5	5	3	.139
Frank Quinn	P	12	31	4	4	1	.129

Let's also take a close look at a few games, focusing on Bush's performance. His first time in the batter's box came in Yale's first game of the season, versus Connecticut (on April 15). In the bottom of the second inning, with the game scoreless and a runner on second base with two outs, the right-handed batting Bush, wearing number 2, “drilled a single into the hole

between short and third” to drive home the initial run of the campaign.¹² In his next three plate appearances he collected another single and reached first with a base on balls. The walk started a seventh-inning rally which contributed to the 4–3 Yale victory. After getting the free pass, Bush moved to second on a sacrifice and then—with some daring baserunning—he advanced to third on a ground ball single to short. He subsequently scored the game-tying run.

In the field, Bush handled 16 chances—15 putouts and one assist—without an error. He participated in a crucial double play to thwart a bases-loaded threat in the fifth. So, the former World War II pilot had an auspicious start to his college baseball career.

Bush’s offensive performance topped that of his UConn counterpart at first base—who went 0-for-4—cleanup batter Walt Dropo, who would win the American League “Rookie of the Year” Award in 1950 and go on to a 13-year major league career. According to the *New Haven Evening Register*, “Dropo was, however, the defensive star for the U-Conns.”¹³

In the next game, another home contest, Bush was again the starting first baseman. He got one hit (a single) in three at bats as the Elis routed Brown University, 17–3. With the game well in hand, Coach Ethan Allen decided to take a look at his bench. Among the substitutes he used was Hugh Sinclair, who played the last few innings at first base—his only appearance in the 1946 campaign. Bush was the exclusive first sacker for the remainder of the season.¹⁴

Another 1946 highlight was the rematch with the Cadets of Army played at West Point, where Bush emerged as the hero. In the top of the seventh inning he drove in the sixth Bulldog run with a sharp single (his second hit of the day) to break the tie and give the Blue a 6–5 advantage—the final score—maintaining Yale’s perfect collegiate record.

Bush was not an offensive leader on the 1946 team. Of the twelve players listed in Table 1, Bush ranked ninth in batting average. All but one of Poppy’s hits were singles; his only extra base hit was a double in the game against Dartmouth on April 27. As the season progressed, Bush’s batting average dipped below .200. Going 4-for-11 in the final three games of the year (against bitter perennial foes Princeton and Harvard), Bush upped his batting average from below the Mendoza line to .212 (11-for-52). Even though his batting record was far from pace-setting, his fielding performance was exemplary. Bush committed only two errors in 143 total chances—including 137 putouts and 4 assists—giving him a .986 fielding average. For comparison, the composite fielding average for first

basemen among Yale’s opponents was just .970. Thus, the overall performance of George Bush on the baseball diamond in the first year of his collegiate career would probably be rated as “good field, poor hit.”

Other items worth mentioning from Bush’s first collegiate season include the following:

- Bush had one stolen base—in the game against Harvard on June 24.
- Bush started at first base in all 17 of Yale’s collegiate games. He was one of only four players to play in all 17 games.
- The Elis won the Eastern Intercollegiate Baseball League Championship with a record of 7–1. The other teams in the loop were Pennsylvania University (5–3), Columbia (5–4), Cornell (5–4), Princeton (3–7), and Harvard (2–8). The Bulldogs swept the “Big Three” title with two triumphs over Harvard and two wins against Princeton. Overall, Yale’s varsity baseball team turned in a sterling 14–3 won-lost collegiate record.

1947

During the Fall 1946 semester, Yale again competed in soccer. Bush was among those from the undefeated 1945 season due to return to the team captained by Paul Laurent. However, Bush had come down with malaria and was unable to participate in any of the nine games (in which the Bulldogs compiled a 3–3–3 ledger). Fortunately, Poppy had fully recovered in time for the 1947 baseball season.

Coach Allen utilized a total of 22 players in 1947, eight of them returnees from 1946. Frank “Junie” O’Brien was elected team captain. The Elis compiled a 16–7–1 record overall. Within the Eastern Intercollegiate Baseball League their W–L–T record was 9–3–0, topping Columbia (7–5–0), Harvard (7–5–0), Princeton (7–5–0), Pennsylvania (6–6–0), Dartmouth (3–9–0), and Cornell (3–9–0) and garnering the Bulldogs the championship for the second consecutive year and an invitation to the NCAA Tournament. Yale won its first two NCAA Tournament games against Clemson and New York, becoming the Eastern Region champions and gaining the right to play in the first College World Series, facing the University of California (Berkeley)—winners of the Western Region. The Golden Bears defeated the Bulldogs, two games to none, to earn the College Baseball World Championship. Thus, overall, Yale compiled an 18–9–1 won-lost-tied record for the

1947 campaign. Table 2 presents a listing of the eleven Bulldog players who saw diamond action on a regular basis during the 1947 season. Appendix B presents the line scores for the batting and fielding performances on a game-by-game basis accomplished by Bush, who again batted in the seventh or eighth slots in the batting lineup. Yale also played two exhibition games (not included in Table 2 or Appendix B).¹⁵

Table 2. Batting Records of Principal Players on Yale's 1947 Baseball Team

Player	POS	G	AB	R	H	RBI	AVG
Norm Felske	C	21	75	10	24	10	.320
Art Moher*	SS	26	97	21	28	16	.289
Dick Mathews	3B	27	97	18	28	15	.289
Gordy Davis	2B	19	70	16	20	4	.286
Bob Rosensweig*	CF	25	64	13	17	6	.266
Bill Howe*	RF	26	96	8	25	16	.260
George Bush*	1B	28	101	16	21	5	.208
Bolt Elwell*	C, LF	25	79	9	14	15	.177
George Sulliman*	LF, CF	18	56	9	10	5	.172
Frank Quinn*	P	21	44	8	6	4	.136
Frank O'Brien*	2B, 3B	21	62	7	7	5	.113

NOTES: (1) An asterisk after the player's name indicates that he was also a member on the 1946 Yale baseball team. (2) Complete RBI information was not available for the 5-24-1947 game with Pennsylvania, which Yale won by a 14-4 score.

In the 1947 season opener, on March 29 in Charlottesville, Virginia, Bush was again the starting first baseman for the Yale Bulldogs. He batted seventh and in four plate appearances he reached base safely three times—a single, a base on balls, and a hit by pitch. He scored the fifth Eli run, which turned out to be the eventual winning run as the Blue defeated the Cavaliers, 6-4. Bush also handled a dozen fielding chances without an error. So, once again Bush started off the season with a pretty good performance. He continued with a 2-for-4 showing in the next game, a loss to the University of Richmond Spiders, 8-7.

After this solid start, Bush endured a rather lengthy period of difficulty in the batter's box. During the next six games he went 0-for-18, his batting average plummeting to .125. Offensively, Poppy's best game of the season was probably the May 24 encounter with Pennsylvania in which he had three hits (all singles) and scored three runs in a 14-4 rout. As in the previous season, his batting average was mired below .200 going into the final three games of the year—against Princeton (two games) and Harvard (one game). He went 4-for-10 to boost his average to .221 as the Elis captured two of those critically important games to emerge as the EIBL champions for the second straight year with a 9-3 record. Princeton and Harvard tied for second place at 7-5.



GEORGE H.W. BUSH PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY

The front of the commemorative baseball card issued by the George H.W. Bush Presidential Library



In the NCAA Eastern Regional Playoffs, Bush went 1-for-4 in each of the two games of the tournament as Yale defeated Clemson University, 7-3, and New York University, 6-4. In the NCAA finals—the very first College World Series (held in Kalamazoo, Michigan)—Bush went hitless in seven trips to the plate as the University of California (Berkeley) won each of the first two games in the best-of-three series. Thus, George Bush turned in a “nothing-to-brag-about” overall .208 collegiate batting average for the 1947 diamond season—21 hits in 101 official at bats.

There were three games in particular wherein Bush's performances had significant impact. On April 30, in the battle with Army at West Point, he was presented with a golden opportunity. The Elis were trailing the Cadets, 4-3, with two outs in the top of the ninth inning. The Bulldogs had managed to get a couple of runners on base, but Poppy fanned to end the game. Bush and two other Blue infielders had committed three errors in Army's fourth inning which contributed to all of the Cadets' runs.

In the very next game, a rematch against Army, Bush again encountered considerable misfortune. He committed two fielding errors (on one play) which contributed to three third-inning runs. Fortunately, the Elis staged a two-run rally to tie the score. But the rally came to an end when Bush stepped into the batter's box and made the final out of the frame. After three more innings of scoreless baseball, a torrential downpour precluded further action, resulting in a 3-3 tie.

After his struggles against Army, Bush rose to the occasion in the NCAA Regional Championship game against NYU. With Yale trailing 4-1 in the seventh, Bush ignited a rally by leading off with a single and then scoring the first of five runs. The rally catapulted the

Elis into the lead and the come-from-behind victory earned them the trip to that first College World Series.

Additional nuggets about Bush's second baseball season at Yale include the following:

- As shown in Table 2, Poppy's overall batting average ranked seventh among the eleven Elis who played regularly. He had three extra-base hits, all doubles.
- Bush tied for third in runs scored with 16. He also demonstrated reasonably good stealth on the base paths by swiping a half dozen bases (third on the team behind the 11 and 7 thefts achieved by Gordy Davis and Art Moher, respectively).
- Bush turned in a respectable fielding record in 1947—260 putouts, 12 assists, and 8 errors—which gave him a fielding average of .971, eighteen points higher than the composite fielding average (.953) of the first basemen of Eli opponents. The Associated Press account of the NCAA Finals praised Bush's fielding prowess, reporting that "first sacker George (Poppy) Bush is a fielding artist."¹⁶
- Bush was the only Eli player to participate in all 28 of Yale's games and started in every one. In fact, Poppy played every inning of every game. Thus, following the example of the "major league player that as a kid he looked up to the most—Lou Gehrig, the Yankees' Hall of Fame first baseman," George Bush built up his own Iron Man credentials.¹⁷

1948

The Yale varsity baseball team of 1948, again coached by Ethan Allen, was composed of a dozen returning lettermen, and a total of 22 players would don the Eli uniform. Bush, again wearing uniform number 2, was again the starting first baseman. Prior to the start of the season, Poppy's teammates elected him to be their captain.

Table 3 presents the batting performances of the thirteen Eli players who played on a regular basis in the 31 official college games of the 1948 season (including six post-season tournament contests). Appendix C provides the line scores for the batting and fielding performances on a game-by-game basis achieved by George Bush.

Table 3. Batting Records of Principal Players on Yale's 1948 Baseball Team

Player	POS	G	AB	R	H	RBI	AVG
Dick Tettelbach	CF, LF	18	50	9	19	8	.380
Norm Felske*	C	29	103	10	35	16	.340
Tom Redden	LF, CF	29	107	19	34	19	.318
Bob James	RF	16	45	8	14	5	.311
Art Fitzgerald	LF	15	46	7	14	5	.304
Art Moher*	SS	31	118	31	35	18	.297
George Bush*	1B	31	110	18	27	17	.245
Dick Mathews*	2B, 3B	31	112	14	27	24	.241
Gerry Breen	RF	26	52	14	12	8	.231
Bob Rosensweig*	CF	13	26	3	5	5	.192
Delos Smith	2B, LF	31	106	10	20	6	.189
Bob Goodyear	P, RF	18	50	7	9	6	.180
Frank Quinn*	P	18	44	6	5	1	.114

NOTE: An Asterisk after the player's name indicates that he was also a member on the 1946 and/or 1947 Yale baseball team.

Yale began its defense of the NCAA Eastern Regional crown with an early spring trip to the South where they were scheduled to play six games in eight days. After rain prevented the playing of the first game (against Richmond), the Elis opened the 1948 season against the University of North Carolina. George Bush went 0-for-3 as the Bulldogs and the Tarheels played to a 7-7 draw. However, the Yale captain was on target in the next game, a 9-6 victory over North Carolina State University (at Raleigh) on April 3:

"BUSH'S 3 HITS PACE BLUE IN FIRST TOUR WIN" read the headline in the April 4 edition of the *New Haven Register*. From the article: "George Bush, husky first baseman, contributed a single, double, and triple to the winner's attack." The box score showed Bush scored two runs and batted in three more, and that he had one stolen base.¹⁸ That batting performance was the most impressive in his collegiate career. In his autobiography, *Looking Forward*, Mr. Bush recalled that after that game, "some scouts approached him as he left the field; however, that was the first and last nibble he ever got from the pros."¹⁹

After getting a single in three at bats in the following game (a 2-0 loss to Wake Forest), Bush hit a four-game slump, going 0-for-11. He rebounded with a robust showing in a 7-0 vanquishment of the University of Connecticut on April 20; he smashed a double and a two-run homer over the left field wall at Yale Field. That home run—the only one in Bush's career—came off Hy Chapin, a former minor league pitcher with both Easton (1939) and Federalsburg (1941) in the Class D Eastern Shore League.

As the 1948 season progressed, Yale won enough games to gain an invitation to the NCAA Eastern

Regional Tournament in Winston-Salem, North Carolina (along with the University of Illinois, North Carolina, and Lafayette). During the “regular” season the Elis had compiled a 17–7–1 record. Within the EIBL, the Bulldogs went 6–3–0, placing them third in the final standings.²⁰ In the Eastern Regionals, the Bulldogs advanced to the NCAA College World Series by defeating North Carolina in the opening round (6–1) and sweeping Lafayette twice in the second round (11–2 and 4–3). But the Elis were not able to continue their winning ways in the NCAA Finals in Kalamazoo, losing the three-game series to the Trojans of the University of Southern California, two games to one by scores of 3–1, 8–3, and 9–2.

The 1948 season was a good campaign for George Bush. He compiled a batting average of .245 (27-for-110), a 37 point improvement over his 1947 average. As shown in Table 3, he again ranked seventh among the batting averages assembled by the 13 players regularly used by Coach Ethan Allen.

Some other noteworthy items for Bush during the 1948 baseball season:

- Poppy hit with more power in his final season than he had in his previous two campaigns. He rapped out nine doubles, one triple, and one homer, for a .373 slugging average. One of Poppy’s doubles came in the game against Princeton on June 5. Prior to that game captain Bush met Babe Ruth at home plate. The Bambino presented the final manuscript of *The Babe Ruth Story* (co-written by George Herman himself and journalist Bob Considine) to Yale University. Ruth addressed the crowd (estimated to be between five and six thousand) saying, “I’ve been to New Haven many, many times over the years, but this is one of the best times.”²¹ Bush later recalled his meeting with the world’s all-time most famous baseball player, stating, “Meeting Babe Ruth on Yale Field was a thrill that stays with me till this day. He was cancer-riddled. His voice was more of a croak than a normal voice, but he radiated greatness and I was privileged to have been asked to go out to home plate with him to receive his papers that he donated to Yale.”²² Teammate Jim Duffus also recalled the Ruth-Bush meeting: “Yet after the ceremony at home plate, Bush insisted the Babe come over to the Yale dugout to meet each player personally. He was real hoarse, but he went up and down the bench whispering, ‘Hiya, kid.’ I’ll never forget that Poppy let us all share the glory.”²³

- Bush finished third in runs scored and fourth in runs batted in among his Eli teammates. With regard to hitting near the bottom of the batting order, Bush once joked, “I was kind of the second cleanup.”²⁴
- In the fielding department, Poppy made but two (inconsequential) errors in a total of 270 fielding chances—including 248 putouts and 20 assists—for a glowing .993 fielding average. The composite fielding average of the first sackers on Yale’s 1948 opponents was just .973.
- For the third consecutive year George Bush started all 31 games in the season and with the exception of the last few innings of the game against Duke on April 6, Bush played every inning of every game in 1948. A particularly strong demonstration of his iron man character is shown by the games against Boston College and Amherst on April 22 and 24, respectively. The column headline in the April 24 edition of the *Yale Daily News* reads, “Bush Doubtful Starter Due To Spike Wound.” As Stan Feur wrote, “There is a question mark in the Yale ranks as to whether Captain George Poppy Bush



Babe Ruth meets Yale baseball player George “Poppy” Bush.

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY COOPERSTOWN, NY

will be ready to go in today's fray. The classy fielding first baseman, who has been hammering out some hefty blows of late, has a painful wound received against Boston College."²⁵ Bush played every inning in each of those games.²⁶

A pair of 1948 games merit mention since one of baseball's rarest events took place in each of them:

In the April 24 contest against Amherst, Bush took part in a nifty triple play. With the game scoreless in the bottom of the fourth, the Lord Jeffs put runners on first and second with nobody out. The next batter smashed a line drive over second. The Eli shortstop, Art Moher, snared the shot and stepped on the keystone (to get the first two outs) and then fired to first. However, "the hurried peg was high and wide." But, Bush—spike wound and all—managed to catch the errant heave and tag the runner as he overslid the bag for the final out of the rally-squelching triple play.²⁷

In the opening game of the NCAA Finals, Yale carried a 1-0 lead into the top of the ninth inning. But the USC Trojans rallied for three runs to take the lead. In the Eli half of the frame, the Bulldogs managed to get their first three batters on to load the bases with nobody out. Most unfortunately (from the Yale perspective), the next batter hit into a game-ending triple play. Had such a cataclysmic ending not occurred, the opportunity to produce a dramatic triumph would have passed to the next batter—Captain George Poppy Bush. One can only imagine how differently things might have transpired.

DISCUSSION

A. THE STATISTICAL COLLEGIATE BASEBALL RECORD OF GEORGE H.W. BUSH

With accurate game-by-game statistics in hand for each of the collegiate games played by George "Poppy"

Bush during his three years on Yale's varsity baseball team, one can readily and reliably determine his statistics for each of his seasons and for his entire career. Table 4 presents the complete season-by-season collegiate batting and fielding stats assembled by the 41st President of the United States. In 76 games, Bush assembled a career fielding average of .983, a lifetime batting average of .224 (59-for-263) with one home run—in sync with the "good-field-no-hit" description given to Poppy by his coach Ethan Allen.²⁸ How do my numbers for Bush's collegiate baseball career compare with the information presented for him elsewhere over the years? The short answer is, "Not well."

In 1990, the Topps (Chewing Gum) Company produced a baseball card specifically for President George Bush, honoring his unique achievement of being the only US president to play in the College World Series.²⁹ The card, which has the exact-same front and back designs as the regular-issue 1990 Topps baseball card set, shows the (supposedly) "Complete Collegiate Batting Record—Yale University" for George Bush, as presented in Figure 1.

As can be seen, no statistics for Bush's 1946 season are included on the Topps card, and there are numerous differences between my numbers shown in Table 4 and the numbers for Bush's 1947 and 1948 statistics. See Appendix D (available on SABR.org) for color images of the front and back of the 1990 Topps baseball card of George Bush.

In 1991, an article in the premiere issue of *USA Today Baseball Weekly* incorrectly stated that Bush was on the Yale baseball team for two years (not three) and compiled a career batting average of .251 (44-for-175) with two homers in 51 games.³⁰ The statistics given in the *USA Today Baseball Weekly* article are identical to those shown on the 1990 Topps baseball card (Figure 1). More recently, in conjunction with Yale's

Table 4. The Complete Batting and Fielding Record of George H.W. Bush at Yale (1946–48)—This Work

Year	G	AB	R	H	D	T	HR	RBI	SB	BA	SLG	PO	A	E	FA
1946 – regular season	17	52	9	11	1	0	0	6	1	.212	.231	137	4	2	.986
1947 – regular season	24	86	13	19	3	0	0	5	4	.221	.256	231	12	8	.968
ERT	2	8	2	2	0	0	0	0	1	.250	.250	13	0	0	1.000
CWS	2	7	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	.000	.000	16	0	0	1.000
1947 – subtotal	28	101	16	21	3	0	0	5	6	.208	.238	260	12	8	.971
1948 – regular season	25	87	16	23	8	1	1	15	2	.264	.414	195	16	2	.991
ERT	3	11	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	.182	.182	26	1	0	1.000
CWS	3	12	1	2	1	0	0	2	0	.167	.250	27	3	0	1.000
1948 – subtotal	31	110	18	27	9	1	1	17	2	.245	.373	248	20	2	.993
Total	76	263	43	59	13	1	1	28	9	.224	.293	645	36	12	.983

NOTE: ERT = Eastern Regional Tournament; CWS = College World Series.

preparations to celebrate the sesquicentennial season of Eli baseball in 2015, Yale University issued a press release focused on Bush's Bulldog diamond career.³¹ The January 2015 press release incorrectly stated the following:

Bush had a strong three-year career with the Bulldogs, playing only part of the 1946 season in addition to the two historic seasons to follow. Bush was as good a fielder as any on the team, fashioning .976 and .992 fielding percentages in 1947 and 1948. His career batting average was .215 with a season-high .245 in 1948 (statistics may be incomplete). In 1948, Bush also hit one home run, one triple, seven doubles, knocked in 16 runs and scored 17 himself. In 1947, Bush hit .208 with one double, six RBI, and five stolen bases in 29 games played.

Compared to my statistics for Bush's collegiate baseball performance, there clearly are several discrepancies with the statistics shown on the 1990 Topps baseball card, the 1991 *USA Today Baseball Weekly* article, and the 2015 Yale press release. All (or most) of the stats included in these sources are apparently "from a fact file [at Yale] that had been around from a long time ago."³² For example, the Yale stats apparently include the May 30, 1947, exhibition game played between the varsity team and the "Yale Club"—an aggregation of Bulldogs players from past years; Poppy produced a 2-2-2-3 batting line in that game, including a home run. The most glaring discrepancy between my statistical record for Bush and Yale's statistical record is that Yale omits Poppy's participation in every game of the Eli's 1946 championship season.

One might wonder how President Bush feels about the research I did on his baseball record at Yale. I sent my findings to the President while he was still in office and was pleased to receive a personal letter on White House stationery from him. Figure 2 is an image of the letter.

B. POPPY'S TEAMMATES WHO PLAYED PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL

In his autobiography, *Looking Forward*, in response to the rhetorical question, "What brought me to Texas..." Mr. Bush wrote, "The truth? I wish I could have answered, 'A fat contract to play professional baseball.'"³³ While Poppy did not accomplish the dream of making it to the major leagues as a player, nine of his Eli teammates did sign contracts to play minor league baseball: Dick Manville, Norm Felske, Dick Mathews, Art Moher, Jim Duffus, Frank Quinn, Walt Gathman, Art Fitzgerald,

USA1
HEIGHT: 6'0" WEIGHT: 170 BATS: RIGHT THROWS: LEFT
BORN: 6-12-24, MILTON, MASS HOME: 1600 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, WASHINGTON, D.C.

George Bush • 1B

COMPLETE COLLEGIATE BATTING RECORD—YALE UNIVERSITY

YR	CLASS	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	SLG	BB	SO	AVG
47	JUNIOR	26	88	16	21	2	0	1	9	5	.295	NA	NA	.239
48	SENIOR	25	87	15	23	6	2	1	14	2	.414	NA	NA	.264
COLLEGE TOTALS		51	175	31	44	8	2	2	23	7	.354	NA	NA	.251
47	POST SEASON TOTALS	4	15	3	2	0	0	0	0	2	.133	NA	NA	.133

YALE TEAM RECORDS

SEASONS1947, 17W-8L-1T.
1948, 17W-7L-1T.

POST SEASON 1947 NCAA EASTERN: WON BOTH GAMES.
1947 NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS: LOST BOTH GAMES.
1948 NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS: WON 1, LOST 2.

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Figure 1. The back of the 1990 George Bush Topps baseball card.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON
May 31, 1991

Dear Mr. Krabbenhof:

Many thanks for your letter about my Yale baseball career.

It's always good to know that there is interest in my collegiate athletic performance, and I appreciate all of your efforts to set the record straight. While your research uncovered a lower batting average, you did come up with a higher fielding percentage than the Yale numbers indicated -- in all, an even trade.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,
G. Bush

Mr. Herman Krabbenhof
Publisher
Baseball Quarterly Reviews
Post Office Box 9343
Schenectady, New York 12309

Figure 2. Letter from President Bush to Herman Krabbenhof, dated May 31, 1991.

and Dick Tettelbach. Three of these Bulldog alumni made it to the big leagues—Manville, Quinn, and Tettelbach. (Appendix E provides the minor league records achieved by each of these Bush teammates.)

Manville had two trials in the major leagues—one game (two innings) in 1950 with the Boston Braves and eleven games (17 innings) in 1952 with the Chicago Cubs. In neither stint did Manville record a victory or a defeat. After his diamond career, Manville went on

to greater success as the co-owner of the Forbes-Manville Furniture Showcase which served retail outlets in the Midwest and Florida.³⁴

Frank “The Arm” Quinn earned a trial with the Boston Red Sox in 1949—appearing in eight games (all relief assignments) and compiling a 2.86 ERA with no wins or losses. In 1950, after appearing in just one game for the Sox, he was acquired by the Washington Nationals (commonly referred to by the nickname Senators) and sent to their Chattanooga team (Southern Association) where he produced a 1–3 W–L ledger with a 6.30 ERA. While Quinn was on the spring roster of the Senators in 1951—even appearing on a baseball card (# 276 in the Bowman set)—he saw no more major league action. “Quinn later moved to Los Angeles and became Vice President of First Western Bank and Trust Co. He worked as a bank executive in New York and Miami as well. In his later years, he worked in Florida real estate development.”³⁵

Tettelbach’s excellent minor league performance eventually earned him a trip to the big leagues, where he made his major league debut with the Yankees on September 25, 1955. He ended up playing in two games, going hitless in five at bats. Prior to the 1956 season, he was traded (along with Whitey Herzog, Bob Wiesler, Lou Berberet, and Herb Plews) to the Senators (for Mickey McDermott and Bobby Kline). With Washington, he cracked the starting lineup and in his first at bat—on Opening Day (shortly after President Dwight Eisenhower had thrown out the ceremonial first pitch)—he blasted a home run off Don Larsen. However, after 18 games he was batting only .156 and was sent down to Denver, where he batted an unimpressive .250 in 72 contests. Tettelbach made it back to the Bigs in the beginning of the 1957 campaign, but batted a paltry .182 in nine games. On May 15 he voluntarily retired from professional baseball. “He went to work for the Copeland Company, a manufacturer of asphalt. He also became a major force in the Connecticut State Golf Association as both a player and official. A six-time Yale Golf Club champion, he served on the Golf Association’s executive committee for 25 years, and was its president in 1991–92.”³⁶

In addition to three of his teammates making the majors, so did two of Bush’s opponents: the aforementioned Walt Dropo (UConn, 1946) and Jackie Jensen, who played for the University of California, Berkeley, in the 1947 NCAA Finals. Dropo’s major league accomplishments included the 1950 American League RBI crown and the still-standing major league record for “most hits, consecutive—12” which he accomplished in 1952 while playing with the Detroit Tigers.³⁷ Jensen put

together an eleven-year major league career with the Yankees, Senators, and Red Sox that included three RBI crowns (1955, 1958, and 1959) and the American League Most Valuable Player Award in 1958.³⁸

Another diamond foe from Poppy Bush’s collegiate days who did quite well in baseball was Vin Scully. He played center field for the Fordham Rams in the April 12, 1947, contest against the Yale Bulldogs. Like Bush, he went 0-for-3 in that game. Scully would go on to an illustrious career as a baseball broadcaster, and receive the National Baseball Hall of Fame’s Ford C. Frick Award among other accolades. Poppy also crossed paths with George “Sparky” Anderson. Although he would bat a lackluster .218 in his only big-league season (1959 Phillies), Anderson subsequently excelled as a manager, guiding three World Champions (1975 and 1976 Reds, 1984 Tigers) and earning a bronze plaque in Cooperstown. Anderson was the batboy for the 1948 USC Trojans, Yale’s opponent in the College World Series that year.

C. BASEBALL AWARDS AND HONORS

While the focus of this article deals with the statistical record of Poppy Bush, there are other significant items closely connected to his performance on the diamond that merit inclusion here.

The George H.W. Bush Lifetime of Leadership Award was created by Yale University to honor Yale alumni athletes who, in their lives after Yale, have made significant leadership contributions in the worlds of governance, commerce, science and technology, education, public service, and the arts and media. The award was named for Bush as the living example of one who successfully and selflessly addressed the global leadership demands of his position. Each honoree is chosen by a broadly representative alumni Honors Committee, based upon the candidates’ individual lifetime leadership contributions in their respective fields. All have been graduated for more than 20 years. Emphasizing that athletics is an important component of the Yale undergraduate educational experience, the award has been given biennially beginning in 2001.³⁹ Three of the award recipients played on Yale’s varsity baseball teams:

- 1) James McNerney (1971) received the award in 2007 in recognition of his illustrious career as a senior executive for Proctor & Gamble, General Electric, 3M, and Boeing.
- 2) Stephen D. Greenberg (1970) received the award in 2009 in recognition of his executive-level leadership in the sports and media

industries, such as the Los Angeles law firm Manatt, Phelps & Phillips (specializing in sports and general business law, including agenting for baseball players), Major League Baseball (as deputy commissioner to Fay Vincent), Classic Sports Network (which he cofounded and eventually sold to ESPN), and Allen & Co. (an investment bank). A son of Hall of Famer Hank Greenberg, Steve also played minor league baseball from 1970 through 1974, compiling a .272–.387–.432 BA–OBP–SLG line with 32 homers in three Triple-A seasons with Denver (American Association) and Spokane (Pacific Coast League).

- 3) James Goodale (1955) was honored in 2015 in recognition of his leadership accomplishments as the vice president and general counsel for *The New York Times* especially for his principal roles in the “Pentagon Papers” and “Reporter’s Privilege.”

In addition to these three Yale Bulldog diamonds, Eli hockey alumnus Roland W. Betts (1968) received the prestigious award in 2005. While he did not play baseball for Yale, he was a major investor in the Texas Rangers Baseball Club, 1989–98.

The George H.W. Bush Distinguished Alumnus Award was created by the National College Baseball Hall of Fame to honor college baseball players who earned a varsity letter in intercollegiate baseball competition and went on to achieve tremendous off-field professional careers.⁴⁰ The initial award was bestowed to George “Poppy” Bush on November 13, 2014. Subsequently, there have been four more recipients of the award:

- U.S. Representative Roger Williams (on August 29, 2015), who previously served as the Texas Secretary of State, played baseball at Texas Christian University and then professionally in the Atlanta Braves organization (1971–73), later returning to TCU as head coach.
- Dr. Bobby Brown (August 29, 2015), who played baseball at Stanford, UCLA, and then Tulane, around Naval Officer Training and medical school, before joining the New York Yankees organization and playing in four World Series during a career spanning parts of eight major league seasons (1946–52, 1954). Following his career as a cardiologist in the Dallas-Fort Worth

area, Brown served as the president of the American League 1984–94.

- Vin Scully (November 08, 2015), who was an outfielder at Fordham in the late 1940s before becoming the voice of the Dodgers in both Brooklyn and Los Angeles (1950–2016).
- Dr. John Everett Olerud (July 16, 2016), who was an All-American catcher at Washington State University and led the Cougars to the 1965 College World Series and, after balancing medical school and minor league baseball for parts of seven summers (1965–71), pursued a career in dermatology at the University of Washington. He is the father of John Garrett Olerud, who had a 17-year major league career (1989–2005).

George H.W. Bush National College Baseball Hall of Fame will be the name of the National College Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. About this latest honor emanating from his collegiate baseball career, President Bush said, “To say I am pleased is an understatement. While my baseball days at Yale hardly measure up to the likes of my boyhood idol Lou Gehrig or Hall of Famers Jackie Robinson or Dave Winfield, I genuinely love the game and am so grateful for this honor, undeserved though it may be.” Construction of the building had been set to begin in late 2014.⁴¹ Funding issues stalled the construction, and although there was a ceremonial groundbreaking in Lubbock, Texas, on June 29, 2015, no actual construction took place. On April 7, 2017, the College Baseball Foundation and the City of Lubbock released statements announcing that the George H.W. Bush College Baseball Hall of Fame would not be built in Lubbock. A week later, Wichita mayor Jeff Longwell stated that Wichita, Kansas, would explore being the home of the College Baseball Hall of Fame.⁴² Two months later, on June 20, 2017, a group from Omaha, Nebraska, indicated that it was exploring bringing the College Baseball Hall of Fame to Omaha—where the College Baseball World Series has been played every year since 1950. The Omaha effort is being led by Omaha real estate executive Kyle Peterson, who played in the College World Series (1995 and 1997 with Stanford) as well as in the majors (1999 and 2001 with the Milwaukee Brewers).⁴³

The Presidential Medal of Freedom is the nation’s highest civilian honor, given to individuals who have made meritorious contributions to the security or national interests of the US, to world peace or to cultural

or other major public or private endeavors. The medal has been awarded to twelve men who played professional baseball. During his term in the White House, President George H.W. Bush granted the honor to Ted Williams in 1991. The Splendid Splinter, the last player to win a batting title with an average over .400, was, like Bush, a decorated pilot, having served in both World War Two (1943–45) and the Korean War (1952–53). In November 2014, Bush was asked, “What was your favorite team growing up?” Bush replied, “The Red Sox. I liked Ted Williams the best.”⁴⁴

The complete roster of professional baseball players who have been recognized with the Presidential Medal of Freedom is given in Table 5.

Table 5. Professional Baseball Players Who Have Received the Presidential Medal of Freedom

Recipient	President	Year
Moe Berg	Harry Truman	1945
Joe DiMaggio	Gerald Ford	1977
Jackie Robinson	Ronald Reagan	1984
Ted Williams	George H.W. Bush	1991
Hank Aaron	George W. Bush	2002
Roberto Clemente	George W. Bush	2003
Frank Robinson	George W. Bush	2005
Buck O'Neill	George W. Bush	2006
Stan Musial	Barack Obama	2010
Ernie Banks	Barack Obama	2013
Yogi Berra	Barack Obama	2015
Willie Mays	Barack Obama	2015

And, while not a former professional baseball player, Vin Scully, who as mentioned above played for Fordham against Poppy Bush’s Yale nine, was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Obama in 2016 in recognition of his baseball broadcasting career. Interestingly, President Obama had previously (in 2010) awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom to George H.W. Bush—“for his nearly 70 years of service to his country.” So, Bush and Scully are connected in several ways—each served in the Navy in World War Two before embarking on college; each played in and went 0-for-3 in that Yale-Fordham game; each received the George H.W. Bush Distinguished Alumnus Award; and each received the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Baseball cards have been associated with baseball for well over a century. An ambition for many an aspiring baseball player is having one’s picture on a bonafide baseball card. As mentioned above, Yale’s Frank Quinn received that honor with his 1951 Bowman baseball card. Non-players have also been honored

with baseball cards such as MLB Commissioner Ford Frick and NL and AL presidents Warren Giles and Will Harridge, respectively; each of these baseball executives was honored with a Topps baseball card one or more times in the 1956–59 sets. As pointed out previously, George Bush was honored by Topps in 1990 by its issuance of a baseball card—produced specifically for him, but not for sale to the general public—in recognition of his collegiate baseball performance and his becoming president of the USA. Subsequently, numerous other baseball cards honoring George H.W. Bush have been put out by various trading card companies.⁴⁵ And, in 2013, Topps produced another 1990 George Bush baseball card that was *available to the general public* via the 2013 Topps Archives Baseball set.^{46,47,48,49,50}

Another baseball card honoring George H.W. Bush is the one produced in 1999 for the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum (located in College Station, Texas). This card was given out on March 22, 1999, to those persons who visited the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum for a special exhibit on President Bush and Baseball. Appendix G provides images of the front and back of this baseball card. The front of the card displays a photo of Bush in his Yale baseball uniform (but without a cap), the seal of the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum in the upper-right corner, and two lines of text at the bottom—“George Bush” and “Yale...First Base.” The back of the card, which also has the seal of the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum, presents Bush’s statistics, as shown in Table 6, with the heading “George Bush—Yale...First Base,” followed by text describing his prep school and collegiate playing career, and the following: “From 1950 to 1951 Bush played on Shell’s Midland, Texas, softball team.” An article by Kelly Brown about this special card states that Hilton Ladner, one of Bush’s teammates at Shell Oil, told them that Bush was not even an employee of Shell, but that he only wanted to play.⁵¹ Ladner recalled the day when a tall stranger with a Yankee accent showed up at the practice field to try out for the team. Ladner said, “Well, he was darn good. He could throw and catch and hit. He had what it takes to be a good ballplayer. We knew nothing about his background, but we wanted him on the team.” With regard to the statistics given for Bush on the back of the card, note they are exactly the same as the yearly and total stats from my research as shown in Table 4 and as reported in 1989 in *Baseball Quarterly Reviews* and in 1991 in *USA Today Baseball Weekly*.^{52,53}

**Table 6. Batting and Fielding Record of George Bush—
Presidential Library and Museum Baseball Card:
“George Bush—Yale, First Base”**

YR	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	SB	AVG	FLD%
1946	17	52	9	11	0	6	1	.212	.986
1947	28	101	16	21	0	5	6	.208	.971
1948	31	110	18	27	1	17	2	.245	.993
TOTAL	76	263	43	59	1	28	9	.224	.983

That card issued by the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum states that George H.W. Bush’s baseball career spanned three decades (1940s, 1950s, and 1960s). But the card could have included some diamond events from the 1980s, as well:

- A) As already mentioned, on April 3, 1989, President Bush became the very first President of the USA to throw an Opening Day ceremonial first pitch—from the pitcher’s mound.
- B) July 13, 1984, George Herbert Walker “Poppy” Bush became what we assume to be the first Vice President—and future President—to actively participate in an old timers baseball game—at Mile High Stadium in Denver. He and some of the old timers chanced to meet at the hotel where Bush was staying during the Colorado State Republican Convention.⁵⁴ One thing led to another, strings were pulled, hoops were jumped through—and before anyone other than a select few knew it, Vice President Bush, wearing a Denver Bears uniform (with number 31 on the back, the number last worn by pitcher Jim Siwy in 1983), was announced as a batter in the fourth inning for the American League team. What follows is a brief composite summary of VP Bush’s participation in the game, derived from several (sometimes disparate) accounts and recollections.^{55–65}

Top of the Fourth Inning (American League at bat):

- Milt Pappas pitching for the National League.
- Moose Skowron singled to right field.
- VP George Bush came up to bat; Warren Spahn replaced Pappas on the mound; Pappas stayed on the field, standing behind the mound. VP Bush popped the ball up behind the mound; Pappas caught the ball and then (purposely) dropped it. VP Bush, who had run to first, was given a Mulligan and called back

to the plate. Pappas then went back to the mound to pitch to VP Bush. The first pitch was a (swinging) strike; the second pitch was a ball. On the third pitch, VP Bush hit a ground ball up the middle for a single. Jimmy Piersall was sent in as a pinch runner for VP Bush, but was waved back.

- Earl Battey hit into a fielder’s-choice-force-out, VP Bush being retired at second base.
- Billy Martin hit into a double play to end the inning.

Top of the Fifth Inning (American League at bat):

- VP Bush took the field for the National League, playing first base, replacing Ernie Banks. Pappas was the pitcher.
- Luke Appling hit a single to right field.
- Bobby Richardson hit into a fielder’s-choice-force-out.
- Jose Cardenal doubled to right field, Richardson advancing to third base.
- Minnie Minoso hit the ball to deep center field, getting a triple and batting in Richardson and Cardenal.
- Brooks Robinson grounded to the third baseman, Ron Santo, who threw to VP Bush to retire Robinson.
- Tony Oliva hit a grounder to VP Bush, who fielded the ball and threw to Pappas covering first for the third out.

In the game account published in the *Denver Post*, Kevin Widlic wrote, “The Vice President later played in the field, where he robbed Tony Oliva of a base hit with a backhanded stop of a hard grounder at first base.” The account also included a quote by Milt Pappas—“He made a terrific play.” Widlic’s article also had the following: “Bush fielded both chances flawlessly in the fifth, the first on a throw from Ron Santo at third, and the second drawing another tingling roar. Oliva smashed a grounder down the first base line, but Bush reacted well, going to his left and knocking the ball down. He recovered and flipped it to Pappas for the inning-ending out.”⁶⁶

Kevin Simpson and Jim Benton of the *Rocky Mountain News* described Bush's fielding in this way: "In the fifth, Bush, playing first base, produced the most memorable moment of his vice-presidency when he went to his left (what, you thought he could only go to his right?) to back-hand a vicious Tony Oliva grounder, robbing the former Twins star of a sure hit by flipping to pitcher Pappas covering first."⁶⁷

In a UPI communication, Jim Burris, the longtime general manager of the Denver Bears commented: "I just couldn't believe that any politician could look that comfortable out there and have that kind of athletic ability. It was obvious that he had played before. You could just tell, the way he shifted his feet and changed position, depending on whether there were men on base or whether the batter was a left-hander."⁶⁸

In an article pursuant to an interview with George H.W. Bush, seven months after the old-timers game, M. Charles Bakst reported what Vice-President Bush said about his playing first base in that game: "I did have my glasses, and they gave me a mitt, a brand new first-baseman's mitt. I'm a left hander. Went out there. The first guy grounded out. The shortstop threw him out; I managed to catch the ball all right. We got another guy; somehow there was another out." And then there was what Bush remembered as an exquisite moment. A batter (whom he thought was Orlando Cepeda) smashed a ball over toward first. Said the revved-up Vice President: "Went to my left. Knocked the ball down. I should have had it clean. And Pappas comes across and covers first and we threw him out and the place was really thrilled with me."⁶⁹

Yet another account of "THE Fielding Play" was provided by Tom Boswell in an article in the *Washington Post*, based on his March 1989 interview of President Bush (i.e., nearly five years after the game). Warren Spahn and Bill Dickey had needled Bush into playing in an old-timers game at Denver. As Bush recalled: "When Tony Oliva came up the second baseman kept yelling at me, 'Get back.' I said, 'Back? I'm on the damned grass. Whaddaya want?' But the second baseman said, 'Back. This guy can still hit.' And damn if Oliva didn't pull one right down the line." The President's memory of the play is that he just wishes he had had his McQuinn Trapper: "My excuse on this part is I had a brand new mitt—knocked the ball down—should have had it clean."⁷⁰

Some twenty years after the historic old-timers game, Bush's daughter, Doro Bush Koch, in her 2006 book, *My Father, My President: A Personal Account of the Life of George H. W. Bush*, wrote that, based on the remembrance of Sean Coffey, the VP's personal aide

at the time (who was watching from the third base side), "Bush put on a glove and headed out to first base, his old position at Yale. 'The best was yet to come,' said Sean, because 'who was up but Orlando Cepeda [sic: should be Tony Oliva], who was known for hitting line drives. Sure enough, he hits a rocket down the right field line. If it had hit somebody in the head, it would have taken their head off. As it was, it looked like it was going into the right field corner for a double—but that was before first baseman Bush jumps to his left. He dives for it, knocks the ball down, gets up, scrambles into foul territory, turns around, and lobs a perfect underhand pitch to the pitcher covering first. Orlando Cepeda [sic: Tony Oliva] is out. Mile High Stadium erupted in cheers."⁷¹

And, three decades after the Dream Play in Denver, Bush's oldest son, George W. Bush, in his 2014 book, *41—A Portrait of My Father*, wrote the following: "Dad held his own in the field as well. Orlando Cepeda [sic: Oliva], a Hall of Fame slugger who played most of his years for the San Francisco Giants, hit a rocket down the first-base line. Dad made a slick play, stabbing the hot shot and tossing the ball to the pitcher to beat Cepeda [sic: Oliva] to the bag. I still remember his look of joy as he jogged back to the dugout."⁷²

At this point, it is appropriate to go back in time a few decades and mention an item from the May 24, 1946, issue of the *Yale News Digest* about the Bulldogs 9–6 victory over Amherst.⁷³ In the "Diamond Dust" subsection of the article is the following: "Poppy Bush turned in the fielding gem of the year on Don Butler's smash in the fifth. It would take an entire column to explain how he did it. Suffice to say, he took a two-base hit away from Butler with a backhand grab of a sizzler."

With respect to Bush's base hit, here are some of the descriptions of his historic one-baser:

- Kevin Widlic provided two descriptions of the Bush bingle: (a) "Vice President George Bush turned Mile High Stadium upside down and stole the show when he pinch hit and grounded a sharp single to center field during Friday night's Denver Dream old-timers baseball game." (b) "Following a swing and a miss, Bush bounced a clean single up the middle." The *Denver Post* reporter also included a quote by Milt Pappas: "It was one of the highlights of my career, my life, whatever. I made him a hero."⁷⁴
- The *Rocky Mountain News* team of Kevin Simpson and Jim Benton provided the following

account of Bush's single: "In the fourth, George Bush, a former college player, became the first player ever to pinch hit on two consecutive at bats. On the first, he popped to second base. On the second try, he cracked a 1-1 pitch up the middle for a base hit."⁷⁵

- In his February 26, 1985, interview with M. Charles Bakst, Vice President Bush described his base knock as follows: "Pappas grooved one and I hit it. I hadn't swung a bat in, God, how many years. I hit it crisp, right through the middle for a single. People actually cheered and stuff when I got the single."⁷⁶
- Doro Bush Koch wrote, "Milt Pappas, the great All-Star pitcher, pitched to Dad. Then Dad hit a sharp single to center field and made it to first base."⁷⁷ And George W. Bush wrote, "When he came to bat against former Baltimore Orioles and Chicago Cubs pitcher Milt Pappas, a three-time All-Star who had pitched a no-hitter, he slapped a single into right field. It certainly didn't hurt that Milt served up a fat fastball for the Vice President to hit."⁷⁸

Summing up her father's opportunity to "play with the superstars," Doro Bush Koch wrote: "'A Walter Mitty night for me,' Dad told one of the interviewers as he came off the field with a smile, referring to James Thurber's mild-mannered character who dreams of being a fearless hero."⁷⁹

Finally, just recently, a blockbuster consequence of Vice President Bush's performance in the old timers game has surfaced.⁸⁰ On July 13, 2017, exactly 34 years after the historic game the following surprising item was posted on the reddit website: "The Detroit Tigers once offered Vice President George H.W. Bush a playing contract (for \$1) after seeing him play in the 1984 Old Timers Game in Denver."

The posting consisted of seven images—correspondence (or copies of correspondence) from August and September, 1984, involving Bobby Brown, the president of the American League, Jim Campbell, the president and chief executive officer of the Detroit Tigers, George Bush, the Vice President of the USA, and Peter Teeley, the press secretary of Vice President Bush. Here, in chronological order, are transcriptions of the letters (images) which were posted on the reddit website; copies of the posted images are shown in Appendix H).

On August 27, 1984, Bobby Brown sent a letter to Jim Campbell saying, "Would you mind having Alice

type this on Detroit stationery and send it to my friend George Bush?"; see Figure 3.

The American League logo in the letterhead is in full red-white-blue color, suggesting that the letter offered in the auction is the original (and not a photocopy). The "Alice" mentioned by Brown was Alice Sloane, who was Jim Campbell's secretary and right-hand "man" for decades.⁸¹

The enclosure referred to by the AL president is the Campbell-to-Bush letter shown in Figure 4A. This version of the letter was written by Brown, not Campbell.

Apparently going along with Bobby Brown's intended prank, Jim Campbell slightly edited and reformatted the letter to Vice President Bush; see Figure 4B.

The "JAC" certainly means that the letter was seemingly written by James A. Campbell, the President and Chief Executive Officer of the Detroit Tigers. The "/as" means that the letter was typed by Alice Sloane. However, this letter appears to be a "draft" letter (or a copy of a draft letter) because (a) it is

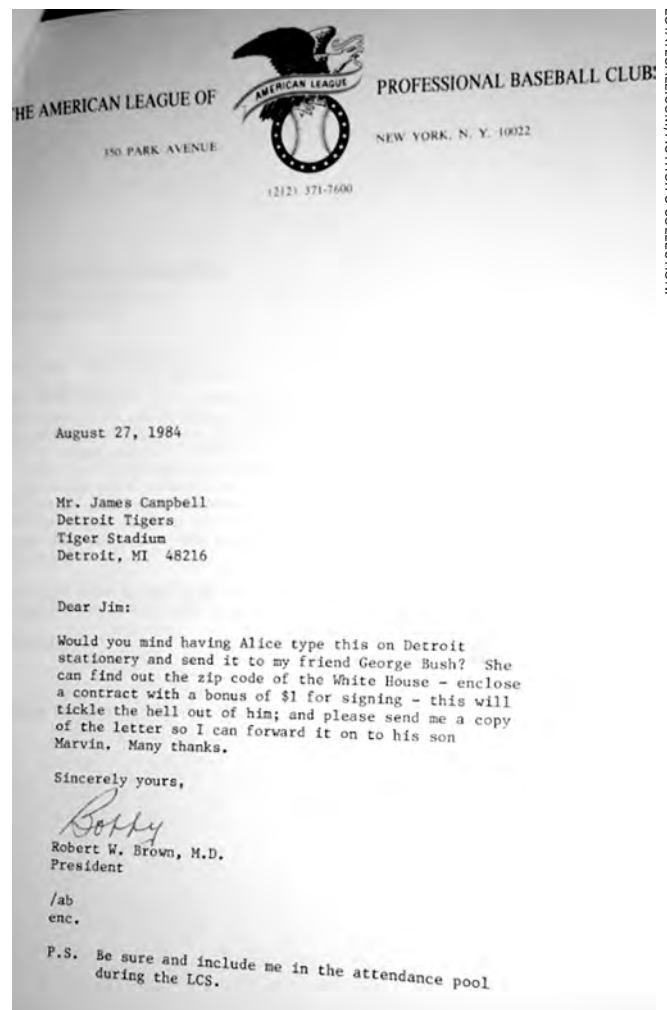


Figure 3. Letter from Robert W. (Bobby) Brown to James A. (Jim) Campbell, dated August 27, 1984.

not typed on “Detroit Baseball Club” stationery; and (b) it is not signed. It also does not (yet) have the Zip Code of the White House; see Figure 4A. The major differences between the Figure 4A letter (Brown version) and the Figure 4B letter (Campbell version) are: (1) the first paragraph was divided into three paragraphs; (2) “farm director” was replaced by “Special Assignment Scout”; (3) “scouting report” was changed to “report”; (4) “1st round” was changed for “first round” (5) “Amateur Draft” was changed to “amateur draft”; (6) “uniform baseball contract” was replaced by “Uniform Player’s Contract”; (7) “consideration, and hope” was changed to “consideration. We hope”; and (8) “anticipation and will” was changed to “anticipation. We will”. There were also a few commas added or deleted.

Shown in Figure 5 is the enclosure referred to in the (final?) draft of the Campbell-to-Vice President Bush letter, i.e., the first page of the Uniform Player’s Contract between the Detroit Baseball Club and George Bush.

While Jim Campbell agreed to assist Bobby Brown with this prank, he made sure to cover himself and the Detroit Tigers by (apparently) sending the contract and cover letter to Mr. Peter Teeley, the Press Secretary for Vice President Bush. The letter from Campbell to Teeley is shown in Figure 6. Curiously, it is noted that, while the letter is on Detroit Tigers stationery and signed by Jim Campbell, the White House zip code is still not included.

What a prank! Was the prank actually pulled off?

I provided scans of the Figure 3 to 6 items to the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum and asked if an archivist could please check their holdings for anything related to the prank contract and cover letter. Archivist Micelle Bogart conducted the search, but was unable to locate any pertinent records in the item-level inventory of records from the White House Office of Records Management (WHORM). She also physically searched through the correspondence received by Mr. Bush when he was Vice President, as well as correspondence received when he was President, but was unable to locate anything related to the prank contract. She provided the this caveat: “That does not mean, however, that we do not have the letters somewhere. Also, in case you are not aware, the White House Office of Records Management does not save all correspondence sent to the president or vice president. A random sampling of public mail is kept and eventually makes it to the National Archives. But, we do not have all correspondence ever received. Even if we do not have a copy of these letters in our records, that does not mean the letters were never received at the White House.”⁸²

Vice President George Bush
The White House
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. Vice President:

Special Assignment Scout

Our ~~farm director~~ Hoot Evers recently received a ~~scouting~~ report on your performance in the Denver, Colorado Old Timers Game. The Detroit Tigers definitely feel that you have all the qualifications to become a major league player. While we recognize that you have only average speed, your fielding and batting skills coupled with your excessive enthusiasm and hustle virtually assures you of being a 1st round draft choice in the June 1985 Amateur Draft. We are therefore enclosing a Detroit Tiger uniform baseball contract for your consideration, and hope that our offer will be enticing enough to lure you away from politics.

We await your answer with great anticipation and will have one of our scouts discuss this with you and your family if you desire.

Sincerely,

James Campbell

Figure 4A. The Bobby Brown version of the Campbell-to-Bush letter, undated.

September 5, 1984

Vice President George Bush
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Vice President:

Our Special Assignment Scout Hoot Evers recently received a report on your performance in the Denver, Colorado, Old Timers Game. The Detroit Tigers definitely feel that you have all the qualifications to become a major league player.

While we recognize that you have only average speed, your fielding and batting skills, coupled with your excessive enthusiasm and hustle, virtually assures you of being a first round draft choice in the June 1985 Amateur Draft.

We are, therefore, enclosing a Detroit Tiger Uniform Player's Contract for your consideration. We hope that our offer will be enticing enough to lure you away from politics.

We await your answer with great anticipation. We will have one of our scouts discuss this with you and your family if you desire.

Sincerely,

JAC/as
Enclosure

Figure 4B. The Jim Campbell version of the Campbell-to-Bush letter, dated September 5, 1984.

I also sent an email to the person who submitted the images to the reddit site (“odor31”), asking about the provenance and authenticity of the letters. I received a prompt reply, stating, “Found them currently up for auction. American Eagle Auction & Appraisal.” Upon googling “American Eagle Auction & Appraisal,” I found the items on EstateSale.com for a “Super Auction” scheduled for August 19 at the Washtenaw Farm Council Fairgrounds, in Ann Arbor, Michigan, with the following headline: “The Incredible Collection of Detroit Tigers Public Relations Director, Dan Ewald.”

REDDIT; AUTHOR'S COLLECTION.

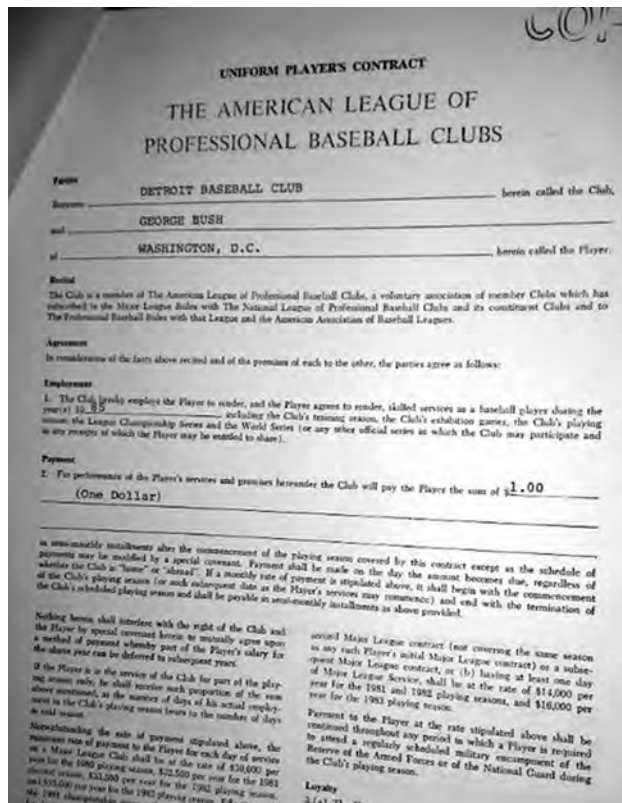


Figure 5. The First Page of the Uniform Player's Contract Between the Detroit Baseball Club and George Bush.

REDDIT; AUTHOR'S COLLECTION.

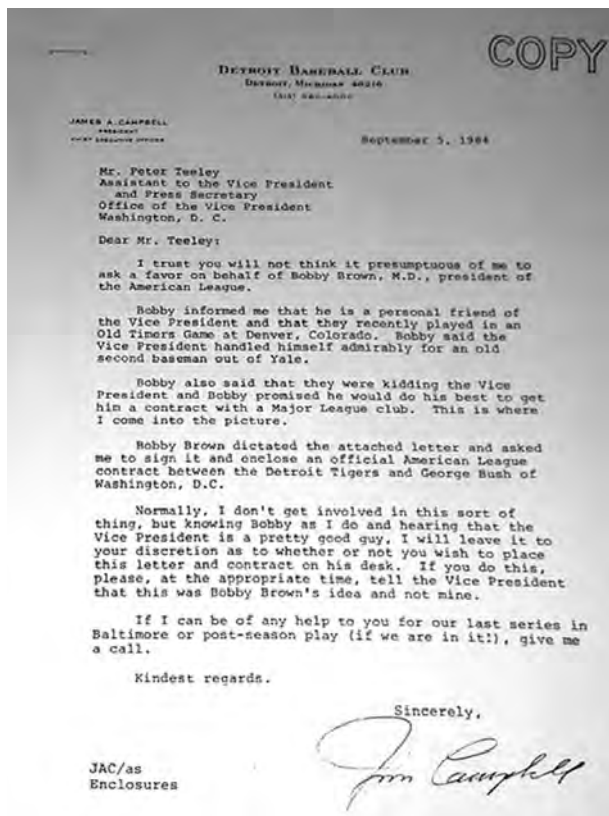


Figure 6. Letter from James (Jim) Campbell to Mr. Peter Teeley, dated September 5, 1984.

The auction “catalog” listed 638 items, including the seven images posted on reddit.

The following overall description was also provided: “The vast majority of this collection came from the extensive collection of former Detroit Tigers Public Relations Director, Dan Ewald. Prior to spending nearly two-decades with the Detroit Tigers, he was a baseball writer for *The Detroit News*. Ewald is the author of 13 sports books with such luminaries as Sparky [Anderson], Bo Schembechler, Al Kaline, George Kell and Ron Kramer. Throughout his career, he served as Sparky Anderson's confidante even after the two retired from the game. The prominence of the vast majority of this collection is truly unsurpassed. Many of the items were directly acquired from Sparky Anderson's and Jim Campbell's collection and executive office files at the defunct Tigers Stadium. Jim Campbell was the longest serving General Manager in baseball history. He served as an executive, General Manager and President of the Detroit Tigers from 1949–92.”

So at this time, here's where we are.

- On July 13, 2017, we learned—thanks to the reddit posting by Alex Maki (Auburn Hills, Michigan) that “The Detroit Tigers once offered Vice President George H.W. Bush a playing contract (for \$1) after seeing him play in the 1984 Old Timers Game in Denver.”
- It is reasonable to conclude that the items shown in Figures 3–6 are authentic and were obtained by Dan Ewald from Jim Campbell, who received the Bobby Brown letter and enclosure and then generated his letters to Vice President Bush and Peter Teeley and also filled in the first page of the Uniform Player's Contract.
- It seems, based on the items shown in Figures 3–6, that steps were apparently taken by AL president Bobby Brown and Detroit Tigers president and chief executive officer Jim Campbell to pull a baseball contract prank on Vice President George Bush shortly after he participated in the old-timers game in Denver on July 31, 1984. I had the opportunity on July 31, 2017, to relate all of the information to Dr. Bobby Brown in a telephone conversation with him. I then asked him if he was familiar with any of it. He replied that while he didn't recall it, it sounded like him, like something he would have done.⁸³

- Subsequently, after I provided copies of Figures 3–6 to Dr. Brown, he wrote a letter to me (dated August 7, 2017) with the following statements: “There is no doubt about the ‘prank.’ I definitely participated to its fullest in the ‘caper.’ I knew all the people involved and all were good friends.”⁸⁴ I called Dr. Brown on August 10, 2017, and asked him if he recalled ever getting any feedback from Vice President Bush about the contract and offer letter. Dr. Brown said that he could not remember getting any feedback, but added that he and George Bush are good, long-time friends who played a lot of tennis together (both as doubles partners and opponents) and that something might have been mentioned then, but he couldn’t remember anything specific.⁸⁵ Thus, we know that the contract offer was legit (albeit a good-natured spoof between good friends).
- It is not known if the letter from Jim Campbell to Peter Teeley (Figure 6) was actually mailed, although it seems reasonable that it was because a “COPY” of the letter (rather than the actual letter) was in the file possessed by Dan Ewald. Likewise, it is not known if Peter Teeley actually received the letter. If the letter was not sent or received, the story is over.
- If, however, the letter (Figure 6)—with the enclosures (Figures 4B and 5)—was sent by Campbell and was received by Teeley, it is not known what Teeley did with the letter and the enclosures. If, using his discretion, Teeley discarded the letter and the enclosures, the story is finished.
- If, however, using his discretion, Teeley gave the enclosures to Vice President Bush (i.e., “placed the letter and contract on his desk”), the story continues.
- No evidence has yet been found to support the possibility that Vice President Bush did receive the Detroit Tigers offer letter (Figure 4B) and contract (Figure 5). So, if Vice President Bush did receive the letter and contract, it is still unknown what his reaction was and what he did or said about it. He could have simply enjoyed the prank and kept it to himself. That certainly is his prerogative. Or, if he did

comment on it to Bobby Brown, Jim Campbell, or a family member, it has been kept private and/or forgotten about. George H.W. Bush did not even mention his participation in the July 13, 1984, old timers game in his autobiography. Similarly there has been no mention of such an offer letter and contract in any of the several biographies (and autobiography) of George Herbert Walker Bush included in Reference 5.

- In spite of the lack of a definitive ending to the story, one way or the other, the story is indeed fascinating. Perhaps more sleuthing will eventually come up with the rest of the story.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

My research on the collegiate baseball career of George Herbert Walker “Poppy” Bush reveals that he played three seasons (not two) at Yale and assembled a “good-field-poor-hit” performance as a first baseman for the Bulldog-nine—a career fielding average of .983 (not .981) and a career batting average of .224 with one home run in 76 games (not .251 with two homers in 51 games).⁸⁶

While Poppy’s “on-the-field” numbers at Yale did not put him on a path to play major league baseball, his “more-than-just-numbers” contributions to Yale’s diamond accomplishments, in combination with his subsequent success in the business world and service in government, did produce an illustrious legacy of awards and honors bearing his name. And, George Herbert Walker Bush was also the first President of the United States of America to (1) throw a ceremonial Opening Day pitch from the pitcher’s mound, (2) to appear on a bonafide baseball card, and (3) while serving as the Vice President, to have played in a major league old-timers baseball game.

Perhaps the most salient finding that emerged from my research endeavor is that Poppy was the starting first baseman in all 76 games the Elis had from 1946 through 1948—including the first two College World Series in 1947 and 1948. Such Iron Man consistency is in perfect alignment with one of Poppy’s baseball idols—Hall of Fame first baseman Lou “The Iron Horse” Gehrig. Furthermore, Bush’s day-in-day-out diamond participation also fit right in with what President Ronald Reagan expounded in his address at the 1988 Republican National Convention. Summing up his administration’s accomplishments and affirming his endorsement and support of the Vice-President to be the next President, Reagan proclaimed, “George [Bush] was there!”⁸⁷

Clearly, baseball has been an important and enduring component in the makeup of the person who became the forty-first President of the United States of America. This was expressed by Mr. Bush in his 1988 autobiography, *Looking Forward*, in describing his collegiate path: “I was majoring in the ‘dismal science,’ economics, but I didn’t find it dismal at all. I enjoyed the work, studied hard, and did well enough in class to earn Phi Beta Kappa and other honors. Technically my minor was sociology, but only technically. My real minors, as far as my attention span went, were soccer and baseball. Especially baseball.”⁸⁸

Finally, to close this article, it is appropriate to mention a baseball-related quotation by George Herbert Walker “Poppy” Bush—“Baseball is just the great American pastime. It’s just got everything.”⁸⁹ ■

Acknowledgments

I gratefully thank the following persons for their fantastic cooperation in providing me with helpful information and/or guidance in a timely manner: Joel Alderman, Larry Annis, Michelle Bogart, Dr. Bobby Brown, M.D., Ryan Cracknell, Dan Ewald, Jr., Raelee Frazier, Vince Gennaro, Karl Green, Bruce Hellerstein, Chris Jones, Cassidy Lent, Len Levin, Julia W. Logan, Norman L. Macht, Alex Maki, Cody McMillan, Hanna Q. Parris, Jay Patton, Emily Perdue, Jacob Pomrenke, Paul Rogers, Sam Rubin, Hanna Soltys, Gary Stone, Morgan Swan, and Jim Wohlenhaus. Also, I reiterate my thanks to those persons whose contributions were very helpful to me when I did the bulk of the statistical research in the late 1980s: Jane Antis, Carol Cofrancesco, Dick Gentile, Stephen Newton, Tom Shea, Dick Thompson, Steve Ulrich, and Chuck Yrigoyen.

Notes

1. For a comprehensive list of the Opening Day games in which the sitting President did (or did not) attend and throw out the ceremonial first pitch for the seasons from 1910 through 1992, see: William B. Mead and Paul Dickson, *Baseball: The Presidents’ Game* (Washington: Farragut Publishing Co., 1993). Mead and Dickson state, “The bulk of this list was compiled by L. Robert Davids, founder of the Society for American Baseball Research.” For information on the Presidents who threw ceremonial first pitches from 1993 through 2009, see: “Ceremonial First Pitch,” en.wikipedia.org (retrieved July 26, 2017). The Wikipedia article carries the forewarning: “This article has multiple issues.” For brief synopses of the connections between baseball and U.S. Presidents from George Washington to Donald Trump, see: John Thorn, “Our Baseball Presidents,” <https://ourgame.mlb.com>, February 26, 2014 (retrieved July 25, 2017) and “Our Baseball Presidents, Part 2,” <https://ourgame.mlb.com>, February 28, 2014 (retrieved July 25, 2017). For an alternative list of Presidents and Baseball from Washington to Trump (with links to “Quotations” and “Attendance”), see “U.S. Presidents & Major League Baseball,” baseball-almanac.com (retrieved July 26, 2017).
2. As shown in the youtube video of this historic event, catcher Mickey Tettleton stood at the edge of the dirt in front of the plate (instead of in the catcher’s box behind the plate) to receive the pitch. See: “President Bush Throws Out First Pitch,” <https://www.youtube.com>, February 11, 2015 uploaded by MLB (retrieved July 1, 2017). It should also be pointed out that President Ronald Reagan was actually the first President to throw a ceremonial first pitch from the pitcher’s mound—at an otherwise “meaningless” *end-of-the-regular-season game* on Friday afternoon, September 30, 1988, between the fourth-place Chicago Cubs (75–84) and the second-place Pittsburgh Pirates (84–73) at Wrigley Field. As shown in a youtube video, Reagan, wearing a shiny, blue Cubs jacket, performed the honor, hurling the ball to Cubs catcher Damon Berryhill (who also stood at the edge of the grass in front of the plate). See: “President Reagan Throws Out the First Pitch at a Chicago Cubs Baseball Game on September 30, 1988,” <https://www.youtube.com>,



Presidential baseball artifacts on display at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in Cooperstown.

- November 30, 2016—uploaded by Reagan Library (retrieved July 1, 2017). See also: Alan Solomon, “Tribune Flashback: Sept. 30, 1988—A Reagan Visit to Wrigley,” articles.chicagotribune.com, June 7, 2004 (retrieved July 15, 2017).
3. Some of the information provided in the current article was presented in my previous report—Herman Krabbenhof, “George Herbert Walker Bush—Iron Man First Sacker at Yale,” *Baseball Quarterly Reviews*, Volume 4, Number 3, (Fall 1989) 101–15.
4. (a) “Lieutenant Junior Grade George Bush, USNR,” Naval Historical Center, April 6, 2001 (retrieved June 28, 2017); (b) Josh Harper, “A Campus Transformed: UNC During the Second World War,” northcarolinahistory.org (retrieved June 28, 2017); (c) Alanna Kaplan, “‘Poppy’ Bush: ‘He Didn’t Have a Whimpy Bone in His Body,’” *Yale Daily News* (#15, September 27, 1988) 3.
5. (a) “George H.W. Bush, Early Life and Education,” Wikipedia (references 3 and 4, retrieved July 2, 2017); (b) George Bush (with Victor Gold), *Looking Forward—an Autobiography* (New York: Bantam Books 1988); (c) Tom Wicker, *George Herbert Walker Bush* (New York: Viking Press, 2004); (d) Doro Bush Koch, *My Father, My President: A Personal Account of the Life of George H. W. Bush* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2006); (e) Timothy Naftali, *George H.W. Bush: The American Presidents Series: The 41st President, 1989–1993* (New York: Times Books, 2007); (f) George W. Bush, *41—A Portrait of My Father* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2014); (g) John H. Sununu, *The Quiet Man—The Indispensable Presidency of George H.W. Bush* (New York: Broadside Books, 2015); (h) Jon Meacham, *Destiny and Power—The American Odyssey of George Herbert Walker Bush* (New York: Random House, 2015).
6. “74 Candidates Turn Out For First Baseball Practice Sessions,” *Yale News Digest* (# 32, March 12, 1946) 1.

7. The origin of "Poppy" as George H.W. Bush's nickname is described in *Looking Forward* on page 28—" [My] grandfather Walker's sons, i.e. my uncles, called him 'Pop,' and started calling me 'Little Pop' and 'Poppy.' That was all right for a small boy, said my father, but it just wouldn't do as a nickname that might follow me through life. Dad usually had a good crystal ball, but this time he was wrong." However, "Poppy" certainly did accompany Bush at Yale, as evidenced by the frequent use of "Poppy" in describing Bush's performance in the articles published in the *Yale Daily News*. In a May 31, 1996, article by Woody Anderson for the *Hartford Courant*, "At the Inaugural Series, A President in the Lineup," the following items were presented: (a) "[Teammate Jim] Duffus said the nickname Poppy came from Bush's grandfather. He was a favorite of his grandfather, who was named Poppy, and followed him around. He was known as Poppy's boy and it was shortened to Poppy. We never heard people say George." (b) "Art Moher was Yale's junior shortstop in 1947. He said Bush was a 'Punch-and-Judy hitter, but an outstanding fielder.' Moher said, 'We always said to Poppy, 'Don't lose the glove.'" The given first name of one of George H.W. Bush's great granddaughters (second daughter of Jenna Bush Hager) is Poppy—in homage.
8. "Eli Baseball Team Points For Opener With Connecticut," *Yale News Digest* (#34, March 19, 1946) 1.
9. "Baseball Team Points For First Game With Connecticut Here Next Week," *Yale News Digest* (#39, April 05, 1946) 1.
10. "Yale Baseball Team Opens Season Tomorrow Against Connecticut U.," *Yale News Digest* (#41, April 12, 1946) 1. Having won the starting first base job for the Bulldogs, George H.W. Bush was following in the footsteps of his father—Prescott Sheldon Bush had been a star first baseman and batted cleanup on the 1917 Yale baseball team: (a) George W. Bush, 41—*A Portrait of My Father*; (b) Mead and Dickson, *Baseball: The Presidents' Game*.
11. On April 18 Yale played a game versus the Kings Point Merchant Marines. At that time (right after World War II), Kings Point was a training center for the Merchant Marines; it did not become a degree-granting institution (academy) until 1949. Bush was the starting first baseman for the Elis and went 0-for-4; the Bulldogs lost the encounter, 4–3.
12. This quotation is taken from the game account written by John J. Leary, Jr. for the *New Haven Evening Register*, April 14, 1946.
13. Ibid.
14. The only other game in the 1946 season in which Bush did not play in its entirety was the one on May 25 at Holy Cross. Coach Allen elected to pinch hit for Bush in the top of the ninth inning; Bill Howe flied out. Since the Elis were in process of losing the game, they did not have to take the field in the bottom of the ninth.
15. Yale also played two "exhibition" games in 1947. Neither of these exhibition contests was included in the full-season schedule. (1) Against "Equitable" on April 14. Bush was the starting first baseman for the Bulldogs and went 0-for-2; the Elis lost the contest, 3–0. (2) Versus the "Yale Club" (an aggregation of Bulldogs stars of yesteryear) on May 30, against whom Bush produced a 2–2–1–3 batting line, including a home run. Bush's uncle, Lou Walker, pitched for the alumni team. In a letter to SABR member Norman L. Macht, Bush wrote, "Norm – Lou claims the 'strike-out'; but the record book shows me homering off him—one of 2 homers I got all year—So much for the 'K.'" See Appendix J for a copy of the letter.
16. Hugh Fullerton, Jr., *New Haven Evening Register*, June 29, 1947.
17. Paraphrased from *Looking Forward* by George Bush (with Victor Gold), Bantam Books: New York, 1988, 44.
18. *New Haven Evening Register*, April 4, 1948.
19. *Looking Forward* by George Bush (with Victor Gold), 42.
20. Final standings and records: Dartmouth (7–1–0); Navy (7–2–0); Yale (6–3–0); Army (5–3–0); Cornell (3–4–0); Columbia (3–5–0); Pennsylvania (3–5–0); Princeton (3–6–0); Harvard (2–4–0); Brown (0–6–0). There are a couple of "curiosities" about the 1948 EIBL season. While Dartmouth emerged as the EIBL champion with its 7–1–0 record (it's only loss being inflicted by Yale), it was not invited to participate in the NCAA Eastern Regional Tournament. Instead, Yale, with a W–L–T record of 6–2–0—before the NCAA Eastern Regional Tournament commenced—was invited. Here's the relevant information as reported in the June 09 issue of the *New York Times* [Dateline—Hamilton, NY, June 8 (AP)], "Yale was named today to represent District 1 at the National Collegiate Athletic Association's Eastern baseball tournament at Winston-Salem, N.C., June 15 to 17. Yale, last year's champion of the four districts, was selected by Prof. Walter Snell of Brown University, NCAA selection committee chairman." With regard to the selection criteria, I was unable to ascertain precisely what they were. Neither the Ivy League (which replaced the EIBL in 1954), nor Yale University, nor Dartmouth University were able to provide the information. Here's what is given on Wikipedia (retrieved July 16, 2017): 1947—In the sub-heading "Field" is this: "The tournament field was determined by regional committees, some of whom held playoffs, while others selected specific conference champions, and still others simply selected their representatives." 1948—In the sub-heading "Field" is this: "As with the inaugural tournament, each representative of the eight districts was determined by a mix of selection committees, conference champions, and district play-offs." While the *New York Times* article did mention the teams comprising Districts 2 (Rutgers, Navy, Lafayette, and West Virginia), 3 (George Washington, North Carolina, Georgia Tech, and Alabama), and 4 (Illinois, Michigan, Ohio University, and Western Michigan), the teams making up District 1 with Yale were not given. I was not able to determine who the other District 1 teams were in 1948. So, for 1948, since there were no playoffs for District 1, Yale was simply selected (even though it was not and could not be the EIBL champion). Then, after the Bulldogs had won the NCAA Eastern Regional Tournament, Yale played its final EIBL game—against Harvard—which the Elis lost, giving them its final EIBL W–L–T ledger of 6–3–0, which established the Bulldogs as the third-best team in the EIBL. It is mentioned that the Yale-Harvard game on June 21 was originally scheduled as the annual "reunion game" between the two arch rivals; it was not supposed to be an EIBL game. However, when the originally-scheduled EIBL game between Yale and Harvard was rained out, the reunion game became the EIBL game as well. It should be noted that Dartmouth also had an EIBL game rained out—May 21 versus Army. However, as it turned out, due to various schedule conflicts, that game was not made up. Finally, in a summary of Dartmouth's 1948 baseball season, Dave Jones wrote for the 1949 *Aegis* (Dartmouth Yearbook): "Rebounding from a dismal 1947 season, the Dartmouth baseball team recaptured some former glory by winning the Ivy League Championship. Blessed with three veterans and six hustling and willing sophomores, Coach Jeremiah molded a team that won seven of eight games and 13 of 16 over-all with one game ending in a tie. The one loss was at the hands of Yale and the great Frank Quinn. Yale, in turn, lost three league games, but nevertheless represented District 1 in the post-season NCAA tournament—a decision that caused no little consternation among followers of Dartmouth's baseball fortunes. ... En route to Hamilton, NY, to play Colgate [June 09], the Dartmouth nine learned that Yale had been chosen for the NCAA tournament. A severe mental letdown followed [and Dartmouth lost the game, 1–7]." 21. Joel Alderman, "Babe Ruth a Part of Yale Field's Most Historic Moment," sportzedge.com, June 05, 2013 (retrieved June 28, 2017).
22. Matt Nadel, "A Baseball Interview with President George H.W. Bush," <https://baseballwithmatt.mlblogs.com>, November 02, 2014 (retrieved June 28, 2017).
23. Bill Koenig, "Bush Fielded Leadership Role at Yale," *USA Today Baseball Weekly*, Volume 1, Number 1 (April 5, 1991) 49.
24. M. Charles Bakst, "Talkin' Baseball for George Bush—Memories of the Babe and the Summer Game Warm the Chill of Winter," *Providence Journal*, March 3, 1985.
25. Stan Feur, "Bulldog Diamondmen Set to Face Lord Jeffs on Yale Field Today—Bush Doubtful Starter Due to Spike Wound," *Yale Daily News*, April 24, 1948.
26. In that April 6, game against Duke, the Blue Devils had built up a 9–0 lead within the first three innings. With the game's final outcome (apparently) already decided at such an early point, Yale coach Allen

- decided to take a good look at his bench and brought in a number of replacements, including a substitute for Bush. Gerry Breen took over for Bush in the fifth and finished with two at bats, no runs, no hits and seven putouts, one assist, and no errors at first base.
27. John J. Leary, Jr., *New Haven Register*, April 25, 1948.
28. George W. Bush, 41—*A Portrait of My Father*.
29. (a) Joe Orlando, "By George... It's Complicated—The 1990 Topps George Bush Baseball Card," *psacard.com*, July 9, 2013 (retrieved July 26, 2017); (b) "PSA Confirms Two Types of 1990 Topps George Bush Baseball Cards," *psacard.com*, July 9, 2013 (retrieved July 26, 2017); (c) Ryan Cracknell, "The Story of the 1990 Topps George Bush Baseball Card," *cardboard-connection.com* (retrieved July 26, 2017); (d) Bob Lemke, "1990 George Bush Reprint Created," *boblemkeblogspot.com*, February 21, 2013 (retrieved July 26, 2017).
30. Bill Koenig, "Bush Fielded Leadership Role at Yale," *USA Today Baseball Weekly*, Volume 1, Number 1, (April 5, 1991) 49. See also: George Vecsey, "Sports of the Times; Keep Moving, Mr. President," *The New York Times* (May 13, 1991)—Vecsey wrote that President Bush said this about himself, "Yes, very good fielder, not a very good hitter. Unfortunately, the record is out there. Somebody came up with the figures, .240—.250 range. Just because I batted eighth, that shouldn't be held against me. No, I wasn't much of a hitter."
31. Steve Lewis, "Former President Recalls Yale Baseball Days," Yale University Press Release, January 15, 2015. *www.yalebulldogs.com* (retrieved June 28, 2017.)
32. "Baseball Expert Challenges Yale Stats on 'Poppy' Bush," *USA Today Baseball Weekly*, Volume 1, Number 5, (May 03, 1991) 27. This article is based on a letter (April 18, 1991) from Herman Krabbenhoft to Paul White, Editor, *USA Today Baseball Weekly*. The major points stated in my letter were published in the article (without a by-line).
33. George Bush (with Victor Gold), *Looking Forward*, 42.
34. Rich Marazzi and Len Fiorito, *Baseball Players of the 1950s—A Biographical Dictionary of All 1,560 Major Leaguers* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009) 232.
35. Bill Nowlin, "Frank Quinn," SABR BioProject, *sabr.org* (retrieved July 01, 2017).
36. Pete Zanardi, "Dick Tettelbach," SABR BioProject, *sabr.org* (retrieved July 01, 2017).
37. Seymour Siwoff, *The Elias Book of Baseball Records* (New York: Seymour Siwoff, 2017) 384, 412.
38. Siwoff, *The Elias Book of Baseball Records*, 384, 410.
39. "2017 Blue Leadership Ball," *yalebulldogs.com* (retrieved July 07, 2017).
40. "New Alumnus Award to Honor Off-Field Accomplishments," *collegebaseballhall.org*, October 2, 2014 (retrieved June 28, 2017). See also the following press releases from the College Baseball Hall of Fame for the announcements of the subsequent recipients of the George H.W. Bush Distinguished Alumnus Award: *collegebaseballhall.org*, July 20, 2015 (Williams and Brown); October 02, 2015 (Scully); May 9, 2016 (Olerud). For a description of the George H.W. Bush Distinguished Alumnus Award trophy, a bronze sculpture featuring a baseball cap with a Yale "Y," an old baseball, and a replica of the first baseman's mitt used during the college career of Poppy Bush, see: Joel Alderman, "College Baseball Hall of Fame Creates 'Distinguished Alumnus Award' for ex-President and Yale Captain, George H.W. Bush, Who Will Be Its First Recipient," *sportzedge.com*, October 27 2014 (retrieved June 28, 2017). This article includes a number of interesting tangential items, such as George Bush's final day as a Yale student-athlete being a "presidential" day—"George H.W. Bush graduated from Yale on June 22, 1948, after taking an accelerated program to get through college in less than three years. One of those receiving honorary degrees from Yale at the time was Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower. This means that at least two future U.S. presidents were on Yale's Old Campus that day for the commencement. And, if Barbara Bush had brought her two-year old son, George W. Bush, along, which was highly likely, that would have made three presidents-to-be who were together for the occasion."
41. George Watson, "College Baseball HOF to be Named for Bush; Construction set for late 2014," *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*, *lubbockonline.com*, November 14, 2013 (retrieved June 28, 2017).
42. Daniel McCoy, "Wichita to Swing at Landing College Baseball Hall of Fame," *Wichita Business Journal*, April 14, 2017.
43. Christopher Burbach, "College Baseball Hall of Fame Belongs in Omaha, Group Says," *Omaha World-Herald*, June 21, 2017.
44. Matt Nadel, "A Baseball Interview with President George H.W. Bush," <https://baseballwithmatt.mlblogs.com>, November 2, 2014 (retrieved June 28, 2017).
45. A search on eBay.com (July 17, 2017) showed that the following George H.W. Bush baseball cards were available (as well as others): (a) 2003 Upper Deck Cincinnati Reds (#SP14); (b) 2016 Topps First Pitch (#FP-17); (c) 2008 Donruss (#33). Curiously, not listed was the 1990 Topps George Bush card—neither the original, nor (unauthorized) reprints, nor (unauthorized) novelty versions (i.e., reprints with "Topps" removed).
46. This George Bush card was "deliberate error" card. Just like the privately-issued 1990 Topps George Bush baseball card, the front of the publicly-available 1990 Topps George Bush (error) card features a picture of George Bush—*George W. Bush—not George H.W. Bush*. Appendix F provides images of the front and back of the 1990 Topps baseball card of George W. Bush. The picture of "W" is from when he was on Yale's freshman baseball team. The back of the "W" card (with the same "USA1" number as the original "HW" card) provides the following information for George W. Bush: "HT: 6'0"; WT: 190; BATS: RIGHT; THROWS: RIGHT; BORN: 7-6-48, NEW HAVEN CT.; HOME: CRAWFORD, TX." The only baseball statistics given on the "W" card are the won-lost and runs-scored and runs-allowed numbers for the Texas Rangers team for the seasons from 1989 through 1998—i.e., the "Texas Rangers Team Record with George W. Bush as Shareholder." Also provided is a brief biography: "George W. Bush's baseball roots date back to his Little League days, when he was coached by his future-president father, collected trading cards, and idolized Willie Mays. After serving as 'high commissioner' of a stickball league at Phillips Academy, he attended Yale, where he played on the freshman baseball team, was a rugby union fullback, and a cheerleader."
47. Ryan Cracknell, "2013 Topps Archives Baseball New Errors Variations Guide," *cardboardconnections.com* (retrieved July 17, 2017).
48. Ryan Cracknell, "The Story of the 1990 Topps George Bush Baseball Card," *cardboardconnections.com* (retrieved June 28, 2017).
49. Danny Laurel, "2013 Topps Archives Baseball Full Checklist," *sportscardsmagazine.net*, May 25, 2013 (retrieved July 17, 2017).
50. As it has developed, just like for George H.W. Bush, there have been a number of other George W. Bush baseball cards issued by various trading card companies. A search on eBay.com (July 17, 2017) showed that the following George W. Bush baseball cards were available (as well as others): (a) 2001 Fleer Platinum (#490); (b) 2011 Topps Allen & Ginter's (#147); (c) 2004 Upper Deck Milwaukee Brewers (#SP15); (d) 2011 Topps Opening Day (#PPF-7); (e) 2011 Topps Opening Day (#PPF-8). Curiously, not listed was the 1990 Topps George W. Bush card (from the 2013 Topps Archives Baseball card set).
51. Kelly Brown, "Card Honors Bush's Baseball Years," *The Bryan-College Station Eagle*, May 21, 1999.
52. Herman Krabbenhoft, "George Herbert Walker Bush—Iron Man First Sacker at Yale," *Baseball Quarterly Reviews*, Volume 4, Number 3, (Fall 1989) 101–15.
53. "Baseball Expert Challenges Yale Stats on 'Poppy' Bush," *USA Today Baseball Weekly*, Volume 1, Number 5, Page 27 (May 03, 1991). This article is based on a letter (April 18, 1991) from Herman Krabbenhoft to Paul White, Editor, *USA Today Baseball Weekly*. The complete yearly and career statistical records for Bush provided in my letter were published in the article (without a by-line).
54. According to the game's program/scorecard, the player rosters included several Hall of Famers and future Hall of Famers—Luke Appling, Joe DiMaggio, Larry Doby, Bob Feller, Whitey Ford, Harmon Killebrew, Mickey

- Mantle, Brooks Robinson, Hoyt Wilhelm, and Early Wynn for the American League and Hank Aaron, Ernie Banks, Orlando Cepeda, Monte Irvin, Juan Marichal, Willie Mays, Ron Santo, Enos Slaughter, Warren Spahn, and Billy Williams for the National League.
55. Cody McMillan (an Archives Technician of the National Archives and Records Administration for the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum AV Archives), "Old-Timers Baseball Game VP Appearance Synopsis," July 13, 2017.
 56. Cody McMillan, emails to Herm Krabbenhoft, July 11–14, 2017.
 57. Kevin Widlic, "Bush Play Steals Show at Dream," *Denver Post*, July 14, 1984.
 58. Todd Phipers, "Old-Timers Got Licks," *Denver Post*, July 14, 1984.
 59. Kevin Simpson and Jim Benton, "Players Left a Game Full of Memories," *Rocky Mountain News*, July 14, 1984.
 60. "Vice President George Bush took the field with the..." upi.com, July 14, 1984 (retrieved July 12, 2017). See also: "Sports People—Who's on First?" *The New York Times*, July 15, 1984.
 61. M. Charles Bakst, "Talkin' Baseball for George Bush—Memories of the Babe and the Summer Game Warm the Chill of Winter," *Providence Journal*, March 3, 1985.
 62. Thomas Boswell, "A Real Sport: President Bush Has Love Affair with Many Games," *Washington Post*, April 01, 1989.
 63. Richard Ben Cramer, *What It Takes: The Way to the White House* (New York: Random House, 1992).
 64. Doro Bush Koch, *My Father, My President: A Personal Account of the Life of George H. W. Bush* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2006).
 65. George W. Bush, *41—A Portrait of My Father*.
 66. Kevin Widlic, "Bush Play Steals Show at Dream," *Denver Post*, July 14, 1984.
 67. Simpson and Benton, "Players Left a Game Full of Memories."
 68. "Vice President George Bush took the field with the..." upi.com, July 14, 1984 (retrieved July 12, 2017). See also: "Sports People—Who's on First?" *The New York Times*, July 15, 1984.
 69. M. Charles Bakst, "Talkin' Baseball for George Bush—Memories of the Babe and the Summer Game Warm the Chill of Winter," *Providence Journal*, March 3, 1985.
 70. Thomas Boswell, "A Real Sport: President Bush Has Love Affair with Many Games," *Washington Post*, April 01, 1989.
 71. Doro Bush Koch, *My Father, My President*.
 72. George W. Bush, *41—A Portrait of My Father*.
 73. "Diamond Squad Tops Amherst, 9–6, for Eighth Straight," *Yale News Digest* (#51, May 24, 1946) 1.
 74. Kevin Widlic, "Bush Play Steals Show at Dream," *Denver Post*, July 14, 1984.
 75. Simpson and Benton, "Players Left a Game Full of Memories."
 76. Bakst, "Talkin' Baseball for George Bush."
 77. Doro Bush Koch, *My Father, My President*.
 78. George W. Bush, *41—A Portrait of My Father*.
 79. Doro Bush Koch, *My Father, My President*.
 80. "The Detroit Tigers Once Offered Vice President George H.W. Bush a Playing Contract (for \$1) after Seeing Him Play in the 1984 Old Timers Game in Denver," <https://www.reddit.com>, July 13, 2017 (retrieved July 26, 2017).
 81. Dan Ewald, Jr., Personal communication (telephone conversation) with Herm Krabbenhoft, July 30, 2017.
 82. Michelle Bogart (Archivist, George Bush Presidential Library and Museum), Personal communication (emails) to Herm Krabbenhoft, July 28, 2017.
 83. Dr. Bobby Brown, MD, Personal communication (telephone conversation) with Herm Krabbenhoft, July 31, 2017.
 84. Dr. Bobby Brown, MD, Personal communication (letter) to Herm Krabbenhoft, August 7, 2017.
 85. Dr. Bobby Brown, MD, Personal communication (telephone conversation) with Herm Krabbenhoft, August 10, 2017.
 86. George W. Bush, Note to Herm Krabbenhoft, November 15, 1989. In a letter (November 8, 1989) from Herm Krabbenhoft to George W. Bush, Managing General Partner, Texas Rangers Baseball Club, a copy of *Baseball Quarterly Reviews* (i.e., Reference 3) was provided to Mr. Bush, who replied promptly with the following hand-written note on Texas Rangers stationery: "Dear Herm—Thanks for the BQR's. I look forward to reading about my Dad. Hopefully you will set the record straight since he claims he was more powerful than Ruth. Yours in baseball, George." A photocopy of the note is given in Appendix I.
 87. Ronald Reagan, "Remarks at the Republican National Convention in New Orleans, Louisiana," August 15, 1988, presidency.ucsb.edu (accessed June 27, 2017).
 88. George Bush (with Victor Gold), *Looking Forward*. See also: George W. Bush, *41—A Portrait of My Father*—"My father's favorite collegiate pursuit took place on spring afternoons at Yale Field. As he later put it, he majored in economics and minored in baseball."
 89. Baseball Almanac, "President George Bush Baseball Related Quotations," www.baseball-almanac.com (accessed June 29, 2017).

Appendices (available on SABR.org)

<https://sabr.org/node/47777>

- A. Game-By-Game Batting and Fielding Record of Poppy Bush (1946).
- B. Game-By-Game Batting and Fielding Record of Poppy Bush (1947).
- C. Game-By-Game Batting and Fielding Record of Poppy Bush (1948).
- D. Images of the Front and Back of the 1990 Topps George Bush Baseball Card.
- E. Minor League Records of Teammates of George Poppy Bush.
- F. Images of the Front and Back of the 1990 Topps George W. Bush Baseball Card.
- G. Images of the Front and Back of the George Bush Baseball Card. Issued by the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum.
- H. Images of the Bobby Brown and Jim Campbell Items Posted on reddit.com.
- I. Image of Photocopied Note from George W. Bush to Herm Krabbenhoft (undated; envelope postmarked: "Dallas, Texas NOV 15 '89").
- J. Image of a letter from George Bush to Norman L. Macht, Courtesy of Norman L. Macht.

Gladys Goodding, Ebbets Field Organ Queen

Rob Edelman

Gladys Goodding was more than just an *artiste* whose musical stylings entertained the Ebbets Field faithful from the early 1940s on. This cheerful, occasionally mischievous woman was a baseball pioneer. Hers was the first organ permanently situated in a big-league ballpark and she predated Eddie Layton, Jane Jarvis, Wilbur Snapp, and other ballyard organists. Her inimitable performance at every Brooklyn Dodgers home game was a foremost part of the Ebbets experience.

Gladys's roots were far removed from Brooklyn; she hailed from Macon County, Missouri, where she was born June 18, 1893. Her parents were Joseph Allen Goodding, a businessman and amateur violinist, and Meribah Creola (Riley) Goodding, a piano teacher; she was the third of their four offspring. While a youngster, she was taught the rudiments of piano by her mother. After the death of her parents—Joseph in 1901 and Meribah two years later—Gladys and younger brother Hugh were dispatched to St. Louis where they lived in the Masonic Home, an orphanage.¹ During this time, she became enamored of baseball. “I learned the game in St. Louis,” Gladys noted in 1942, “when I used to hang over my back fence and watch the B. & O. nine and other good semipro teams play...”²

After leaving the Home upon turning 18, Gladys lived with an older brother in Kansas City, where she learned to sing, and then settled in Independence, Missouri. By then, she had become so adept at piano that she was able to master the fundamentals of the organ in two weeks. “I had to,” she recalled. “The regular organ player at a church in Independence...was going on vacation. And I wanted to be of some assistance.”³

Gladys wed Robert Reinholdt (Bob) Beck and gave birth to two children: Robert (born in 1915) and Maxine (1916). But she and her husband eventually divorced. Meanwhile, she began performing light opera on the Chautauqua and Lyceum entertainment circuits. She was billed as a “soprano-pianist” and garnered positive press. “Gladys Goodding, with the orchestra, is pleasing immensely with her solos,” wrote *The Lyceum Magazine* in 1922. “Her stage presence is admirable, and this coupled with a winning smile and a beautiful voice make her one of the most popular members of

the organization.”⁴ She also became a protégé of Thurlow Weed Lieurance, a period composer best-known for penning “By the Waters of Minnetonka,” a popular love song. “Mr. Lieurance was very much interested in Indiana,” Gladys once recalled.⁵ Her own aspirations, however, far exceeded fame in the Midwest.

Upon her divorce, Gladys reclaimed her maiden name and, in 1923, she and her children moved to New York City. “I wanted to get into musical comedy or light opera,” she explained, “but I was a woman with two children and needed the security of a steady job.”⁶ To support herself and her family, she became a full-time organist in Loew’s theaters, where she provided musical accompaniment for silent films. She also occasionally went on tour; in October 1931, for example, she was the instrumentalist for the Roxy Male Quartet, performing in concert in Ossining, New York.⁷ She was the musical accompanist on “Major Bowes Amateurs on Tour,” a unit of prize-winners from the radio talent show that performed at various venues. She also soloed on the radio. At the 12 noon hour and lasting for 15 minutes on February 17, 1930, “Gladys Goodding, songs” aired over WOV radio in New York.⁸

Her break into sports came in 1937, when she was hired to accompany sporting events at Madison Square Garden; she entertained fans at Rangers hockey and Knicks basketball games and played “The Star-Spangled Banner” at boxing matches. “Ethel Mullany, head of the [Garden] booking department...helped me get my sports job,” Goodding recalled. “She convinced Tommy Lockhart, one of the hockey bosses, that I would be an added attraction.”⁹

Between 1925 and 1968, the Garden was located on Eighth Avenue between 49th and 50th Streets in Manhattan and Gladys and her organ were situated in Loge 29 of the venue. “The Garden is just like home to her,” the *New York Post* reported in 1947. “She’s ‘Gladys’ to all the personnel and she calls them by their first names right back.”¹⁰ For a while, she also played at the finale of boxing cards. But then, on one occasion, Chick Wergeles, a promoter whose fighter had just been beaten, was complaining loudly during a radio interview—and Gladys employed her musical skill in an attempt to silence him. “I played ‘Good

Night, Sweetheart,' and that was the last time I performed after the fights at the Garden."¹¹

The Brooklyn Dodgers hired Gladys in 1942. The story goes that a Brooklyn hockey fan and Garden regular suggested that she bring her skills to Ebbets Field. She penned a letter to Dodgers Executive Vice-President Larry MacPhail and was immediately hired. "Mr. MacPhail plays the piano and is a lover of fine music," she noted during that first season. "I got the job."¹² That May the Dodgers brought an electric Hammond organ into Ebbets Field and Gladys eventually found herself "installed in the baseball field 'organ loft,' a glass enclosure high above the crowd."¹³ The *Brooklyn Eagle* reported that it "looks as though the (organ) is to become a permanent fixture of Dodger games—Also Gladys Goodding, the virtuoso who plays it..."¹⁴

That first season, two unrelated incidents thrust Gladys into the limelight. First, a retired music teacher who resided near Ebbets Field took her to court because he was bothered by her organ playing. But there was a catch. "The poor darling was hard of hearing," Gladys recalled. "He couldn't even hear the judge's questions. The case was dismissed. The next day the complainant asked me if I would play one of his compositions. I couldn't refuse him. He was a nice person after all."¹⁵ Then she flaunted her trademark ingenuity when three umpires—Bill Stewart, Ziggy Sears, and Tom Dunn—appeared on the Ebbets Field turf and, to the delight of the fans, she regaled them by playing "Three Blind Mice." "That was the one and only time I played it," she explained. "It was done especially for Umpire Bill Stewart. I knew him from Madison Square Garden when he was a hockey referee. After the game I apologized and Bill forgave me."¹⁶ Indeed, during the 1942 season, Tom O'Reilly, writing in *PM*, described her as "the lady who made so much noise in Ebbets Field, Home of Pandemonium" and the "mood builder for MacPhail's Mendicants" as well as "minstrel to our Kingly Bums" whose objective was to "soothe the savage breasts of the Flatbush Faithful."¹⁷

As the years passed, Gladys became an Ebbets Field institution. She received fan mail from as far away as Canada and Honolulu. In 1947, she was commissioned to record a "Baseball Medley" on a special V-Disc (a recording made in cooperation with the US military for the entertainment of GIs) produced by the Music Branch of the US War Department's Special Services Division. Her selections were "Sidewalks of New York," "Shine on Harvest Moon," "Alice Blue Gown," "Down By the Old Mill Stream," "Margie," and, of course, "Take Me Out to the Ball Game."¹⁸ That same year, she penned the music and lyrics for "Follow the

Dodgers," which became the team's theme song. Her playing was featured on a recording of the tune, with a chorus provided by the Bank of Manhattan Choral Club. "It's a good rousing song," she observed, "and I didn't overdo it like most songs about the Dodgers by predicting victory."¹⁹

There's a baseball club in Brooklyn
A team they call 'Dem Bums'
That keeps your eye right on them
And watch for hits and runs

Oh, follow the Dodgers
Follow the Dodgers around
The infield, the outfield, the catcher
And that fellow on the mound

Oh, the fans will come a-runnin'
When the Dodgers go a-gunnin'
For the pennant that they're
Fightin' for today

So, Dodgers—keep swingin'
And the fans will keep singin'
Follow the Dodgers! Hooray!²⁰

Also in 1947, Gladys was described by *New York Post* writer Mary Braggiotti as "a warm-mannered, feminine little person with humorous blue eyes, fluffy brown hair and two grown-up children." And it was stressed that "baseball is her game." "I enjoy all the sports," she declared, "but baseball is the game I love. I'm definitely a Dodger fan, of course. I have the best seat in the park and I watch every game right through. There's a great camaraderie about baseball. It's the strangest, nicest feeling..." As proof of her horsehide devotion, the profile concluded, "Where do you suppose she went the other night? To a baseball game at the Polo Grounds with Hilda Chester, the famous Dodger fan."²¹

By then, her long-established specialty was her unique rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner," which she simultaneously sang and played in "a spirited interpretation...[employing] a ringing lyric soprano."²² Like clockwork, her performance was timed at one minute, five seconds. By 1952, she had performed it on thousands of occasions, but she told Val Adams of *The New York Times* that "it sounds new to me every time I play it." Adams wrote that Gladys had long been living "in a hotel just around the corner from Madison Square Garden. On baseball days she rides the subway to Ebbets Field, accompanied by her fox terrier pup,

who sits beside her at the organ. Sometimes he stands up for ‘The Star Spangled Banner’ and sometimes he doesn’t.”^{23,24} Also that year, *Brooklyn Eagle* columnist Tommy Holmes noted, “Miss Gladys Goodding celebrates her tenth anniversary as organist laureate at Ebbets Field and it is safe to say that her music has provided more consistent pleasure than the Dodgers.”

The present-day practice of blaring a specific song for a ballplayer as he comes to the plate or the mound (from Trevor Cahill’s “White Rabbit” and Francisco Cervelli’s “That’s Amore” to Anthony Rizzo’s “Can’t Stop” and Mariano Rivera’s “Enter Sandman”) also may be linked to Gladys. “Mine was a wonderful relationship with the players and fans,” she once declared. “Before the games, I would serenade the players on their birthdays, play their state songs and their favorite popular numbers.”²⁶ Before construction of the organ box, the instrument was near the home team dugout, allowing her to become “acquainted with the boys when they’d come over to me and ask for their favorite tunes. Joe Medwick was the first one to do that. He likes ‘Intermezzo.’” She added that Mickey Owen’s choice number was “Dark Eyes.” Freddie Fitzsimmons had three: “Melancholy Baby,” “Si Si,” and “Let Me Call You Sweetheart.”²⁷

Visiting players could make requests, too. “They call me up or make signs,” she explained. “Now take Red Barrett, the Boston pitcher. He likes the tune ‘Paper Doll.’ The first time he wanted me to play it he kept moving his fingers like scissors, then making believe to rock a doll in his arms—until finally I caught on. Gene Hermanski likes polkas and mazurkas. Red Corriden, the Yankee coach who used to be with the Dodgers...has to have ‘When Irish Eyes Are Smiling.’ And of course I always play something to do with Dixie when Dixie Walker makes a home run.”²⁸

Gladys maintained this connection during her entire Brooklyn tenure. One of countless examples: On August 18, 1957, the Pittsburgh Pirates were battling the Dodgers in an Ebbets Field twin bill and she serenaded Roberto Clemente and Bob Kennedy on their 23rd and 37th birthdays. Four years earlier, the *Brooklyn Eagle* reported that she “played the customary rendition on her magic organ in recognition of (New York Giant) Sal Maglie’s 36th birthday. A motion in the Dodger clubhouse to send a horseshoe wreath of poison ivy was voted down.”²⁹

With the advent of television, Gladys’s popularity increased. “During Friday night telecasts of Garden boxing bouts the invisible Miss Goodding has become as much a fixture to the TV audience as a supersized razor,” observed Adams of the *Times*. “On WOR-TV



BROOKLYN EAGLE PHOTOGRAPHS—BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY—BROOKLYN COLLECTION

Gladys Goodding shown here at the keys in a photo from the archives of the Brooklyn Eagle newspaper.

telecasts from Ebbets Field...her harmonizing at the Hammond is as familiar as the sight of two runners on the same base.”³⁰ And during the pre-game broadcasts of *Happy Felton’s Knothole Gang*, Gladys feted the host by playing “I Want to Be Happy.” By then, her snappy rendition of “Chiapenecas,” a Mexican folksong, had become a fixture during the seventh inning stretch, with the fans’ cadenced clapping accompanying the music.

On extra-special (albeit none-too-happy) baseball-related occasions, Gladys’s musical choices were extra-appropriate. On their last Ebbets Field appearance of 1952, Dodger fans mournfully filed out of the ball yard—their beloved Bums had just lost Game 7 of the World Series to the hated Bronx Bombers, 4–2. *The New York Times* reported that Gladys captured the mood of the moment as she “played a medley of tunes that left nothing to the imagination. From a rendition of ‘Blues in the Night,’ Miss Goodding...drifted into ‘What Can I Say, Dear, After I Say I’m Sorry.’” She followed up with “This Nearly Was Mine,” “You Got Me Cryin’ Again,” “Deep Purple,” and “What a Difference a Day Makes.” When “the park was virtually empty... Gladys concluded with ‘Auld Lang Syne’—better known in Brooklyn as ‘Wait ‘Til Next Year’”³¹

And on the Bums’ last-ever appearance at the Flatbush ballyard—a 2–0 victory over the Pittsburgh Pirates on September 24, 1957—Gladys, according to Roscoe McGowen of the *Times*, “played numerous



A copy of "Follow the Dodgers" on display at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in Cooperstown.

tunes with the farewell motif." After Brooklyn scored its first run in the first inning, she serenaded the fans with "Am I Blue?" and "After You've Gone." Run number two came in the third frame, after which she played "Don't Ask Me Why I'm Leaving." Also on her playlist were "Thanks for the Memory," "How Can You Say We're Through?" "When I Grow Too Old to Dream," and "When the Blue of the Night Meets the Gold of the Day." McGowen noted, "Miss Goodding at the end of the game, started playing 'May the Good Lord Bless and Keep You,' but somebody turned on the record always played after Brooklyn games, 'Follow the Dodgers.' This was eventually silenced and the organist was able to close out her program by playing 'Auld Lang Syne.'" ³²

Jack Lang, covering the farewell for the *Long Island Star-Journal*, augmented this playlist. Before the game began, she "sounded the keynote with her rendition of 'California Here I Come.'" Among the other "sentimental favorites" were "What Can I Say Dear, After I Say I'm Sorry," "If I Had My Way," "Vaya Con Dios," "Que Sera, Sera," and "Say It Isn't So." "When the game was over," Lang added, "Gladys was practically

crying at the organ. As the fans filed out of the park, she played 'So Long, It's Been Good to Know You,' 'May the Good Lord Bless and Keep You,' and, finally, 'Auld Lang Syne.'" ³³

Upon the Dodgers abandoning the Borough of Churches, Gladys remained in New York and maintained her Madison Square Garden connection. Her extracurricular activities continued to involve everything from entertaining patrons in department stores and patients at Veterans Administration hospitals to directing amateur shows and binding Braille books for The Lighthouse, an organization which offers assistance to the blind and visually impaired. During World War II, she had performed at the Stage Door Canteen, which presented live shows and musical entertainment to Americans in uniform. And she was indeed a New York celebrity. In July 1951, she joined Jersey Joe Walcott, the heavyweight boxing champ, as well as singer Kay Arman and "vocalist" Tony Bennett to perform at a program to raise money for the Brooklyn Amateur Baseball Foundation, which supported 23 sandlot baseball leagues in Brooklyn, Queens, and Long Island. ³⁴

Upon becoming arthritic, she retired and settled in Arizona; as Dick Young reported in 1959, "Gladys Goodding... is a pretty sick gal in St. Mary's Hospital, Tucson, Ariz." ³⁵ But she returned to New York and resumed her Garden organ-playing, occasionally landing on the entertainment industry's version of the disabled list; the following year, a hip fracture kept her away from the Garden for several weeks. But she was well-aware of her good fortune. "I call myself the luckiest woman in the world every time I'm at a sports show." ³⁶

Gladys Goodding passed away on November 18, 1963, at St. Clare's Hospital in Manhattan; she had suffered a heart attack, and her remains were cremated. ³⁷ Her final Madison Square Garden appearance was at a basketball game on the Saturday before her death. A little less than two weeks later, *The New York Times* reported that, for the "first time since 1937 the national anthem was played at a Madison Square Garden fight without Mrs. Gladys Goodding at the organ....[She] was as much a part of [the] Garden as its basketball players, hockey players and fighters." ³⁸ But she was as equally beloved in Brooklyn. After the Dodgers copped their first (and only) World Series victory, Brooklyn Borough President John Cashmore gifted Gladys with a silver coffee service.

Her celebrity was resurrected decades later by the Trivial Pursuit board game. Players were asked to name the individual "who played for the Knicks, Rangers, and the Dodgers." The answer: Gladys Goodding. ³⁹ ■

Notes

1. "Missouri Masonic Museum: Reflected Values—Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth," last accessed July 6, 2017, <https://www.mohome.org/missouri-masonic-museum>.
2. Tom O'Reilly, "Ebbets Field Organist Soothes Flatbush Faithful," *PM*, July 24, 1942: 31.
3. Moe Berger, "Top Player at Garden Never Gets Into Contests," *The New York Times*, November 15, 1955: 43.
4. "Playmate of Marilyn Miller," *The Lyceum Magazine*, July 1922: 44.
5. Tom O'Reilly.
6. Gladys Goodding, Organist, Is Dead," *The New York Times*, November 20, 1963: 43.
7. Roxy Quartet To Appear At High School On Oct. 8," (Ossining) *Citizen-Sentinel*, September 24, 1931: D10.
8. Radio Programs Scheduled for Current Week," *The New York Times*, February 16, 1930, 156.
9. Moe Berger.
10. Mary Braggiotti, "The Glad Gal of Ebbets Field," *New York Post*, September 19, 1947.
11. Moe Berger.
12. Tom O'Reilly.
13. "Gladys Goodding, Organist, Is Dead."
14. Tommy Holmes, "Flack May Run Into Real Poser," *Brooklyn Eagle*, May 11, 1942: 9.
15. Moe Berger.
16. Ibid.
17. Tom O'Reilly.
18. "V-Disc 741 Gladys Goodding," last accessed July 6, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CUCBbi00SMw>.
19. Margaret Mara, "Adds Lyrics to Her 'Follow Dodgers' Tune," *Brooklyn Eagle*, April 26, 1951: 23.
20. "Follow the dodgers (Brooklyn Dodger Tribute)," video last accessed July 6, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DNjzf8TvCVA>.
21. Mary Braggiotti.
22. Ibid.
23. Her longtime residence was the Hotel Belvedere, located at 319 West 48th Street.
24. Val Adams, "The Girl Who's Heard But Never Seen: Gladys Goodding Provides The Music at Most TV Sporting Events," *The New York Times*, April 27, 1952: X11.
25. Tommy Holmes, "Robbie Rated Support From Dodger Brass," *Brooklyn Eagle*, May 12, 1952: 14.
26. "Gladys Goodding, Organist, Is Dead."
27. Joan Crosby, "Stars, Umps, Too, Like Gladys's Tunes," *Brooklyn Eagle*, May 4, 1945: 15.
28. Mary Braggiotti.
29. T.H. (Tommy Holmes), "4th Assist For Furillo," *Brooklyn Eagle*, April 27, 1953: 15.
30. Val Adams.
31. Louis Effrat, "Dodgers Organist Plays the Blues," *The New York Times*, October 8, 1952: 38.
32. Roscoe McGowen, "Dodgers Defeat Pirates in Ebbets Field Finale; Phillies Turn Back Giants," *The New York Times*, September 25, 1957: 33.
33. Jack Lang, "Auld Lang Syne at Ebbets Field," *Long Island Star-Journal*, September 25, 1957: 5. (An altogether different memory of the occasion was recalled a half-century later by Dodgers broadcaster Vin Scully. In an article written by Jerry Crowe, headlined "The last pitch at Ebbets means more to him now," and published on page D2 of the *Los Angeles Times* on September 25, 2007, Scully recalled, "Gladys was a very nice lady, known to take a drink or three. And Gladys showed up with a paper bag—and there wasn't any doubt what was in it. It was too late for lunch...." And he continued, "If I remember correctly, the very first song she played was 'My Buddy,' a pretty down song, and it went down from there. All of us in listening to the music were aware of her mental state. And I'm sure she was dipping into the brown bag, and the music kept getting more depressing every third out.")
34. Sam Goldaper, "Joe Walcott Heads Card of Celebrities For All-Star Classic," *Brooklyn Eagle*, July 27, 1951: 14.
35. Dick Young, "Young Ideas: Jackie's Memory Should Be Longer," *Buffalo Courier-Express*, July 5, 1959, 7-C.
36. Moe Berger, "Top Player at Garden Never Gets Into Contests," *The New York Times*, November 15, 1955: 43.
37. According to the "Gladys Goodding" page on ancestry.com (https://www.ancestry.com/genealogy/records/gladys-goodding_35794961), ex-husband Robert passed away on April 25, 1942, in Vallejo, Solano, California. Their offspring did not remain with Gladys in New York. Son Robert married Rose Carolyn Hummel and passed away in December, 1980, in Davenport, Iowa. Daughter Maxine wed Frederick Miles Magnuson and was residing in Florida when she passed away in June, 1988.
38. Deane McGowan, "Persol Upsets Thomas at Garden on Relentless 2-Handed Attack," *The New York Times*, November 30, 1963: 42.
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Jim Piersall's Tumultuous 1952 Season

Neal Golden

Jimmy Piersall's death on June 3, 2017, provided an occasion to recall his rookie season of 1952 that he began playing a new position—shortstop—for the Boston Red Sox, continued with AA Birmingham, and ended in a mental hospital. His is the inspiring story of a young man overcoming a serious health problem to craft a productive 17-year major league career.

On our trip through Jim's rookie season, we will discover the following:

- Piersall exhibited erratic behavior the previous season with AAA Louisville.
- He quickly became the favorite of the Red Sox fans with his hustle, competitiveness, and show-boating tactics.
- He lost his starting position at shortstop because of his lack of hitting but later returned to the lineup in right field.
- The event that triggered his abrupt option to Birmingham was an unusual clubhouse incident that the Red Sox tried to hush up.
- His departure stirred a storm of protest from fans.
- Some Boston reporters claimed that the real reason for Piersall's demotion was the jealousy of the "old guard" on the club.
- Only a couple of writers suspected that Piersall was mentally ill.
- Jim behaved even more erratically with Birmingham, leading to his hospitalization.
- Medical examination revealed serious mental problems that took a month and a half of treatment to alleviate.
- Through it all, Piersall's saga riveted Boston, with numerous front-page stories on his travails.

James Anthony Piersall grew up with a demanding father who dreamed of a pro baseball career for his son, and a mother who spent multiple stints in mental hospitals. He was high-strung as a boy and plagued by headaches starting as a teenager. He had difficulty keeping still.¹

Piersall began his career in the Red Sox farm system at age 18 in 1948. Boston scout Neil Mahoney heard about a "schoolboy wonder" in Waterbury, Connecticut. Mahoney "sold him on the Sox, stealing him out from under the Yankees."² Piersall sparkled in center field for four years in the minors.

When Jim reported to Red Sox spring training camp in Sarasota, Florida, on March 1, 1952, new manager Lou Boudreau announced that he was shifting him to shortstop. Piersall's best position was center field, but Boudreau was obviously pleased with veteran Dominic DiMaggio in that position. Lou didn't feel the same way about 33-year-old Johnny Pesky, a fixture of the Red Sox infield since 1946. Pesky had kept his starting shortstop job in 1951 even though Boston had signed a capable shortstop in Boudreau (one year older than Pesky) following his release from the Indians after the 1950 season. Pesky had a .313 batting average in 1951 and scored 93 runs. Furthermore, general manager Joe Cronin gave Pesky his first raise in two years: \$2500.³

But Boudreau took over as skipper from Steve O'Neill for the 1952 season and he didn't believe Pesky—who "was troubled all spring with his legs"⁴—provided his best option at short. He even went on record as favoring third baseman Vern Stephens, who had held down the shortstop position for the 1948, '49, and '50 seasons.⁵ Instead, Boudreau had Pesky work out at second base to fill the vacuum left there by the retirement of Bobby Doerr.⁶ "Piersall needs seasoning, game experience," added Boudreau. "He's going to see plenty of action in the exhibitions down here. And he's going to make mistakes. He's still got a lot to learn, but he's anxious and willing. He'll come along and be a great major league shortstop."⁷

Boudreau's announcement left writers scratching their heads. Joe Cashman of the *Boston Daily Record* could recall many instances of a player starting at

shortstop before shifting to the outfield—Joe DiMaggio and Mickey Mantle being two famous cases. “But you can count on the fingers of one hand the great shortstops...who started out in any other position. And the only one of these who moved from the outfield...was the immortal Honus Wagner...”⁸ Still, Cashman liked what he had seen so far. “Considering his inexperience, Piersall is doing a creditable job in the strange position.” And the scribe added, “if he can become a good shortstop he’ll be of more value to the Sox than he would be as an outfielder.”⁹

During the first week of spring training, Piersall passed around cigars to celebrate the arrival of a second daughter back in Scranton, Pennsylvania. Jim now had an additional mouth to feed. In his autobiography *Fear Strikes Out*, he described himself at that time as “a scared, tense kid” who put tremendous pressure on himself to earn money to support his family.¹⁰ And now he was being asked to learn a new position. “It’s impossible!” he wrote. “I’m not a shortstop. I’m a center fielder...It doesn’t make sense. What makes them think they can make a shortstop out of me? Just trying to shift from the outfield might ruin me.”¹¹ Still, he celebrated the new baby’s arrival by making a leaping catch of a liner with his back to the plate. He also showed his inexperience at his new position by failing to cover second on a relay from the outfield and dropping a popup.¹²

His athletic ability trumped his fears. Reporting on a March 13 exhibition game, Cashman wrote: “In addition to getting the lone Boston run and only extra-base blow, Jim Piersall had a busy, brilliant day at short...he handled eight chances flawlessly and sparkled with Ted Lepcio on two double plays.”¹³ On March 14, John Drohan wrote in the *Boston Traveler*: “The conclusion is that Piersall...has impressed the Sox so favorably that he’s going to be carefully considered for the varsity job before being sent to Louisville. It was the original intention to give him a thorough schooling on shortstop technique and send him down to Louisville for the balance of the 1952 season.”¹⁴ That afternoon, “Jim Piersall had another brilliant day at shortstop and got two hits.”¹⁵ Then “another impressive day at shortstop” in the next game.¹⁶

Cashman continued to laud Piersall. In a March 24 article on the top rookies in spring training, he wrote: “Probably [the] most remarkable of the entire rookie contingent this spring is Piersall. Here is a lad who has spent his entire baseball career...as an outfielder and today, after less than 10 weeks of infield experience, is the best defensive shortstop on the Sox squad.”¹⁷

On March 30, an article appeared in the *Louisville Courier-Journal* that cited disturbing behavior from

Piersall’s behavior made him a popular but controversial figure.



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Piersall’s past that called into question his ability to handle the stress of playing for the Red Sox. Jim played the 1949 and 1950 seasons and 17 games at the beginning of the 1951 season for Louisville, the Red Sox’ farm club in the AAA American Association. But even though he was batting .310 to start the ’51 campaign, he was demoted to AA Birmingham at his own request because he had been relegated to the bench by Louisville manager Pinky Higgins, who had to play another promising prospect in his place.¹⁸ In the *Courier-Journal* article, Higgins said this about Piersall from the Colonels’ spring training site: “I’ve never seen a kid change like he’s changed. Never heard a peep out of him at Boston’s pre-spring training rookie camp. He was really docile. You wouldn’t have recognized him.” The reporter, Tommy Fitzgerald, explained the background of Higgins’s comments. “With the Colonels, [Piersall] didn’t seem to be a kid in complete control of his emotions. He was inclined to fly off the handle, being sensitive to jibes from the stands and from the opposing dugout. He also had a tendency to rub his own teammates the wrong way. He has all the ability in the world, but he wasn’t the best-liked ballplayer...This was a factor in Jimmy’s going from the Colonels to Birmingham last season...Now Jimmy seems to have grown up. Jimmy was a high-strung kid, over-eager and ambitious, in the past. A little maturity and experience seems to have changed his disposition.”¹⁹

Fitzgerald reported Joe Cronin’s appraisal of Piersall to that point in spring training. “I’d say he has a perfect temperament for a shortstop. ...Aggressive and a take-charge guy. He’s outgrown those other little faults of his.” Cronin added: “He can go to his left, to his right, come in and go back as well as any shortstop in America...If you never knew he was a converted center fielder, you’d think he had been playing shortstop all

his life.”²⁰ Unfortunately, Cronin’s assessment that Jim had “outgrown those other little faults” proved to be wishful thinking.

As the Red Sox broke camp, observers felt Piersall had clinched a spot on the roster. Cashman: “Last season Allen Richter, playing for Louisville, was chosen the All-Star shortstop in the American Association. Jimmy Piersall...was the regular center fielder for Birmingham in the Southern Association. Today, Piersall rates as the Red Sox second-string shortstop and Richter...must return to Louisville unless he can persuade a big-league club to buy him...That’s correct. An outfielder from Double A, who never played a game at short until two months ago, is now picked by an all-time shortstop great named Lou Boudreau over a boy who was the standout shortfielder in Triple A.”²¹

Then Cashman revealed that “Boudreau’s present plan is to use Vern Stephens at short for the first six or seven innings of games and then throw Piersall in for defensive purposes when the Red Sox happen to be in front. But many are predicting that before the regular season is very old, Piersall will be a regular nine-inning shortstop.”²² When the Red Sox arrived in Boston for their annual three-game series with the crosstown Braves right before opening day, Boudreau talked as if Piersall were his starting shortstop. “Piersall will have to learn to play a different way in every American League park. I intend to show him the difference in each park as we travel around the circuit.”

Sure enough, when the Red Sox opened the regular season at Washington, Piersall was in the starting lineup at shortstop with another rookie, Ted Lepcio, manning second. Boudreau relegated veterans Stephens and Bill Goodman to the bench, and shifted Pesky to third base. Batting sixth, Jimmy smacked a double, “the longest drive of the game,” in four trips to the plate. Piersall also “handled everything that came his way at short...”²³

Despite playing without Ted Williams, who would miss most of the 1952 and 1953 seasons after being recalled to military service during the Korean War, the Red Sox got off to a good start. By April 23, Jimmy was batting .400 in his first ten games and getting good reviews for his fielding. Following a victory over the Yankees April 23, Mike Gillooly of the *Boston American* wrote: “The Red Sox have now won eight games, more than any other club in either league. They have won them principally through the keystone combination of Jimmy Piersall at short and Ted Lepcio at second. These whiz kids cover so much ground they make average pitching look good.” As late as May 7, Piersall was still 13 points above .300 with seven doubles and seven

RBIs—more production than anyone expected from him.²⁴ An instant hit with the fans, Jimmy was invited to speak at many sports gatherings.²⁵

But the seeds were being planted for the weeds that would soon choke Jim’s rookie season. Piersall irritated Yankees infielder Billy Martin and vice-versa. The two started razzing each other in spring training, and Billy kept up the attack during the Yankees’ two-game series at Fenway Park April 23–24.

Piersall began to exhibit difficulties with umpires in a May 11 game at Yankee Stadium. When Jim Honochick ruled Gil McDougald safe because first baseman Billy Goodman failed to tag him after receiving Jimmy’s wide throw, half the Sox squad stormed the umpire. Jim was so incensed that he was chased from the game “for using rude language.”²⁶ It’s possible perfectionist Piersall was irate because the safe call gave him an error.

No articles reported any conflicts between Piersall and Martin during that series in New York. However, it can be deduced from later events that the two continued to jaw back and forth during the three games.²⁷

The feud with Martin came to a head May 24 before a game at Fenway Park. During infield practice, Piersall taunted the Yankees. Martin, warming up on the sideline, told him to shut up. The rookie responded by telling Martin he listened only to “guys who actually played.” Following some more give-and-take, Jim called Billy “a dago busher.” With that, Billy dropped his glove and challenged Piersall to meet him in the players’ runway under the stands.²⁸ Martin, in his own words afterwards, “hit him good twice,” dropping Jimmy to his knees and drawing blood before Piersall closed in and grappled with Billy. Piersall’s shirt was ripped. Coach Bill Dickey of the Yankees and Sox pitcher Ellis Kinder separated the combatants.²⁹

Out of the starting lineup since May 17 when his average dropped to .255, Piersall heckled Martin throughout the game from the Boston bench. Afterward, Jim implied his frustration at not playing was a factor in his tangle with Martin. “What’s there for me to say? He’s hot-headed. I’m hot-headed because I’m not playing. ...He was on me pretty good in New York. I don’t know why.”³⁰ Martin said, “He made some pretty bad remarks. I may be smaller than he is, but I’ll fight anybody who makes those remarks to me.”³¹ Boudreau seemed unperturbed by the fracas. “They’re both scrappy kids, quick-tongued and quick-tempered and they’ve been going at each other since spring training.”³²

Lou didn’t mind Jim tangling with an opponent, but he had a different opinion when Piersall took on a

teammate. Two days after the fight with Martin, Jim got into a shoving match with Mickey McDermott, who needled him about his set-to with Billy. "Verbal barbs were exchanged in the Sox clubhouse and when Piersall leaped to his feet, McDermott pushed him backwards into his open locker. Then Piersall charged the lanky pitcher—noted as a bench jockey and ribber—and shoved him backward over a couple of chairs to the floor. The hurler quickly realized the steamed-up Piersall was in an agitated mood from the Martin incident and apologized. They shook hands and that ended the affair."³³ Boudreau declined to take disciplinary action against either player but declared, "I have told them...that I do not want any fighting among the players." Concerning Piersall's second offense in three days, the Boston skipper said, "Just as long as he plays ball for me, that's all I ask. ...Riding another ball player is all right providing you know when to stop. I want the kid to play hard, aggressive baseball."³⁴ On June 1, Piersall was chased from the bench by umpire Ed Hurley, who claimed Jimmy "was hurling profanity at him."³⁵

Two days later, the Red Sox and Tigers announced a blockbuster nine-player deal. Boston gave up Pesky, first baseman Walt Dropo, third baseman Fred Hatfield, outfielder Don Lenhardt, and pitcher Bill Wight. Boston received third baseman George Kell, shortstop Johnny Lipon, outfielder Hoot Evers, and pitcher Dizzy Trout. Asked to clarify Piersall's status on the roster following the shakeup, Boudreau said he would be a reserve shortstop ready to take over for Stephens and available for center field for DiMaggio in event of an injury to either player.³⁶

Jim made the headlines again by walking out of a squad meeting prior to the June 3 home game with Cleveland. Ed Costello of the *Boston Herald* found the volatile rookie in the dugout crying. Asked why he was distraught, Piersall said he had been told earlier that day that he would start at shortstop, but when Boudreau read the lineup to the players, Lipon was at short. "I just want to play. That's why I pop off on the bench. ...I've worked hard. ...When I'm not playing, I blow my top." When Costello advised apologizing to the manager, Jim wiped the tears away and, with head down, went back to the meeting.³⁷

Jimmy returned to the starting lineup June 5 in right field in place of Clyde Vollmer, who suffered from a stiff neck. Boudreau: "Jim moves good out there ... he'll be all right if he starts hitting."³⁸

Detroit came to Fenway Park for a five-game series starting June 6 that attracted large crowds because of the recent trade. The Tigers' bench jockeys rode

Piersall unmercifully, calling him "Johnnie Ray" because of the aforementioned crying incident.³⁹ (Ray was a contemporary singer known for crying while singing.) Commenting on the final game of the series, Austen Lake wrote in the *Boston American*: "The strangest transfiguration of all is the sudden, almost hysterical fondness the right field patrons are showing toward Jim Piersall, the Sox problem child and fussy-budget who has been kicking up all kinds of ruckuses this spring. Lou paroled Jim in right field on his promise of good behavior with the proviso he wouldn't jaw back and forth with the fans. But it was too much for Jim who just can't resist screwing his neck around and giving wisecrack for each jape. But he's doing a fleet-footed job of work too and hauling down flies, both long and short. And he gets his quota of hits. So the fans...like Jim for his small antics and he-man competence."⁴⁰

In the last game against Detroit that series, Piersall smacked a solo homer. On June 11 against St. Louis in Fenway, Jim started a six-run ninth-inning explosion against ancient Satchel Paige to pull out the 11–9 victory. "The brash rookie beat out a bunt to open the inning and then practically went into hysterics on the base path with a series of pantomimes that bewitched even an old-timer like Satch. ...Satch seemed almost relieved when he walked Bill Goodman to force in Piersall with the first run of the inning...but Piersall kept riding him from the bench..."⁴¹ After the game, 46-year-old Paige said, "I never saw any man do those things anywhere." Once again, Jim was defiant. "I don't care what anybody thinks about what I was doing. We won the ball game, right? And winning ball games is what I'm after no matter what goes on."⁴²

In his article on the victory over the Browns, John Drohan wrote, "Jim Piersall...threatens to become the greatest gate attraction the Red Sox ever had...the Sox have, in Piersall, a player different from any one ever on the club. 'I told Satch I was going to bunt,' said Jim, 'when I went up there in the ninth. He looked at me kind of surprised. But he didn't say anything. Then, when I put the bunt down and reached first, I went to work on him.'...Piersall mimicked Satch's fluid windup. He held on to his arm, yelling, 'Satch, you won't be able to wash your face tomorrow, your arm will be so tired.'...Catcher Clint Courtney said, 'I think that Piersall's crazy. I never saw such a crazy guy in baseball.'"⁴³

In the last game of the subsequent three-game series in Chicago, Boudreau benched Piersall in favor of Vollmer. Cashman wrote, "Vollmer for Piersall is construed as a move to discipline rookie Jim, whose

eccentric actions have the whole league talking and the fans flocking to see him. Not since Harry Hooper's days have the Hose had a right fielder who could field and throw and run like Piersall. Moreover he hit .341 [actually .333] since going to the sun field. Along with all that, he's the most refreshing and hustlingest guy the Hose have had in ages. If he's forced to become strictly conventional, the Red Sox will ruin the best gate attraction in the league. And while he's sitting out, the Sox will be depriving themselves of one of the keenest competitors and most talented rookies in the business."⁴⁴

Jim appeared in the next two games as a late-inning replacement for Vollmer. He returned to the starting lineup for all four games in Cleveland but went only 2-for-12. In one of the games on the Western swing, Piersall sped in from his outfield spot to catch a low liner with his gloved hand while tipping his cap to the crowd with the other.⁴⁵ On June 25, Mike Gillooly wondered why Piersall hadn't started the first two games in Detroit since he had hit .526 and knocked in seven runs against the Tigers in earlier series.⁴⁶

The games in Detroit earned Piersall a \$10 fine from American League president Will Harridge for "fraternizing" with the Detroit players. Jimmy told reporters before the first game against Washington back in Fenway Friday night, June 27, that he had written a letter to Harridge. "I told him I'd be paying some umpire's salary before the season was over."⁴⁷ Writing that self-incriminating line to the league president showed a lack of judgement, as did telling the media about it.

Despite a "We want Piersall" banner in center field, Jim did not enter the game against the Nationals until the seventh inning as a defensive replacement. He made a backhanded catch of a screaming liner and immediately whirled toward the bleachers, removed his cap, and bowed. The fans loved it.⁴⁸

Then came the bombshell. The Red Sox "astounded the baseball world"⁴⁹ at noon on Saturday, June 28, by abruptly sending Piersall to Birmingham of the AA Southern Association just 12 hours after Boudreau had announced that Jimmy had won back a starting spot in right field. Piersall cried like a baby in the clubhouse when he received the news. Talking to reporters before boarding a flight to Birmingham, Jim blamed coach Bill McKechnie of all people. "Here I am playing good, hustling ball, and what do I get for it? McKechnie ships me out of town after Boudreau told me Friday night I was starting Saturday's game...I can't figure the reason. Don't they want to win? Didn't I

help get them up there?"⁵⁰ Jimmy's totals with the Red Sox for 56 games included a .267 batting average (43-for-161), 16 RBIs, 28 runs, 8 doubles, 1 home run, and 28 walks.

Boudreau told reporters, "I changed my mind about him this morning after saying last night he would start today's game. I sent him down to straighten him out. He's got to hit better. I told him so. My decision wasn't made overnight. I know Piersall's antics made him popular with the fans and the baseball writers. But I had to consider the other 25 or 30 men on my club. We're trying to win and Piersall was a disturbing influence." Lou said that Jimmy told him, "Maybe I deserve this, but I'll be back."⁵¹ Lou didn't mention it, but he had asked coach Bill McKechnie to talk to Jim to no avail.⁵² GM Cronin reinforced his manager's explanation. "I've never seen Lou so nervous. After he sat shaking in my office for some time, he finally told me Piersall had to go for the good of the club. Lou said time and again he had begged Piersall to behave himself but that he just got worse every day."⁵³ Cronin cited the fact that Jim had stood clowning at the plate by mimicking the pitcher while taking three strikes in the game against the Nationals.⁵⁴

Despite these explanations, Gillooly asked, "Who's running the ball club? Not Boudreau, evidently. And perhaps not even Joe Cronin, who earlier in the week had called Piersall 'My Boy' and praised the 'bush league' stuff Jimmy pulled to defeat...Satchel Paige...It's been bruited about for weeks now that a quintet of Sox five-year men have been complaining about Piersall's pranks. Reliable reports have it that they went to Boudreau and asked that he release the kid... 'He lowers the dignity of the club' was their complaint."⁵⁵

"Thunderous disapproval was registered by rabid Red Sox fans" at Saturday's game when they learned that their favorite had been demoted. One fan expressed the feelings of many when he said, "I came out to the game today just to see Piersall play. I read in the papers that Boudreau said he was going to start in right field. Now I find they shipped him out. What's the matter with that Boudreau anyway?" Another fan said, "I think he's the victim of the jealousy of some other players. He's a natural clown and was getting a lot of publicity which some of the older players resented."⁵⁶

Jim's wife Mary and his father were bitter about the demotion. Both felt he behaved as he did because he thought management wanted him to do so. Mary said, "When he had the battle with Billy Martin, they seemed to approve of his type of bench jockeying.

Jimmy thought that was what they wanted, a player full of fire and with the desire to win.” His father blamed Jim’s teammates. “I know they were giving him the silent treatment. Ted Lepcio was the only one who would talk to him. What kind of men do they call themselves? It looks as though they couldn’t stand a kid who was as good as some of them, full of determination and trying to set a fire under them. They can relax now. They don’t have to worry about losing their jobs to a rookie who was playing better ball than they were.”⁵⁷

Boston American columnist Austen Lake sensed that something was wrong with Piersall. “...the Red Sox have produced some weird characters during the last seven, neurotic years. But the latest and daffiest is Jim Piersall...Somewhere between spring’s dry stubble and summer’s green grass, Piersall became a one-man psychopathic ward—either by plan or by nature. Both on and off the field his moods merged into each other in a maniacal blur. He babbled half coherently, wept impulsively, stormed without provocation, laughed convulsively, gyrated, quarreled and jiggled—sometimes separately, sometimes all at once. So is this a studied ACT, self-designed to increase his public appeal and thus fatten his future contract as a box office attraction? Or did some of Jim’s cerebral rivets work loose since last March when he was a docile, industrious, church-going youth...? ...When the Sox opened their season Jim turned loud, belligerent, burlesque and a cockle-burr under his team’s skin. ...It was funny for a while and the fans welcomed Jim as a comic relief...Still what puzzles me from believing that this was coldly calculated by Jim was his immediate and frenzied flood of real tears when benched or scolded. And his black funks when rebuffed! His angers are violent and sudden...Also he had a chronic persecution complex and complained loudly that he was a target for clubhouse politics, dugout prejudices, and managerial discrimination. Also, from being a civil-tongued, courteous man, calmly polite as he was in the South, he employed harsh obscenities, offensive even to the rough-spoken company of ball men.”⁵⁸

Another writer concerned about Piersall was Bill Cunningham. He wrote in the July 4 *Boston Herald*: “The Boudreau decision to bar himself to the press immediately after ball games is said to stem from the fact that ‘some of the writers’ were not too kind in their reporting of the Piersall sacking. In other words, they wrote sympathetically of the young man. Although not involved, it seems to me that was the human way to handle it. Something’s wrong with that kid. He needs help, not abuse.”⁵⁹

Piersall was no stranger to Birmingham, where he compiled what he later called “one of the greatest baseball seasons I’ve ever had.”⁶⁰ He batted .346 in 121 games in 1951, helping lead the Barons to both the Southern Association title and the Dixie Series crown over the Texas League champions. He told his wife before leaving Boston that he was glad he was sent to Birmingham because he had a lot of friends there.⁶¹ He made an immediate impact when he returned to The Magic City. He went straight from the airport to the ballpark, suited up, played center field, and hit a three-run homer. The ball cleared the 60-foot scoreboard in left center field 381 feet from home plate.⁶²

Two days later, Piersall, his voice quivering, told the Birmingham diamond club, “From now on I’m going to do my best to control my behavior.”⁶³ But he had already begun the antics that got him demoted. In the Sunday doubleheader the previous day, he “pranced out of the players’ tunnel, twirling a bat like a drum major’s baton, ...and laid down in the outfield when the rival pitcher came to bat.”⁶⁴ He went to bat left-handed on one occasion. He hit a home run that earned him a \$50 prize but also heckled the Memphis batters from the outfield, where he continually whistled. Twice he left the field to get water, once while he was a runner on third and again when he was batting. He doffed his cap every time he passed the Memphis dugout. As in Boston, the hometown fans loved his antics while the opposing players hated them.⁶⁵ Eddie Glennon, the Barons’ general manager, called Cronin the next morning and told Joe, “That boy certainly has changed since we had him down here last year. Maybe I can stand it if we are winning, but some of those freakish stunts of his will become quite irritating when we are losing.”⁶⁶

With the Barons in New Orleans on July 2, a story broke in Boston that explained why Piersall had been shipped out so suddenly. The words came from Ronnie Stephens, four-year-old son of Red Sox short-stop Vern Stephens, and were spoken to a *Boston American* reporter: “Jim Piersall held me over his head and spanked me three times.” The boy continued, “I socked him one and told him he was a naughty boy. I cried for 10 minutes.”⁶⁷ The incident occurred during the eighth inning of the game against the Nationals the previous Friday. When confronted by reporters while in Philadelphia for a series with the Athletics, Boudreau admitted that the spanking was the last straw. Lou realized that Jimmy might have been fooling with the boy but hit him “a little too hard.” Vern Stephens had not known about the incident until the story broke. His reaction was, “It’s a good thing they sent Piersall out of town away from me.”⁶⁸



Piersall's antics accelerated when he was sent to Birmingham.

When contacted in New Orleans, Piersall didn't deny that the incident happened but said he intended no harm to the youngster. "I did go into the clubhouse during the game, and Vern's young boy, a cute kid, was there. I started fooling with him and I guess I gave him a little spank on the seat of his pants that was a little too hard because he started to cry. I kidded with him then and asked if he was all right. I have two children of my own and wouldn't for a minute stand for anyone intentionally hurting them. I certainly didn't mean to hurt Stevie's boy and told him so Friday night and Saturday morning." Vern admitted that Jim came to him and asked him if Ronnie was okay but said that he didn't understand what Piersall was talking about.⁶⁹

In acknowledging the incident, Boudreau told reporters, "I couldn't announce why I was sending Piersall down to Birmingham for obvious reasons, but his action Friday night was the culmination of a series of incidents that forced me to drop him from the club." The next day, after reading Jim's explanation, Stephens changed his tune and said that he was sorry for Jim, and that he realized the spanking was meant in fun. "And I'm sorry that the news of the incident was taken to Lou Boudreau." When told what Stephens said, Piersall replied, "Gee, that's wonderful. He is such a grand guy."⁷⁰

It also came to light that the person who "squealed" on Piersall was clubhouse attendant Johnny Orlando, who was present with Ronnie and his nine-year-old brother. Vern Jr. also defended Jim. "He wasn't hitting him hard, though. Ronnie cried because Ronnie is tender. Piersall was just playing, I think."⁷¹

Boudreau also clarified what bothered him about Piersall's behavior. "Jim is such a good outfielder that he can handle the job despite his clowning. But it was

at the plate and off the field that burned me up. He's not good enough a batter yet to fool around at the plate. Time and again, I told him that he has to bear down at the plate. But he kept up the clowning."⁷²

Bob Dunbar of the *Boston Herald* called the spanking incident "extremely unfortunate. Piersall may be a lot of things, but he certainly isn't a child-beater. As a matter of fact, most of the youngsters around Fenway Park love him. Jim used to get to the park...and play ball for a couple of hours with boys like Tommy Cronin, son of the Sox general manager."⁷³

Piersall gave some clues about his mental state when he spoke by phone from New Orleans to *Boston Daily Record* reporter Paul Whelton on July 3. Jim said, "That business about a spanking really knocked me for a loop. The thing was just a bit of fun in passing and while I was swinging the little fellow in the air and setting him down again in the clubhouse, I did spank his fanny a couple of times—just like I do with my own kids—but only in fooling. He did start to cry and maybe I did hit him too hard, but I thought he probably was more frightened at being swung into the air. Boy, you don't think people up there really believe I'd hurt a child, do you?" Told that the consensus in Boston was that it "was just one of those things," Piersall said, "Good!" He then revealed his plan to send Ronnie a telegram to tell him he regretted what happened. He even told the reporter what he would say and asked how it sounded. "You don't figure anybody'll twist that to make it sound like more popoff?" Assured that "nobody of sound mind" would, Jim said, "That's swell. It relieves my mind." Then Whelton asked, "When do you figure you'll be back with the Boston club, Jim?"

"I'm not even going to guess. I'm just playing ball. I guess I'm gonna be a settling down guy—if it takes all summer. But I'll be back. I'll be up there."

"There's a light still burning in the window."

"Brother, I hope so. Don't let anybody blow it out."

"You're the only one can do that."

After a moment of silence, Jim replied, "I get you. I know what you mean."

He thanked Whelton for the talk, then said he had to go "send that wire."⁷⁴

We can't know whether the revelation of the spanking exacerbated Piersall's emotional problems. But we do know that he went beyond anything he had done before in the five-game series against the Pelicans in New Orleans July 2–5. In the first game, Piersall, playing center field, "never once stopped his monkey shining or his jabbering. He rode [Pelicans pitcher Ramon] Salgado, flaunted the authority of the

umpires and indulged in all sorts of unorthodox clowning.”⁷⁵ He also rushed in from his position holding his hands up for “time” and went to the bench without explanation. It turned out that he needed to rearrange the bandage on a foot blister. Southern Association president Charlie Hurth, in attendance, was not pleased.

During the series, Piersall also did the following:

- Never sat on the bench when his team was at bat but instead stood just outside the dugout with his back to the field, waving a towel to the crowd
- While a runner on first base, walked to home plate to whisper something to the batter and, on another occasion, left the batter’s box to speak to the runner on third
- Tried to squint down at the catcher’s signals during an at-bat, walking out of the box before one pitch with two fingers down to show what the catcher had called
- Used the glove of Pelicans’ outfielder Frank Thomas after the latter made a spectacular catch to end the half inning (Players left their gloves on the field between innings in those days.)
- Rode Pels pitcher Ed Wolfe throughout every one of his plate appearances against him and continued to heckle Wolfe each of the three times he reached first base via a walk. On one of those occasions, Jim walked from first base to the mound to accuse Wolfe of throwing at him.

Matters got out of hand in the final game of the series when Jim’s actions caused his own pitcher, John McCall, to lose his cool. In the top of the sixth, a big rhubarb broke out when home plate umpire George Popp ruled a ball foul. Birmingham manager Red Mathis was ejected, and several players berated the ump. Piersall took no part in the fuss but instead mimicked the umpires, his manager, and some of the players. “He grabbed up a bat and knelt at the plate; then raced hither and thither, laughing good-naturedly...”⁷⁶

When Popp ordered play to resume, Jim “loitered about the infield, paying no attention to the remonstrations of his teammates to go out to his position. McCall, who was anxious to get the game going, threw a ball in Piersall’s direction and far into center field. He doubtless figured that would make the playboy go

to the outfield. Umpire Popp ordered him to go and Piersall slowly walked out. He kicked the ball as if in soccer, ran after it, picked it up and threw it to the scoreboard boy. The boy, who was at the top of the high board, tossed it back; Piersall returned it.” That was too much for Popp, who ejected Piersall from the game. As Jim ran past the pitcher’s mound, McCall gave him a tongue-lashing.⁷⁷

Shortly afterward, Piersall, still in uniform, appeared in the grandstand among a group of about 500 New Orleans Recreation Department boys. With many fans watching him instead of the game, he led them in a chant, “We want Piersall.” Then Jim disappeared into the dressing room. Returning in street clothes, he joined league president Hurth in his box seat and had the audacity to heckle Popp as well as Pelicans manager Danny Murtaugh while sitting next to the man who had the authority to fine and/or suspend him.⁷⁸

Veteran *Times-Picayune* sportswriters Harry Martinez and Bill Keefe had mixed opinions about Piersall. On the one hand, wrote Martinez, “baseball needs more players like Jim Piersall...to put more life into the game. ...Call him a ‘screwball,’ ‘showboat’ or what you will, he has color, and any individual who can give the fans so many laughs is valuable to a ball club. After all, the fans go out to the parks to be entertained. ...Piersall is a ‘take charge’ guy. Whether he is at bat, on base, or in center field, you can’t help keeping your eyes glued to him. ...Piersall can afford to clown a bit because he is a good ballplayer. His only fault is, he overdoes his act.”⁷⁹

Keefe had similar sentiments. “The boy may not be a big-league ball player and may be a big-league screw ball. Don’t, however, sell him short as a ball player and don’t think too harshly of him because he gets a lot of fun out of baseball. He has more points to admire than to condemn...He loves to play and he puts out 100 percent effort on every try. ...When he keeps within bounds he’s refreshing, original and entertaining. You can’t help but like him...” However, “Unless he curtails some of his activities, he isn’t going to get along with any manager or with any teammates.”⁸⁰

After the incident with pitcher McCall, Keefe changed his tune. “Up until about 5 o’clock Saturday evening I shared with the baseball writers of Boston the opinion that Lou Boudreau...and his players had taken an unfriendly, unjust and narrow-minded stand against Jim Piersall...Came late Saturday afternoon and I was compelled to admit to myself that the Red Sox had not rebelled against Piersall because they were envious of the attention he attracted, and Boudreau had not demanded his removal because Boudreau disliked seeing the boy monopolize the limelight. It

became apparent to me that Boudreau and the Red Sox wanted to rid themselves of Piersall because they realized he was hurting the play of the team, just as the Birmingham players in the Southern Association are beginning to learn that Piersall is a thorn in the side of any team of ambitious ball players.”⁸¹

Yet Piersall still had his defenders in the American League. At least two managers in Philadelphia for the All-Star game, the Athletics’ Jimmy Dykes and Cleveland’s Al Lopez, praised Jim. “Crazy or not,” commented Dykes, “I’d take Piersall any day. He’s a heck of a ball player...”⁸² Browns manager Marty Marion praised Piersall during a series in Boston right after the break. “Baseball needs colorful, aggressive players of the Jim Piersall type. I don’t mean I approve of all the things Piersall did. He went too far at times. But if he could be tamed to the extent where he wouldn’t upset his own club and still show the life and fight he did when with the Sox, he could be a great asset.”⁸³

When the Southern Association reached its All-Star Game break, Jim returned to Boston to bring his wife and children to Birmingham. However, he told the Boston press, “I’ve changed my mind. It’s too hot to move so I’m going back alone.” He also reiterated his determination to return to the Red Sox. “I’ve got a million dollars’ worth of ability and I’m going to prove it to Lou Boudreau and Joe Cronin. Maybe they think I’m a screwball but I’m going to prove to them that I can play the kind of ball that wins pennants. ...It seems that when a fellow gets a reputation, everybody wants to get in on the act. Last Sunday everyone criticized me spitting on an umpire. Heck, I didn’t spit on any umpire. I was just talking to him...”⁸⁴ Piersall also called Cronin to ask to be restored to the Sox roster. According to Jimmy, Cronin was willing but Boudreau was not. “I promised to clam up and stick strictly to baseball, but it didn’t get anywhere except Joe said, ‘Go back to Birmingham and behave. Maybe something will happen later.’” Jimmy stopped by Fenway Park and picked up “a bale of mail” that had been sent by fans. “Most of the fans tell me to behave myself and I’ll be back in Boston. I think they’re right.”⁸⁵

Meanwhile, Keefe took an informal poll of owners and managers of Southern Association teams who were in New Orleans for that circuit’s All-Star game. “None wants to be quoted on Piersall’s threat to baseball—naturally. No man likes to be the cause of losing a man his job—especially when it’s a married man with a couple of kids. But most of the men have spoken to Birmingham ball players and they all agree that the Barons themselves are the sufferers. They merely point out that no player wants to room with Piersall.

A few of them scoff at the story that Piersall uses no offensive language. They offer to prove that the young man has been very offensive in his cussing in hotel lobbies, as well as on the ball field.”⁸⁶

When play resumed in the Association, so did Piersall’s antics. The Pelicans played a series in Birmingham a week after the bizarre set in the Crescent City. A *Life* magazine photographer was present on July 12 when Piersall razed Pels pitcher Salgado just as he had in the previous series. Upset by what Jim was doing, New Orleans outfielder Frank Thomas went after Jimmy. Players from both teams crowded around the pair, and no blows were thrown.⁸⁷

Up in Boston, Piersall received support from a surprising source—Dave Egan of the *Boston American*, famous for his long-running criticism of Ted Williams and the Red Sox front office.⁸⁸ “...men who have led the Red Sox to defeat after defeat over a period of many years actively resented young Jimmy Piersall from the moment...he first set fiery foot in the Sarasota training-camp. ...He disturbed them...because he said too much. He jogged them out of their comfortable ruts. ...He challenged them to work as feverishly as he worked. He demanded that they be pugnacious ball-players, not weary businessmen. ...And he got what the old guard, in so many lines of endeavor, too often gives the young. He got the works, with a capital W.”⁸⁹

Egan added a twist to the spanking story. “On a sunny April day in Sarasota more than a year ago, [Piersall] felt impelled to stiffen Johnny Orlando, the clubhouse custodian who is a member in good standing of the old guard. He was stepping to the plate in batting practice, with one of Dom DiMaggio’s bats in his hands, when Orlando roughly intruded himself and attempted to wrest the bat from him...It was none of Orlando’s business in the first place, and Piersall had been given permission by DiMaggio to use the bat in the second, and Orlando had laid rough hands on him in the third, but to men who want no cloud in their sky, ... this was as good an excuse as the next to brand him an undisciplined trouble-maker. ...I am saying that what the embittered old guard of the Red Sox wanted to happen did happen, when Jimmy Piersall was sentenced to an indeterminate term in Birmingham, and this is my accusation: that men who have become fat and rich at the expense of Tom Yawkey and the baseball fans of New England did nothing to help, and everything to hurt, the most magnificent prospect that baseball has known in a generation. ...Now there are dozens of stories about the boy: how he taunted the placid Vic Wertz of the Tigers into such an unwonted fury that Wertz invited him under the grandstand; how

Piersall makes a spectacular catch in Yankee Stadium while playing for Cleveland in 1961. The other outfielder is Willie Kirkland.



NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME LIBRARY, COOPERSTOWN, NY

he told Cleveland newspapermen that only George Kell excelled him on the Red Sox squad...how he imitated the curious lope of Dom DiMaggio...and how the same Johnny Orlando who had been set on the seat of his trousers in Sarasota 15 months earlier galloped to Boudreau with the fantastic story about Vern Stephens' child...Piersall, in other words, has been the victim of a palace plot."⁹⁰

Anton Demers wrote a column that appeared in the *Boston American* the next day under the large headline, "Lip on Over Piersall?—No!" He wrote: "The old boys are just about washed up and if Boudreau intends to make a pass at the pennant he might as well go all the way with the youth movement. ...The Sox have done very well with their Lepcios, Whites, Gernerts, Brodowskis & Co. They did better than well when Piersall was with the club, sloughed off when he was disciplined." And, "Do these Red Sox want to win? This telephone has been ringing all morning with the same fan query: 'Have the Sox recalled Piersall yet?' It seems they better had."⁹¹

On July 14, Jim had another run-in with an umpire, this one during a Monday night home game that drew 10,200. Piersall argued that he caught a triple and was tossed for the third time since he joined the Barons. Jim admitted later that he did not catch the ball on the fly.⁹²

As if this soap opera needed more subplots, this item appeared in the July 15 *Boston Traveler*: "Jim Piersall may come back to Boston in a Celtics' basketball uniform before he returns to the Red Sox. Boston's club in the National Basketball Association put Piersall on its negotiations list today. The Celtics now will

attempt to sign him to play this winter."⁹³ However, GM Cronin immediately announced that the Red Sox would not give him permission to play even if he was interested in doing so.⁹⁴

Piersall's antics literally reached new heights July 16 in a home game with Atlanta. He squirted home plate with a water pistol to greet teammate Milt Bolling as he arrived following a homer. Shortly afterward, Jimmy argued loudly over a strike three call, causing his dismissal from a fourth contest. Jim then went to the Rickwood Field grandstand roof and continued to heckle the umpire.⁹⁵

That was the last straw for President Hurth, who suspended Jim for three games and fined him \$50. That was also the last straw for Joe Cronin, who summoned his troubled outfielder to Boston. The Associated Press article added, "There were unconfirmed reports that the...outfielder would not return to the Barons."⁹⁶ That possibility was substantiated the next day when it was learned that Jim had flown on a one-way ticket and that all his clothing and equipment followed him to Boston.⁹⁷

A headline on the front page of the evening *Boston Traveler* on Friday, July 18, the day after Jim's return, blared, "Piersall May Return To Lineup." Reporters met with an "extremely nervous" Piersall at his home that morning as he waited to meet with Cronin. Concerning the possibility of his playing that night against Cleveland, Jim said, "The suspension stands in the big leagues as well as in the Southern Association, but I hope the Red Sox can do something about it and get it cut to one day." He revealed that, at the insistence of Red Sox officials, he had visited "a nerve doctor" in

Birmingham. According to Piersall, the doctor believed his nervous condition had been brought on by the uncertainty about whether he'd be playing in Birmingham or Boston. "He gave me some pills and told me, 'I don't think you need these, and you can do what you want with them, but they may relax you and slow you down a little.' But I didn't want to slow down any, and I threw them down the drain." Jim admitted he didn't like playing in Birmingham because of the heat but bragged that attendance tripled in his time with the club. He also gave his paranoid opinion of the Southern Association arbiters. "The umpires are out to get me down there. ...They're strictly bush all the way." He excused his outlandish behavior this way: "My jumping around out there put the fans on me...and it takes the pressure off the rest of the boys." He boasted that he had not made an error during his three weeks with Birmingham. He also revealed that he had collected more than \$600 worth of clothing from merchants who offered prizes for extra base hits and hitting certain signs in the park. Ever the optimist, Piersall said, "I've learned my lesson, and I'm ready to play up here."⁹⁸ He then went to a radio station for a live interview and took so many phone calls from fans that the show was extended 15 minutes.⁹⁹

The meeting with Cronin turned out to be an automobile ride during which Joe gave his young farmhand "a fatherly talk." All the GM would say afterward was, "Right now, he's still on the Birmingham roster. In three or four days, I may tell you something different." That statement set off speculation that Piersall could be sent to another Red Sox farm club or that Joe would intercede with Boudreau to get Jim back in a Red Sox uniform.^{100,101}

None of that came to pass. After meeting with Jim Saturday morning and talking to owner Tom Yawkey, Cronin made a stunning announcement. "After consultation and with advice of doctors, Jim Piersall is going to take a rest. The ball club, of course, is interested primarily in Jim Piersall—not where he is going to play or how or what position." Pressed for further comment, Cronin said, "I think it would be for the best interests of Jim Piersall if all of us left him completely alone for the time that he'll be absent from baseball." The Birmingham Barons placed Piersall on the disabled list.¹⁰²

Jim acted as if a great weight had been removed from his shoulders. When he returned with his wife from the second meeting, "he was bubbling over with good spirits, singing in an off-key baritone..." according to a front-page story in the *Boston American*. He refused to add anything to what Cronin had said.¹⁰³

After being examined at a private facility in Georgetown, Massachusetts, Piersall was admitted to Danvers (MA) State Hospital on July 22 for a 10-day observation period. The transfer was made with the consent of Jim's wife after her husband became "overactive and very difficult to manage." "He's a pretty sick boy right now," said Dr. Clarence Bonner, superintendent of the hospital. Jim's condition was diagnosed as "nervous exhaustion."¹⁰⁴ The following day, he was transferred to Westborough State Hospital to be nearer his home in Newton.¹⁰⁵

Jimmy wrote this about his 1952 season on the first page of *Fear Strikes Out*: "I don't remember any of it. From the moment I walked into the lobby of the Sarasota-Terrace Hotel in Sarasota, Florida, to report to the Red Sox special training camp on the morning of January 15, 1952, until the moment I came to my senses in the violent room of the Westborough State Hospital in Massachusetts the following August, my mind is almost an absolute blank. I do have a clear recollection of the birth of my second daughter, Doreen, in March, but outside of that, there are only a few hazy impressions. ... Shock treatments, faith, a wonderful wife, a fine doctor and loyal friends pulled me out of it."¹⁰⁶

Billy Martin had said in July that he had "no regrets" about fighting Piersall because "he had it coming."¹⁰⁷ But when the Yankees infielder learned of Jim's illness, he felt ashamed. "I didn't know he was sick like that. Maybe we deserve each other. Sometimes I think I'm ready for the guys with the white coats myself."¹⁰⁸

Jim disappeared from the newspapers for the entire month of August. Finally, an item appeared stating that Piersall, who "suffered a nervous breakdown," returned to his Newton home on September 9. Although still in the "convalescing stage," he was reported by the Red Sox front office "to be getting along very well."¹⁰⁹ Lou Boudreau expressed delight that Jim had improved enough to leave Westbrook hospital. "If Jim is well, I'm sure he'll be one of our regular outfielders next season. ...He's a brilliant prospect."¹¹⁰

In November, Piersall took his family to Sarasota for the winter to prepare for spring training 1953.¹¹¹ In addition to paying all his medical bills, the Red Sox took care of his family's expenses in Florida.¹¹²

As the Red Sox started spring training for the 1953 season, Boudreau announced that Piersall was his right fielder "if he is in as good shape physically and mentally as reported."¹¹³

Jim rewarded his manager's faith in him by batting .272 in 151 games that season. Modern defensive statistics rank him first among American League right fielders in 1953 in Total Zone Runs and Range Factor/Game.¹¹⁴ ■

Notes

1. sabr.org. Jim Piersall biography by Mark Armour.
2. Murray Kramer, "Murphy Reveals Story Behind Red Sox Kids," *Boston American*; May 11, 1952, 18.
3. Joe Cashman, "Pesky Delighted with New Pact," *Boston American*; March 2, 1952, 19.
4. Anton Demers, "Lip on Over Piersall?—No!," *Boston American*; July 14, 1952, 7.
5. Larry Claflin, "Vern Capable of Replacing Ted in Left," *Boston American*; March 18, 1952, 29.
6. John Drohan, "Red vs. Sox in First Hose Intra Squad Tilt," *Boston Traveler*; March 4, 1952, 42.
7. Mike Gillooly, "Grade A Outfield Talent Brought Piersall Shift," *Boston American*; March 4, 1952, 16.
8. *Boston Daily Record*; March 10, 1952, 42.
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10. Jim Piersall and Al Hirshberg, *Fear Strikes Out: The Jim Piersall Story* (New York, Open Road Integrated Media, 2011); Kindle location 947.
11. Piersall and Hirshberg; Kindle location 1061.
12. Ed Costello, "Dropo's Bat Paces 'Sox,' 7-0," *Boston Herald*; March 6, 1952, 22.
13. Joe Cashman, "Senators Hand Hose 5th Loss in Row, 4 to 1," *Boston Daily Record*; March 14, 1952, 11.
14. John Drohan, "Boudreau Still Testing With Piersall, Stephens," *Boston Traveler*; March 14, 1952, 35.
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22. Ibid.
23. Joe Cashman, "3 Yearlings Terrific As Parnell Wins, 3-0," *Boston Daily Record*; April 16, 1952, 37.
24. Mike Gillooly, "Rizzuto Scores on Mize's Single," *Boston American*; April 24, 1952, 20.
25. *Boston Herald*; June 6, 1952, 22.
26. Arthur Sampson, "Sox Protest Involves Umpire's Judgment, Unlikely to Get Far," *Boston Herald*; May 12, 1952, 15.
27. Mark Cofman, *162-0: Imagine a Red Sox Perfect Season: The Greatest Wins!* (Chicago: Triumph Books, 2010); 81.
28. Bill Pennington, *Billy Martin: Baseball's Flawed Genius* (Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt: 2015); 86-87.
29. *Times-Picayune*; May 25, 1952, 89. Martin's fight with Piersall stirred up the slumbering Yankees. They won 13 of their next 18 games to climb into first place.
30. Herb Raley, "Billy Martin, Jim Piersall fight at Red Sox-Yankees game," *Boston Globe*, May 25, 1952, page unknown. Piersall often excused his behavior by saying that anyone would have done the same in his position.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. *Newport Daily News*, May 27, 1952, 12.
34. Ibid.
35. Joe Cashman, "Piersall Chased," *Boston Daily Record*; June 2, 1952, 32.
36. *Boston Traveler*; June 3, 1952, 50.
37. Ed Costello, "Piersall Breaks Down, Cries After Walking Out on Meeting," *Boston Herald*; June 4, 1952, 22.
38. Ibid.
39. Alan Frazer, "Tigers Ride Jim Piersall," *Boston American*; June 9, 1952, 32. Ray sang the song "Cry" that topped the charts in 1952.
40. Austen Lake, "Lou Wins Big Debate; Loses a Little One," *Boston American*; June 9, 1952, 47.
41. Will Cloney, "Red Sox Win 11-9, In Last of Ninth," *Boston Herald*; June 12, 1952, 1.
42. *Springfield (MA) Union*, June 29, 1952, 9.
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51. Ibid.
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56. Leo Monahan, "Sox Fans up in Arms as Kid Goes," *Boston American*; June 29, 1952, 19.
57. *Boston American*; June 30, 1952, 3.
58. Austen Lake, "Queer Case of Piersall: Cute or Quaint," *Boston American*; June 30, 1952, 43.
59. Ibid.
60. Piersall and Hirshberg; Kindle location 986.
61. *Boston Herald*; July 4, 1952, 4.
62. Ibid.
63. *Arkansas Democrat*; July 17, 1952, 29.
64. Ibid.
65. *Boston American*; June 30, 1952, 31.
66. Ibid.
67. *Boston American*; July 3, 1952, 13.
68. Ed Costello, "Piersall May Return If Batting Improves," *Boston Herald*; July 4, 1952, 1.
69. Ibid. Golenbock says in *Red Sox Nation* (page 202) that Piersall was accused of kicking the boy. However, none of the contemporary newspaper articles mention kicking, only spanking.
70. Nick Del Ninno, "Piersall Ousted for Spanking Stephens Boy," *Boston Traveler*; July 3, 1952, 10.
71. Virginia Bohlin, "'Spanking by Piersall Playful'—Mrs. Stephens," *Boston Traveler*; July 3, 1952, 5.
72. Nick Del Ninno, "Piersall Ousted for Spanking Stephens Boy," *Boston Traveler*; July 3, 1952, 10.
73. "Bob Dunbar," *Boston Herald*; July 4, 1952, 4.
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88. bostonsportsmedia.com/2009/06/23/excerpt-on-dave-egan.
89. Dave Egan, "Colonel Blames Sox Old Guard: Urges Piersall Return to Hose," *Boston American*; July 13, 1952, 9.
90. Ibid.
91. Anton Demers, "Lip on Over Piersall?—No!," *Boston American*; July 14, 1952, 7.
92. *Arkansas Democrat*; July 15, 1952, 28.
93. *Boston Traveler*; July 15, 1952, 1.
94. Ibid, 13. Piersall had also been an outstanding basketball player in high school.
95. *Huntsville Times*, July 17, 1952, 1.
96. *Arkansas Democrat*; July 18, 1952, 18.
97. *Boston American*; July 18, 1952, 6.
98. Harry Friedenber, "Piersall May Return To Lineup," *Boston Traveler*; July 18, 1952, 16.
99. *Boston American*; July 19, 1952, 16.
100. Ibid, 11.
101. *Boston Daily Record*; July 19, 1952, 27.
102. Harry Friedenber, "Piersall May Return To Lineup," *Boston Traveler*; July 18, 1952, 16.
103. *Boston American*; July 20, 1952, 1.
104. *Boston American*; July 22, 1952, 41.
105. *Times-Picayune*; July 23, 1952, 24.
106. Piersall and Hirshberg, Kindle location 9.
107. *Boston American*; July 19, 1952, 2.
108. Pennington; 87. Martin and Piersall eventually became lifelong friends. Jimmy told the *New York Post* in 1980: "I love Billy Martin. He helped me when I was down." Of the fight, Piersall said, "It was just one of those things that happened in baseball back then. Neither of us held a grudge."
109. *Boston Herald*; September 11, 1952, 12.
110. *Boston Daily Record*; September 12, 1952, 28.
111. Ed Costello, "'I'm Ready,' Says Piersall," *Boston Herald*; November 9, 1952, 153.
112. Golenbock; 203.
113. *Times-Picayune*; December 3, 1952, 31.
114. www.baseball-reference.com/players/p/piersji01.shtml.

Analysis of Andres Galarraga's Home Run of May 31, 1997

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ABSTRACT

In this article the home run hit by Andrés Galarraga at the Florida Marlins' home stadium in 1997 is analyzed. Assigned initially at 529, feet it was considered one of the longest in major league baseball history, but the distance estimate was later lowered to 468 feet. A mathematical model is developed to determine the trajectory of the ball using known principles of physics. The reliability of the model is demonstrated by comparisons with actual trajectory data measured by Statcast. The authors combine physics, descriptive geometry, detailed video analysis, and remote sensing data to examine Galarraga's home run. A breakthrough emerged from utilizing a high-resolution (LIDAR technology) map of Pro Player Stadium allowing the determination of accurate horizontal and vertical coordinates of the ball's impact point on the seats of the stadium. To account for uncertainties, eighteen cases were considered by varying the initial conditions based on historical ranges of MLB home runs, wind speed, and direction. Using orthogonal and conical projections, the most reliable solutions were selected by comparing the maximum height of the ball for each case to the actual height reached by the ball as shown on the video frame. The results show that Galarraga's home run reached a distance between 517.5 and 529.4 feet, with 524 feet the most probable value. Therefore it is one of the few home runs prior to the Statcast era to be proven to have exceeded the 500-foot distance.

1. INTRODUCTION

On May 31, 1997, Andres Galarraga ("The Big Cat") of the Colorado Rockies stepped up to the plate at Pro Player Stadium, in Miami, Florida, to confront Florida Marlins pitcher Kevin Brown in the fourth inning with the bases loaded. Galarraga connected on a 2–2 hanging slider to hit a mammoth grand slam to left-center field, into the twentieth row of the upper deck. Its distance was initially estimated at 573 feet and then changed to 529 feet (See Figure 1, from the *Rocky Mountain News*¹). Galarraga's home run was considered one of the longest homers in the history of major league baseball and one of the few to have exceeded 500 feet in distance.²

However, Greg Rybarczyk—founder of Home Run Tracker—studied some of the longest home runs in MLB and found that many of their distances had been overestimated.³ In particular, he reduced the distance of Galarraga's homer to 468 feet, excluding Galarraga from the elite 500-foot-plus group. The objective of this research is to resolve this conflict and answer these questions: What was the true distance of Galarraga's homer? Is this homer one of the few that has exceeded the distance of 500 feet?

2. MATHEMATICAL MODEL TO ANALYZE THE TRAJECTORY OF THE BATTED BALL

2.1 Dynamics equations

Newton's second law states that the sum of the gravitational (\vec{F}_g), drag (\vec{F}_d) and Magnus (\vec{F}_m) force vectors

ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS



Figure 1. The *Rocky Mountain News* reports a 529-foot distance a day after Galarraga's homer on June 1, 1997, in Denver, Colorado.

is equal to $m\vec{a}$, for a batted ball of mass m that has acceleration \vec{a} :

$$\vec{F}_g + \vec{F}_d + \vec{F}_m = m\vec{a} \quad (1)$$

where the Coriolis force due to earth's rotation has been neglected. The gravity force is given by $\vec{F}_g = -m\hat{g}\hat{k}$ where \hat{k} is a unit vector along the global fixed axis z in the inertial reference frame (x, y, z) . The drag force is given by:

$$\vec{F}_d = -\frac{1}{2} \rho C_d A V \vec{V} \quad (2a)$$

$$C_d = 0.50 - \frac{0.227}{1 + e^{-\left(\frac{1.4e7 V - 108.7}{21.0}\right)}} \quad (2b)$$

where ρ is the air density, C_d is the drag coefficient, A is the cross-sectional area of the ball, \vec{V} is the relative velocity vector given by the difference between the ball's and wind's velocity vectors with respect to ground, V is the speed or modulus of \vec{V} and C_d is the drag coefficient.⁴ In Equation (2b) the speed V is given in miles per hour (mph).

2.2 The Magnus force and the rotational velocity components

The Magnus force is given by:

$$\vec{F}_m = \frac{1}{2} \rho C_m A V^2 (\hat{\omega} \times \hat{V}) \quad (3)$$

where $\hat{\omega}$ and \hat{V} are the unit vectors of the rotational velocity vector $\vec{\omega}$ and the translational velocity vector \vec{V} , respectively, and C_m is the Magnus coefficient that depends on the spin factor S . The following expression of C_m has been proposed by Sawicki et al. in 2013 and cited in Nathan for its good fit to experimental measurements:⁵

$$C_m = 1.5 S \quad \text{for } S \leq 0.1 \quad (4a)$$

$$C_m = 0.09 + 0.6 S \quad \text{for } S > 0.1 \quad (4b)$$

The spin factor is given by $S = 0.00853 \frac{\omega}{V}$ where ω is the rotational speed in rpm and V is in mph. The decay of the rotational speed ω can be incorporated by multiplying the spin factor S by κ^t where κ is the spin decay factor and t is the time in seconds. For example, a value of $\kappa = 0.98$ means that the rotational speed decays 2% each second.

The modulus F_m of the Magnus force in Eq. (3) is given by Eq. (5) where γ is the angle between the $\vec{\omega}$ and \vec{V} vectors:

$$F_m = \frac{1}{2} \rho C_m A V^2 \sin \gamma \quad (5)$$

$$\gamma = \arccos(\hat{\omega} \cdot \hat{V}) / \omega V \quad (6)$$

where the dot \cdot means the scalar product of vectors \vec{V} and $\vec{\omega}$. In the fixed global coordinate system (x, y, z) , these vectors are given in terms of its scalar components and the unit vectors $\hat{i}, \hat{j}, \hat{k}$ along the coordinates x, y, z , respectively:

$$\vec{V} = V_x \hat{i} + V_y \hat{j} + V_z \hat{k} \quad (7)$$

$$\vec{\omega} = \omega_x \hat{i} + \omega_y \hat{j} + \omega_z \hat{k} \quad (8)$$

In the local coordinate system, the rotational velocity vector $\vec{\omega}$ can be written in terms of the time-varying orthonormal vectors $\hat{e}_b, \hat{e}_s, \hat{e}_g$ and the spin rates $\omega_b, \omega_s, \omega_g$ which are defined as the back, side and gyro spin components of the rotational speed, respectively:

$$\vec{\omega} = \omega_b \hat{e}_b + \omega_s \hat{e}_s + \omega_g \hat{e}_g \quad (9)$$

$$\hat{e}_b = \vec{V} \times \hat{k} \quad (10a)$$

$$\hat{e}_s = \hat{e}_b \times \vec{V} \quad (10b)$$

$$\hat{e}_g = \hat{e}_s \times \hat{e}_b = \vec{V} \quad (10c)$$

Note that ω_b could be positive or negative if it produces upward movement (backspin) or downward movement (topspin), respectively.

In matrix form, the global rotational speed components (ω_G) are related to the local ones (ω_L) by the transformation matrix A which is an orthogonal matrix. They are written in compact form (Eq. 11) and expanded form (Eq. 12) as follows:

$$\omega_G = A \omega_L \quad (11)$$

$$\begin{bmatrix} \omega_x \\ \omega_y \\ \omega_z \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} V_y/V_{xy} & -V_x V_z/VV_{xy} & V_x/V \\ -V_x/V_{xy} & -V_y V_z/VV_{xy} & V_y/V \\ 0 & V_{xy}/V & V_z/V \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \omega_b \\ \omega_s \\ \omega_g \end{bmatrix} \quad (12)$$

where $V_{xy} = (V_x^2 + V_y^2)^{1/2}$. The inverse relation is given by Eq. (13) where A^t is the transpose of A :

$$\omega_L = A^t \omega_G \quad (13)$$

Given the initial values of the rotational components $\omega_b, \omega_s, \omega_g$ of the batted ball, the initial rotational components $\omega_x, \omega_y, \omega_z$ in the global coordinates are calculated from Eq. (12). Neglecting the spin decay, angular momentum is conserved during the ball's flight, and therefore the rotational velocity vector $\vec{\omega}$ remains unchanged in the inertial (x, y, z) reference frame. However, due to the change in the direction of the velocity vector \vec{V} the local rotational frame is not an inertial frame and the rotational components $\omega_b, \omega_s, \omega_g$ may change; they are calculated from Eq. (13) at each time step. If the spin decay (κ) is incorporated in the ball's flight, each rotational component $\omega_b, \omega_s, \omega_g$ and $\omega_x, \omega_y, \omega_z$ is multiplied by κ^t . The set of three non-linear differential equations (Eq. 1) are solved by finite differences considering small time increments.

2.3 Validation of the Model

The model has to be validated before applying it to analyze the home run of Galarraga. Validation is done in two steps. First, neglecting air resistance and Magnus effect, the results of the model are compared to the analytical solution obtained from the classic theory of projectile motion. For a batted ball, given an initial height $h_0 = 3.28$ ft, an exit speed $V_0 = 110$ mph and a launch angle $\theta = 35^\circ$, the analytical solution gives the following results for the maximum height (H) and range (D) of the ball: $H = 136.31$ ft at $t = 2.875$ s and $D = 764.6$ ft at $t = 5.786$ s. Results for the simulation model using a time step of 0.001 s leads to values of $H = 136.35$ ft at $t = 2.875$ and $D = 764.7$ ft at 5.786 s. The very small differences in height and range are attributable to numerical discretization errors.

Next the model is validated by comparison with actual trajectory data measured by the Statcast system on a fly ball hit by Kris Bryant in a 2016 NLCS game, reported by Alan Nathan.⁶ The game took place at Dodger Stadium on October 20, 2016. According to Nathan, Statcast data show that the ball left the bat with an exit speed of $V_0 = 107.1$ mph, a vertical launch angle of $\theta = 20.8^\circ$ and an initial spray angle of $\beta_i = 2.4^\circ$ to the left of dead center field. The ball landed 382.6 feet from home plate at a final spray angle of $\beta_f = 4.4^\circ$ to the right of dead center field with a hang time of $t = 3.9$ s. The complete trajectory of the ball in vertical and horizontal planes is depicted graphically in Nathan's paper; the horizontal plane (top view) of the ball shows a curvilinear trajectory, indicating that the batted ball had a strong component of side spin (there is no wind) in addition to the back spin typical of long fly balls. These Statcast data provide us a unique opportunity to test the validity of the simulation model subjected to three-dimensional motion. The elevation of Dodger Stadium is reported to be 515 feet above sea level. According to the box score the game started at 5:09 PM and Bryant's fly ball occurred at the top of the fifth inning. We estimated the time to be approximately 6:40 PM. At that moment Weather Underground at the nearest station indicated an air temperature of 80.96° F, a barometric pressure of 1010.9 hPa and a dew point of 28.04° F with no wind. Using these data the calculated air density was 0.073 lb/ft³.

To run the model, additional information is required regarding the exit spin rate of the ball, but this is not presented in Nathan's paper (spin data of batted balls are not published by Statcast). Observation of the video shows that Bryant's bat is tilted down at approximately 45 degrees at the moment of the impact so

we assume that the ball leaves the bat with similar amount of backspin and sidespin. Thus the problem is formulated in the following way: given the known initial conditions V_0 , θ and β_i the goal of the simulation is to adjust the values of the initial spin rates ω_b and ω_s in order to replicate as accurately as possible the ball's trajectory measured by Statcast. To be able to compare the results of the model to the measured data we adopt the same system of coordinates as the one shown in Nathan's paper. So the coordinate system has its origin in the back of home plate, where the x-axis points to the catcher's right, the y-axis points to the second base and the z-axis points in the vertical direction. According to this system the initial position of the batted ball is estimated from Nathan's charts as $x_0 = 0$, $y_0 = 2$ ft and $z_0 = 3$ ft. The numerical solution was calculated with a time interval of 0.001 seconds. After some iterations with different spin rates, the best results were obtained with $\omega_b = 830$ rpm and $\omega_s = 820$ rpm. A small spin decay ($\kappa = 0.98$) was used.

The results of the model are compared to the measured data in Figure 2. The scales have been distorted in the figures to allow small differences to be appreciated. The Distance in Figure 2 (right) is the horizontal distance from the origin of coordinates. The measured data from Statcast are obtained by digitizing the ball's trajectory from Nathan's figures. The side and top views in Figure 2 show a good correspondence. The model yields a horizontal distance of 382.6 ft at $t = 4.0$ s and a final spray angle of $\beta_f = 4.4^\circ$, as compared to 382.6 ft at $t = 3.9$ s and $\beta_f = 4.4^\circ$ of Statcast. It is concluded that the model reproduces satisfactorily the measured data.

The numerical simulation allows examining in more detail the behavior of the spin rates during the flight. Time variations of ω and its components ω_b , ω_s , and ω_g are shown in Figure 3.

A gradual reduction in ω_b and ω_s is compensated by a gradual increase in ω_g during the first two seconds of the ball's flight, meaning that part of the back and side spins are being converted into gyro spin. A more pronounced decline in ω_s starts developing after the ball reaches its peak at $t = 1.87$ s. Surprisingly, the gyro spin component of the rotational speed is greater than the back and side spin components at the end of the flight. The velocity vector is no longer perpendicular to the rotational velocity vector and the angle between them (Ec. 6) evolves from an initial value of 90° to a value of 44.2° at the end of the trajectory at $t = 3.96$ s. Table 1 shows the initial and final values of the different components of the spin rates. The slight reduction in ω is due to the spin decay factor used in the simulation.

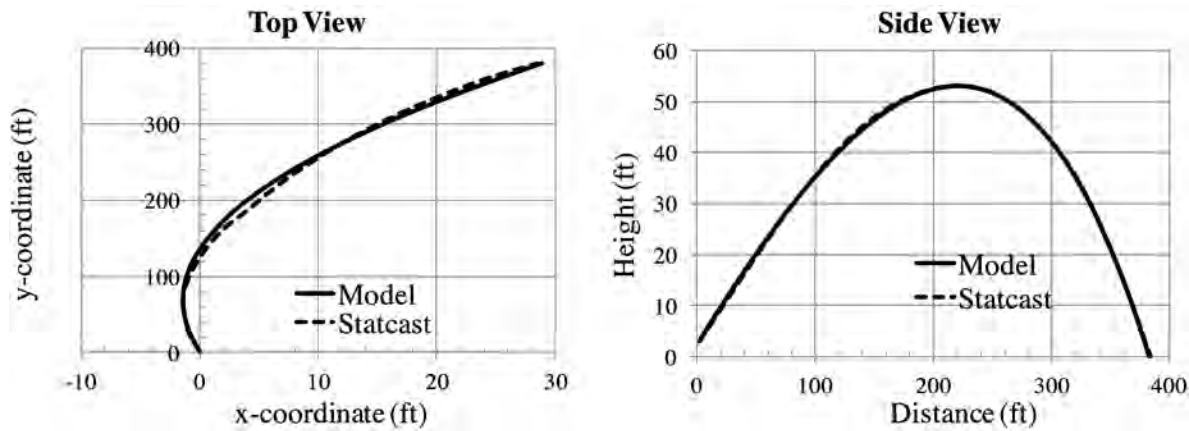


Figure 2. Model and Statcast (Nathan, 2017) trajectories of the Kris Bryant's fly ball, shown in horizontal (left) and vertical (right) planes.

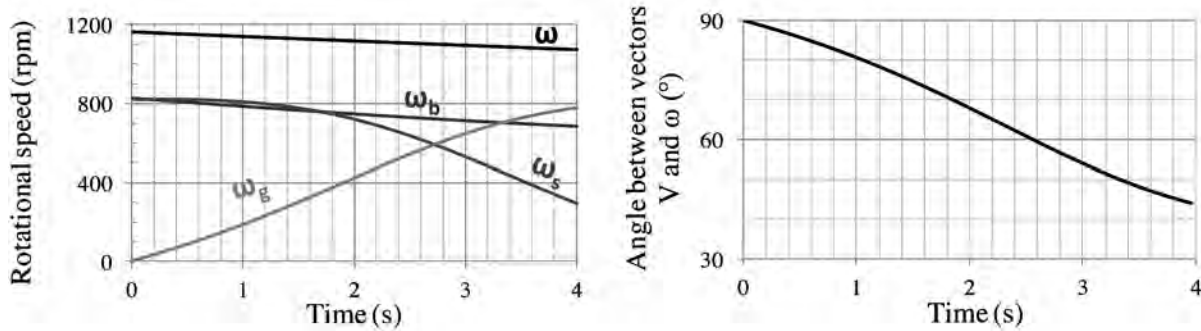


Figure 3. Time variation of the calculated values of the spin rates (left) and of the angle between vectors \vec{V} and $\vec{\omega}$ (right), during the ball's flight.

Initial Values					Final Values				
Speed Rates (rpm)				γ (°)	Speed Rates (rpm)				γ (°)
ω	ω_b	ω_s	ω_g		ω	ω_b	ω_s	ω_g	
1167	830	820	0	90	1077	685	306	773	44

Table 1. Initial and final values of the spin rates during Kris Bryant's fly ball. γ is the angle between vectors \vec{V} and $\vec{\omega}$.

3. Analysis of Galarraga's Home Run

There are two categories of unknowns that must be first determined in order to calculate the total distance traveled by the home run. The first category refers to the flight time (t_v), the coordinates (d , h) of the point where the ball landed on the stadium and the weather conditions (air density and wind speed and direction). The second category of unknowns refers to the initial conditions at the moment that the bat hits the ball. These are the initial translational speed (V_0), the vertical launch angle (θ), the horizontal spray angle (β) and the rotational speed components (back spin ω_b and side spin ω_s , assuming an initial gyro spin $\omega_g = 0$); these variables were not measured in 1997 but must be estimated in some way in order to solve the problem. The unknowns in this second category have a higher level of uncertainty than those of the first category.

3.1 Flight time and impact point

A frame-by-frame analysis of FOX video (MLB, 2016) was performed with a professional video editing program (Adobe Premiere). The flight time is the time from the moment the ball is batted to the moment when the ball hits the stadium. The internal chronometer of the editing program indicates a time flight of 4.67 seconds, which differs from the 4.97 seconds given by ESPN's Home Run Tracker (2016).³ Given this discrepancy, two independent chronometers were inserted into the program; both yielded 4.67 seconds, therefore this time was adopted as the flight time. The ball's point of impact was located in the middle of row 20 on the third sector of the upper deck (from the LF line) which has 30 rows (Figure 4, left).

The coordinates of the ball's impact point and of home plate were determined using LIDAR technology (Laser Imaging Detection and Ranging) which gives a

high-resolution 3D map of the Pro Player Stadium. For that purpose, a point cloud image of the stadium was downloaded from the US Geological Survey website and processed with Global Mapper software.⁷ The impact point was placed according to the location provided by the video frame (Figure 4, left). Home plate was located using the distances measured by physicist Brian Raue from the plate to the LF and RF fences, which were 327.5 feet and 347.25 feet, respectively, as shown in Figure 4, right.⁸ A horizontal distance (d) of 413.1 feet from the back of home plate and a height (h) of 97.5 feet above field level were obtained (Figure 4, right). The line connecting the plate to the point of impact forms an angle of 14.4° to the LF line.

3.2 Weather conditions

The game's box score indicated a temperature of 87° F on May 31, 1997, a cloudy sky without precipitation, and a game start time of 1:17 PM with a duration of 3:32.⁹ Climatic conditions included average relative humidity of 72% with a maximum of 97% and sea-level pressure of 1013 hPa.¹⁰ The altitude is 1 m. An air density of 1.148 kg/m^3 was calculated. The box score indicated winds of 6 mph out to center field at the beginning of the game. However, an analysis of the box score suggests that the home run could have taken place sometime between 2:40 PM and 3:00 PM. At 2:40 PM the closest weather station (KOPF, about 4 miles from the stadium) indicates recorded winds of 11 mph at an angle of about 11° out to the left of the LF line and around 3:00 PM recorded winds of 13 mph from right to left which coincide with the values used by ESPN.¹¹ Given the uncertainties regarding the wind, these three values were used in the calculations.

3.3 Initial conditions

It can be seen in the video that the bat made contact with the ball at approximately 3 feet (vertical distance) above field level. We also assume that the ball was hit at 2 feet (horizontal distance) from the back of the plate, thus setting the initial position of the batted ball. Since the other initial conditions for the ball (V_0 , θ , ω_b , and ω_s) are unknown, they must be assumed. Although there are many possible solutions to the problem, it is not necessary to adopt totally arbitrary values since in the last two years Statcast has measured the initial speed (V_0) and vertical launch angle (θ) of home runs hit in MLB. This information is used in this work to define ranges of possible values for these variables. An analysis of MLB's data indicates that the 50 longest home runs connected in 2015 and 2016 had an initial speed between 101 and 119 mph and a launch angle between 18° and 45° .¹² Therefore, these ranges of values for V_0 and θ are adopted for the calculations. The adopted range of horizontal exit spray angle (β) is 5° to 20° measured from the LF line (Figure 4, right); the actual value depends on the wind direction and the amount of side spin.

Rotational speeds (not reported by Statcast) have been obtained indirectly by Nathan.¹³ For a set of 281 homers the values found were between 650 rpm and 3500 rpm. Homers that reached greater distances ($D > 450 \text{ ft}$) had values above 1100 rpm. Therefore the range of ω values considered in the calculation was 1000 rpm to 3500 rpm. Since the ball was pulled to left field, it is assumed that there is a sidespin rotational component that causes the ball to break toward the LF foul pole based on Statcast data.¹⁴ The rotational component of backspin, sidespin and gyrospin speeds

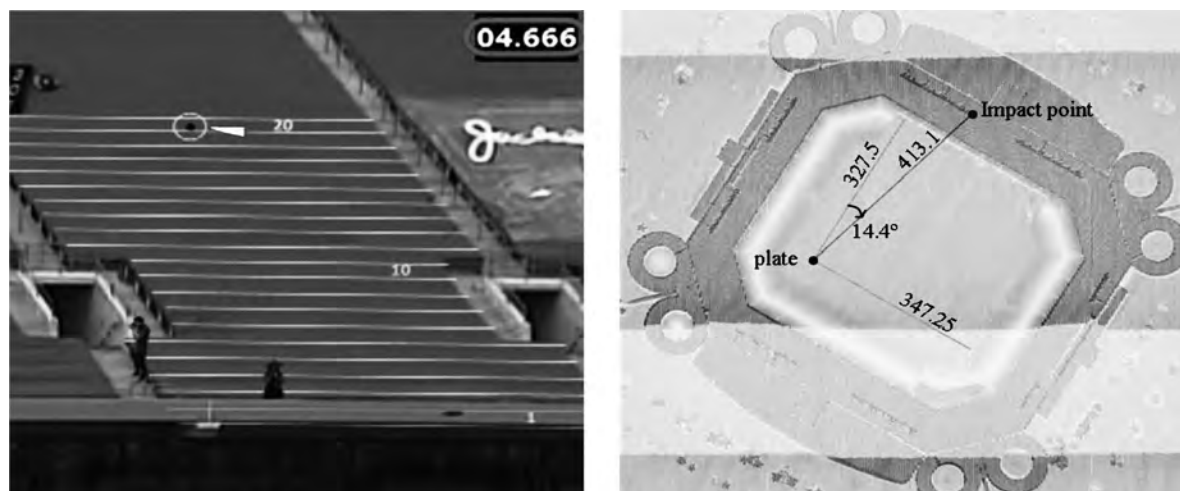


Figure 4. (Left) Video frame showing the ball's impact point on row 20 at a time of 4.67 seconds. The frame has been modified to highlight the rows that were covered by a blanket. (Right) Image from LIDAR point clouds showing the distances from the home plate to the impact point and to the LF and RF fences.

are assumed to be 0.94ω , 0.34ω and 0.00ω , respectively being ω the exit rotational speed, considering that at the moment of impact the bat was tilted downward at an angle of about 20° to the horizontal plane. The influence of other possible values for the rotational components will be discussed in the next section. A small value of spin decay was assumed ($\kappa = 0.98$), which means that the rotational speed decays 2% each second.

3.4. Solutions

The problem to solve is to find a trajectory such that at 4.67 seconds the ball is at the observed point of impact in the stadium. This point is defined by the height $h = 97.5$ ft above field level and the horizontal distance $d = 413.1$ ft from the home plate (Figure 4, right). For each set of initial conditions, the trajectory of the ball is obtained solving the set of non linear differential equations (Eq. 1) by finite differences using a time increment of 0.005 s. The problem is not expected to have a unique solution.

Given the uncertainties regarding the wind speed and direction, three wind hypotheses were considered as mentioned earlier:

- 1) 6 mph out to center field (as recorded in the box score)
- 2) 11 mph at 11° out to the left of the LF line (KOPF, 2:40PM), and
- 3) 13 mph from right to left (KOPF, 3:00PM).

For each wind hypothesis the rotational speed (ω) was varied in increments of 500 rpm between 1000 and 3500 rpm thus generating a total of 18 cases (Table 2). Other initial conditions were varied within the selected ranges to find trajectories for which the calculated point of impact of the ball in the stadium matched the observed point at 4.67 seconds.

Table 2 shows the results for the 18 cases analyzed; there are 6 cases for each wind hypothesis. The initial conditions (ω , V_0 , θ , β), the maximum height (H) reached by the ball and its time of occurrence (t_{\max}) and the total distance (D) measured from the point

where the bat strikes the ball, are shown. The shaded rows in Table 2 indicate the seven most reliable solutions that are identified in the next section. The relative error of the impact point predicted by the model is less than 0.25 per thousand for all cases. It should be pointed out in Table 2 that the total distance traveled (D) turned out to be above 500 ft for all cases.

It should be noted that the solution depends on the magnitude and the sign of the sidespin adopted. Another set of 18 cases were also generated changing the sign of the sidespin, keeping its magnitude, so that the ball breaks from left to right, although this hypothesis has a very small probability of occurrence according to data measured by Statcast (Figure 4 in Nathan 2017⁶). For this assumption the results indicate a small variation in the total distance (D) as compared to the results shown in Table 2, less than 2%, and again all cases exceed 500 feet.

The solutions shown in Table 2 were generated assuming rotational backspin (ω_b) and sidespin (ω_s) components of 0.94ω and 0.34ω , respectively. Another set of solutions were additionally generated assuming $\omega_b = 0.80 \omega$ and $\omega_s = 0.60 \omega$; the results indicate a small reduction of less than 0.5% in the total distance (D) for the 18 solutions shown in Table 2.

When the analysis is carried out in the absence of wind, the results indicate a reduction of less than 3% in the total distance (D) for all the cases shown in Table 2; furthermore, all of the seven most reliable solutions exceed 500 feet.




Wind Hypothesis	Solution #	Exit Rotational Speed	Exit Speed	Exit Launch Angle	Exit Spray Angle	Max. Height	Time of Max. Height	Total Distance
		ω (rpm)	V_0 (mph)	θ (degrees)	β (degrees)	H (ft)	t_{\max} (sec)	D (ft)
 6 mph	1	1000	118.8	35.6	16.4	138.7	2.9	502.3
	2	1500	118.0	33.8	17.3	135.9	2.9	506.2
	3	2000	117.3	32.3	17.8	133.0	3.0	510.2
	4	2500	116.7	30.8	18.8	130.4	3.0	513.5
	5	3000	116.1	29.3	19.5	127.8	3.1	517.5
	6	3500	115.5	27.9	20.3	125.3	3.1	521.0
 11 mph	7	1000	116.0	37.0	18.9	139.6	2.9	508.7
	8	1500	115.2	35.4	19.7	136.9	2.9	512.5
	9	2000	114.4	34.0	20.4	134.3	3.0	516.6
	10	2500	113.7	32.6	21.2	131.7	3.0	521.0
	11	3000	113.1	31.2	21.9	129.2	3.0	525.0
	12	3500	112.4	29.8	22.6	126.8	3.1	529.4
 13 mph	13	1000	117.4	35.8	21.3	138.4	2.9	505.9
	14	1500	116.4	34.0	22.2	135.4	2.9	510.3
	15	2000	115.4	32.6	23.0	132.5	3.0	516.4
	16	2500	114.6	31.1	23.7	129.6	3.0	519.3
	17	3000	113.7	29.6	24.4	126.9	3.1	524.8
	18	3500	112.9	28.1	25.2	124.3	3.1	528.5

Table 2. Solution for each case. The highlighted rows indicate the most reliable solutions.

The 18 cases shown in Table 2 represent possible solutions when taking into account the uncertainties regarding the initial conditions and the wind speed and direction. However, some solutions are more reliable than others as discussed next, where descriptive geometry and video analysis are brought into the discussion.

3.5 Reliability of the solutions

To select the most reliable solutions, the maximum height (H) reached by the ball in each of the 18 trajectories obtained (Table 2) is compared to the height shown in the video after performing a descriptive geometry analysis using orthogonal and conical projections. A detailed explanation of this analysis is presented in the Appendix. The results indicate that 11 of the 18 calculated trajectories have maximum heights which fall out of the video frames. Thus, these trajectories are discarded since in the video the ball, at its highest point, is always within the frames throughout the filming, i.e. the cameraman never lost sight of the ball until the moment it impacted the deck.

The most reliable solutions whose maximum heights remain inside the video are the following: Solutions #5 and #6 for wind hypothesis 1, solutions #11 and #12 for wind hypothesis 2, and solutions #16, #17 and #18 for wind hypothesis 3. These are highlighted in Table 2. The ESPN's maximum height is also outside the video frame as shown in the Appendix and therefore it is not a reliable solution.

The essence of the analysis is that of the 18 solutions that were found based on different assumptions about spin and wind, only 7 had a maximum height that would have stayed in the view of the camera.

3.6. Seven most reliable solutions for Galarraga home run

Figure 5 shows the trajectory (side and top view) of the ball for each of the seven most reliable solutions indicated in Table 2. The grey area shows the remaining

eleven solutions. The curvature of the ball shown on the top view is the result of the combined action of the wind and the sidespin. Considering only the seven most reliable solutions, the total distance (D) of Galarraga's home run is found to be between 517.5 and 529.4 ft (Table 2); all of them exceed 500 feet. The mean value of the total distance of the seven solutions is 523.6 feet.

The total distance of 468 feet found by ESPN is lower than those found in this study, primarily because they used an impact point in row 20 that is 15 feet lower and 9 feet closer to the plate than the distances obtained with LIDAR technology. LIDAR is more reliable because it corresponds to the built stadium and not to a scale model. In addition, ESPN used a longer flight time of 4.97 seconds compared to the value found by this study of 4.67 seconds which was verified using three independent chronometers.

4. Conclusions

A detailed analysis has been made of Andres Galarraga's home run of May 31, 1997. Two distinct claims were previously reported about the distance traveled by Galarraga's home run: the initial estimate of 529 feet by Florida Marlins staff and the more recent claim of 468 feet by Greg Rybarczyk in ESPN Home Run Tracker. In this study, the combined use of four disciplines—physics, geomatics (LIDAR technology), descriptive geometry, and video analysis—proved to be valuable in finding reliable results.

A 3D mathematical model was developed and validated using actual data from Statcast. Eighteen cases were analyzed in order to take into account the uncertainties regarding the initial conditions (exit speed, back and side spins, launch and spray angles) and the wind speed and direction. The seven most reliable solutions were selected by comparing the maximum height of the ball in each analyzed case to the actual height shown in the video frame after applying descriptive geometry

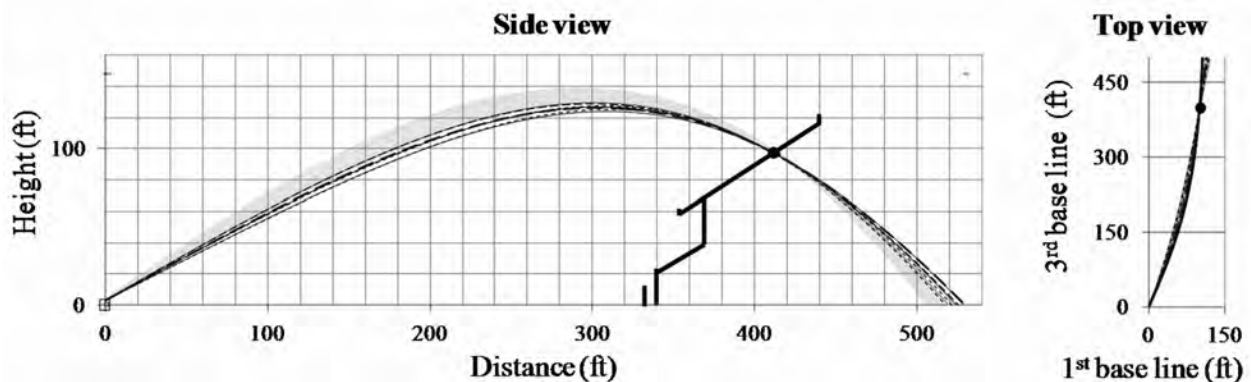


Figure 5. Side and top view of the calculated trajectories for the seven most reliable solutions (Table 2) which are indicated by the dark lines. The remaining eleven solutions are shown in the grey area.

techniques. The accuracy of the solutions was validated by comparing the trajectories predicted by the model with the trajectory shown by the video.

As a result the total distance of Galarraga's home run is estimated to be between 517.5 and 529.4 feet, with a more probable value of 524 feet. This distance range is greater than the value of 468 feet given by the ESPN Home Run Tracker and closer to the value of 529 feet given originally by the stadium's staff. The distance found by ESPN is shorter than those found in this study primarily because their coordinates of the point of impact are 9 feet closer (horizontally) to the plate and 15 feet lower (vertically) than the coordinates obtained in this study, even though in both cases the ball's impact point was on row 20 of the deck. The coordinates in this study were obtained with LIDAR technology which is considered to be more reliable because it corresponds to the actual built stadium and not to a scale model as used by ESPN. Furthermore, the uncertainties regarding the initial conditions and wind were not considered by ESPN. The home run of Galarraga is one of the few hit prior to Statcast proven to have exceeded the 500-foot distance in the history of MLB. ■

Acknowledgments

The authors acknowledge the support of Santiago Yopez in the use of LIDAR images and the review of the manuscript made by Oscar Luis López. The authors also recognize the comments of the two anonymous reviewers from SABR who helped to improve the quality of the paper.

Appendix

An appendix to this paper, found at <https://sabr.org/node/47841>, describes in detail the procedure followed to obtain the most reliable solutions for the trajectory and projected distance of Galarraga's home run, accompanied by additional graphs, graphics, and plots. The maximum height (H) reached by the ball in each of the 18 trajectories obtained is compared to the height shown in the video after performing orthogonal and conical projections.

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HOME RUN DISTANCE

The phrase "home run distance" doesn't mean what many people assume it means. Two separate stats are used during MLB broadcasts. Statcast refers to "hit distance" (DST) as the straight line distance from home plate to whatever the ball first hits, whether seat, fan, or foul pole. But that isn't the number shown when Statcast reports the footage on a home run. This stat, which they refer to as "projected home run distance" (HR-DIS), answers the implied question: how far would the ball have traveled *if the stadium had not been in the way*? From the Statcast glossary on MLB.com: "Projected Home Run Distance is a pivotal tool when comparing individual home runs. Looking at Hit Distance alone is not an optimal practice... [C]omparing the distances of monstrous home runs has long been a hobby of baseball fans. And Projected Home Run Distance gives us a slightly fairer way to do that."

— Cecilia Tan

NOTES

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“Just Bounce Right Back Up and Dust Yourself Off”

Participation Motivations, Resilience, and Perceived Organizational Support Among Amateur Baseball Umpires

Lori A. Livingston, Ph.D. and Susan L. Forbes, Ph.D.

Sports officials have long possessed a less-than-desirable reputation in the eyes of the general public. Negative images of baseball umpires—and the conflicts that arise between them as arbiters of the rules and others—have been promulgated for well over a century. For example, Voigt described the umpire of the late nineteenth century as “...America’s manufactured villain.”¹ Similarly Leslie, with his accounts of umpires in a southern United States league during the 1930s, labelled the umpire as “...the heavy of the baseball drama, the villain of the play, and the object of antagonism...”²

Today the baseball umpire continues to be seen in a negative light with the occupation described as “...one of competitive sport’s most uncelebrated positions...”³ These accounts document the age-old dismissive portrayal of the baseball umpire’s role and the interpersonal conflict associated with it. Popular media accounts of confrontational events in baseball and other sports reinforce that this is still the case and that such altercations are particularly problematic in youth sports.⁴ These narratives emphasize the stressful nature of sporting officials’ roles and fuel the popular assumption that threats of verbal and physical abuse are the primary reason why candidates drop out of the officiating ranks. But is this truly the case for baseball umpires?

An umpire’s job is intrinsically challenging as cognitive stress results from having to make split-second decisions (calls) in complex situations.⁵ A review of the literature reveals that few have scrutinized these challenges as experienced by first, second, or third base umpires.⁶ The home plate umpire, in contrast, has been the subject of many studies. This is likely because the majority of calls—including the assessment of pitches as balls or strikes—are the responsibility of the home plate umpire. Decision-making at home plate is frequent and complex as the umpire must attempt to accurately perceive the locations of pitched baseballs moving at high velocities along varying trajectories with respect to the plate.⁷ The ability to accurately call balls and strikes has been studied extensively, with investigations of variables of influence including the home plate umpires’ positioning relative to the catcher, experience levels, and the reputations of batters and

pitchers.^{8,9,10} Extrinsic sources of stress for umpires, in contrast, often come in the form of verbal complaints or challenges from players, coaches, and fans.¹¹ Rainey and Cherilla, in an observational study of 70 amateur baseball games, characterized such complaining as being of moderate to low intensity and described it as a “...type of social background noise or static” and a “game within a game.”¹² Coaches’ efforts to influence the umpires’ calls have become an expected part of the sport, and, with experience, umpires learn to handle these challenges in routine ways.¹³ Serious conflicts including incidents of physical assault, in contrast, are rarely observed.¹⁴

Experiencing stress is an inherent part of a baseball umpire’s job, yet it has not been shown to be a significant predictor of one’s intention to terminate participation from umpiring.¹⁵ Recent studies assert that sports officials are highly resilient and able to cope with the stresses of the task at hand.¹⁶ As a result, the overall research agenda on sports officials is slowly shifting from one historically pessimistic in nature and focused on the question of why officials terminate their participation, to trying to understand why they become involved or continue in the role.^{17,18} New insights on the recruitment and retention of sports officials, including baseball umpires, are beginning to emerge in the literature.¹⁹

One such insight: officials often begin while still competing or shortly after leaving the playing ranks, and view officiating as a way to stay physically active and give back to a sport that they enjoy.²⁰ Some engage in officiating through their own initiative, while others do so at the invitation of a mentor or friend.^{21,22} Financial reimbursement may initially attract some to the role but money as a motivator may be limited given that the overall cost of participation as an official (e.g., equipment costs, annual registration and insurance fees) can easily exceed income.²³ As time goes by, many officials will begin to see themselves as volunteers rather than as employees, engaged in a leisure pursuit with individuals with similar interests.^{24,25} As mentioned, as officials gain experience, they become resilient and are able to cope with stress by normalizing the challenges that they experience.²⁶

Three recently published investigations emphasize the important role that perceived organizational support (POS) plays in predicting persistence as a sports official.^{27,28} Ridinger's investigation is of interest in that it lends some insight into the experiences of youth baseball umpires in the United States.²⁹ The participant sample was small ($n = 7$), yet unique given that the overwhelming majority of studies on baseball umpiring have studied either major-league or similarly elite-level (e.g., semi-professional) umpires.^{30,31} Ridinger found the umpires had a strong sense of community and were appreciative of the mentorship and training they received. They also enjoyed their involvement and described it as being meaningful to their lives, while at the same time acknowledging that it was sometimes difficult to balance umpiring duties and the time spent traveling to games with job, school schedules, and family demands. Ridinger's study provides some important insights into the experiences of amateur baseball umpires, but the small sample size limits their generalizability.

To better inform our understanding of baseball umpires' behavior, the purpose of this investigation was to identify what motivates individuals to enter into and remain active in amateur baseball umpiring, and investigate their resilience and how their perceptions of the support they receive from their sporting organizations affected their resilience.

Using Newell's Model of Constraints and Deci and Ryan's Self Determination Theory as our guiding frameworks, we defined motivation as the reasons people give to explain why they participate in umpiring, and we assumed that this motivation arises from the interactions between the characteristics of the individual, the task of officiating, and the informal (i.e., sense of community) and formal (i.e., sporting organization) environments in which they perform their duties. We hypothesized, *a priori*, that entry into and persistence in the role may be linked to motivation to participate in the sport, resilience or the ability to thrive in the face of adversity, and the extent to which perceived support is provided by the officiating organization. It was also expected that differences in these measures may be observed based on individual differences in sex, age, and umpiring location (i.e., urban or rural settings).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

For the purposes of this investigation, we borrowed from the confluence of two well-established theoretical frameworks including Newell's Model of Constraints and Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (SDT).^{32,33} Newell's Model of Constraints proposes that there are

three interacting types of constraints—task, environmental, and individual—that are responsible for optimal or successful performance in a given activity. Task constraints include the demands placed on the umpire (e.g., technical ability, knowledge of the rules, quick decision-making) and are, in this study, seen as identical for all participants. Environmental constraints, in contrast, refer to the broader social perspectives encountered while engaged in umpiring, and include location (e.g., urban versus rural), the physical environment (e.g., large stadiums versus small sandlots), the social environment (e.g., umpiring community), and the influence of fellow officials, friends, and other supporters. Importantly, these environmental constraints also include the organizational policies (e.g., training and mentorship, remuneration, performance recognition) and practices (e.g., frequency of certification or recertification opportunities, pay rates, award ceremonies) that underpin umpires' perceptions of the extent to which sporting organizations value their contributions and care about their well-being.³⁴ Individual constraints, as the term implies, refer to the inherent characteristics of individuals themselves including their age, physical and intellectual capacity, sex, as well as the qualities of resilience and motivation that subsequently influence their ability to fulfill their psychological needs.

SDT posits that an individual's behavior is guided by three innate psychological needs: competence (the desire to demonstrate and improve one's abilities), relatedness (the desire to be valued, respected, and seen as important by others), and autonomy (the desire to be in control of one's actions).³⁵ It also suggests that when individuals are free to choose their behaviors without external influence or interference to satisfy these needs, their motivations to do so emerge from three distinct thematic areas: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, or amotivation. According to Cerasoli and others, intrinsically motivated behaviors are engaged in for their own sake (e.g., enjoyment) while extrinsically motivated behaviors are governed by the prospect of instrumental gain (e.g., financial incentives).³⁶ Amotivation, in contrast, reflects extremely low levels of motivation which are indicative of a lack of motivation and resultant dropout from a behavior or activity.^{37,38}

Recent work by Gillet and colleagues supports the notion that there is a link between an individual's psychological characteristics, including their motivations and resilience, and the environment in which they work.³⁹ Importantly, they suggest that organizations wishing to improve employee engagement and retention can do so by providing an environment that

promotes positive feelings of POS. Similarly, research in the area of sports commitment demonstrates the importance of individual motivation in combination with organizational support in successfully transitioning individuals from participation as athletes to participation as coaches, administrators, or officials.⁴⁰ For these reasons, we use the interactional structure of Newell's framework, believing that individual constraints such as motivations and resilience are linked to environmental constraints, including POS, and are necessary for understanding the complexities of officiating retention and/or attrition in baseball umpiring.

METHOD

This investigation utilized a discrete subset of data from individuals who self-identified as active amateur baseball umpires in a comprehensive study of 1,073 active Canadian amateur sports officials.⁴¹ Approval for this study was secured from the Lakehead University Research Ethics Board. With support from Sports Officials Canada, an electronic invitation was then distributed to active sports officials across the country. English and French versions of the invitation, and the subsequent data collection tool, were utilized. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected using a multi-part survey tool built on the SurveyMonkey™ web-based platform. For the purposes of analysis, the collected data were merged and professional translators were hired to translate all data into English. The sample was one of convenience and included active officials from 37 different sports. Of this sample, approximately twenty percent (20%) were exclusively active as umpires in the sport of baseball.

Participants

The sample consisted of 211 (204 male, 7 female) active amateur baseball umpires residing in nine Canadian provinces. Descriptive data pertaining to age, sex, and their predominant officiating location (i.e., urban, rural, or both) are found in Table 1. About one-quarter of the participants ($n = 47$) indicated that they were still actively playing the game of baseball. In a similar yet slightly different vein, about two-thirds (63%) of the entire sample identified that they began umpiring while still playing the game, with the remainder (28%) indicating that they became active in the role after their playing days ended. Only 19 (9%) of the 211 umpires studied indicated that they had never played the sport. Years of involvement in umpiring ranged from a minimum of one to a maximum of 48 years, with an average of 16.3 ± 11.0 years. The officiating levels held ranged from Level 1 (Grassroots) to Level 5A

(i.e., National Level with participation in international umpiring assignments). Seventy-one percent of the study participants had completed a college diploma or university degree and 62% were employed in full-time occupations.

Data Collection

In addition to completing a demographic questionnaire, the participants were asked to respond to a series of open-ended questions which aimed to understand the following:

- (a) their reasons for entering into officiating
- (b) what factors may have contributed to that decision
- (c) what individual or organizational supports were available to them while officiating
- (d) positive and/or negative experiences had while umpiring
- (e) had they ever considered leaving the umpire role and if so, what convinced them to stay?

They were also given the opportunity to answer the question, "Is there anything else you would like to add?"

The respondents also completed three standardized questionnaires with demonstrated reliability and validity characteristics:

- (a) the Sport Motivation Scale (SMS)⁴²
- (b) the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC2)⁴³
- (c) the 8-Item Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS).⁴⁴

Each required responses on Likert-type scales to a series of questions or statements pertaining to an individual's reasons or motives for participation in sport (i.e., including intrinsic and extrinsic sources of motivation, as well as the phenomenon of amotivation), self-perceived levels of resilience (i.e., a measure of stress coping ability), and their general beliefs regarding an organization's commitment to them and their intention to continue their relationship with that organization, respectively.⁴⁵ An in-depth description of the full survey tool, including the reliability metrics for each of the three standardized questionnaires, may be

found in the overall comprehensive study of amateur sport officials.⁴⁶

Data Reduction and Analysis

Responses to the open-ended questions were downloaded from the SurveyMonkey™ platform and printed. Response rates to the open-ended questions ranged from a low of 65% for the question, “Describe a challenging officiating event you experienced recently and how you responded,” to a high of 92% for the question, “What influenced your decision to become an official?” From the outset, these responses were collected in an effort to understand each individual’s motivations for entry into umpiring, why they persist in the role, and to determine if these active umpires had ever considered discontinuing their participation in umpiring. Descriptive data pertaining to the frequency of these responses were generated. In addition, it was anticipated that these open-ended responses would possibly inform or provide useful illustrations of our quantitative findings.

Using the SPSS Statistical Package (Version 23.0; IBM SPSS Statistics, Chicago, IL), quantitative data from the three standardized questionnaires were analyzed. The analyses began with the generation of descriptive statistics. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were then calculated to examine the strength and statistical significance ($p \leq 0.05$) of associations, if any, between the dependent variables of interest. The dependent variables included three measures each of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and one measure of amotivation from the SMS, one measure of resilience from the CD-RISC2, and one measure of perceived organizational support from the SPOS survey.^{47,48,49} Given that the observed associations between the dependent variables were only poor to fair in magnitude (e.g., ranging from -0.35 , $p < 0.01$) to 0.55 , $p < 0.01$), independent three-way univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) procedures were conducted for each dependent variable.

The independent variables included sex, age group, and predominant officiating location (i.e., urban, rural, or urban and rural). Age group was used as a proxy for officiating experience for a number of reasons. First, over 98% of the respondents indicated the age group to which they belonged (e.g., 25 years or under, 26–40 years, 41–55 years, or 55 years and over). However, when asked to report the actual number of years spent umpiring, many simply wrote “20+” or “30+” or estimated their experiences as “about 7 years.” In a number of instances, moreover, participants did not indicate their number of years of experience or, when prompted,

their umpiring level. Second, when reported, the correlations between age group and years of experience ($r = 0.96$, $p < 0.01$) and age group and umpiring level ($r = 0.93$, $p < 0.05$) were strong. Therefore age group was an acceptable proxy measure for experience. Finally, choosing age group rather than years of experience or umpiring level allowed for more cases to be included rather than excluded from the statistical analysis.

For each univariate ANOVA procedure, the data were assessed for adherence to statistical assumptions (e.g., normative distribution, homogeneity of variance, etc.). Of particular concern was the assumption of homogeneity of variance and its requirement for the proper application and interpretation of the statistical findings generated.⁵⁰ Levene’s Test of Equality of Error Variance was used to test the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable was equal across all groups.⁵¹ Spread-versus-level plots were also generated to further examine the relationship between the observed standard deviation and mean. Only those results for which it was determined that the aforementioned assumptions were sufficiently satisfied are reported hereafter.

RESULTS

Responses to Open-Ended Questions

Entry into officiating. More than one-third (37%) of all respondents indicated that they were umpiring because of their “love” for the game. For 30%, becoming active as an umpire was a way for them to stay in touch with the sport itself after their playing days were over (i.e., due to injury, physical limitations, or the inability to aspire to higher competition levels). For others (19%), involvement was frequently tied to family influences; that is, encouragement to become umpires by members of their families—fathers, grandfathers, uncles, or siblings—who were already active in the role, or they became involved when their children began playing the game. In contrast, about one in every seven respondents (16%) explicitly indicated that they were at least in part attracted to umpiring as a way to make money during the summer months. Alternately, 13% indicated that they became an umpire as a result of the need for more umpires or higher quality umpires in the game.

Persistence in the role. About 66% of the respondents correctly identified resilience as the ability to “bounce back” from an adverse situation. Moreover, 58% explicitly self-identified as being resilient or as being seen as resilient by their colleagues. Only 6% of the sample questioned their resilience while 3% openly acknowledged that they were not resilient.

Fourteen percent of the participants indicated that they did not experience stress while officiating and/or that they actually had fun doing the job. For those that did acknowledge experiencing stress, 47% overtly expressed confidence in their abilities to deal with it. Many indicated that they always endeavored to do the "best job" that they could as an umpire while also acknowledging that they occasionally made mistakes. Importantly, they often stated that they always tried to learn from their mistakes and would use them to become better in their role. When needed, support—in the form of discussing difficult calls or game situations—was provided by peer umpires (82%). Others indicated that support was also provided by their officiating associations or committees (23%) or umpires-in-chief or tournament convenors (17%). Interestingly, 7% also found support through electronic means (e.g., on-line websites, chatrooms, or blogs; e-mail groups; organizational hotlines). Secondary support was frequently (37%) provided by immediate family members (e.g., spouses, parents). In contrast, only 2% of the participants explicitly identified that they were not good at managing the stress associated with their umpiring role while 8% openly stated that they did not feel well supported by their officiating organizations or umpire-in-chiefs.

Discontinuing participation. In reply to the questions, "Have you ever considered leaving officiating? If so, why and what helped you decide to continue as an official?" 130 of the 166 individuals (78%) who responded to these questions indicated that they had considered it earlier, had already left once and came back, or were currently pondering the idea of leaving. The most commonly cited reason for considering a departure was the need to respond to career-, school-, or family-related pressures (11%). For others (8%) either their age or the effects of an acute or chronic injury or disease condition was making it difficult to keep up with the physical demands of the role. Only 7% of participants identified the threat or frequency of verbal or physical abuse as an unequivocal contributor to their drop out intentions. The most frequent reason given for deciding to remain (16%) was that of feeling obligated to stay to support the young officials and/or young athletes in the game, or, because of actual or pending shortages in the number of active umpires within their region. The second most frequently cited reason for staying was the ability to earn income as an umpire (5%). Importantly, only around one in five (22%) of all the respondents indicated that they had never considered leaving the game.

Quantitative Results

Participation Motivations. The seven subscales of the Sport Motivation Scale (SMS) included three measures of intrinsic motivation, three measures of extrinsic motivation, and one measure of amotivation. Independent three-way ANOVA procedures generated significant differences for only two of the seven subscale measures, both of which were indicative of extrinsic sources of motivation. According to Pelletier and others, extrinsic motivation through external regulation is indicative of behavior that is fueled by external sources such as material rewards (e.g., remuneration, trophies) or feedback from others (e.g., to receive praise and/or to avoid criticism).⁵² In such instances, participation is used to obtain rewards or to avoid negative consequences, but not for the sake of fun. For this dependent variable, a significant interaction effect was observed for age group by officiating location ($F_{(6,194)} = 2.49, p < .02$). Those in the 25 years and under age group ($M = 12.5, SD = 4.3$), regardless of officiating location, appeared to be more motivated by external rewards than those in the 26–40 year age group ($M = 11.1, SD = 5.1$). Such motivation, moreover, appeared to decline on average with increasing age, with mean age group scores of 10.2 ± 4.6 and 9.7 ± 4.0 for the 41–55 and 56-and-over age groups, respectively.

There was one notable exception to this consistent downward trend with rural officials in the 41–55 year age group displaying a higher mean score ($M = 13.1, SD = 3.4$) than those officiating in strictly urban ($M = 11.1, SD = 4.8$) or a combination of urban and rural ($M = 7.2, SD = 3.2$) environments. Introjection was the other source of extrinsic motivation for which a significant interaction effect of sex by officiating location ($F_{(1,194)} = 3.88, p < .05$) was observed. According to Pelletier and coauthors, with introjection the former external source of motivation is no longer needed to promote participation. Instead, participation is reinforced through internal pressures (e.g., guilt or anxiety). In this instance, mean scores for introjection were considerably lower for females ($M = 6.0, SD = 2.6$) in comparison to males ($M = 9.5, SD = 4.6$) umpiring in urban environments. In contrast, for those who umpired in urban and rural environments, the mean score for females ($M = 10.3, SD = 1.7$) was much higher than that observed for females who restricted their activity to urban environments while the mean male scores ($M = 9.6, SD = 4.0$) were on par with their urban-based umpiring colleagues. Some caution must be exercised in interpreting these two findings given the small numbers of umpires that identified as being strictly rural-based or female, respectively. With that said, and

as previously described, the statistical assumptions were thoroughly checked and re-checked, suggesting that these are statistically robust results worthy of some consideration.

Resilience. CD-RISC2 scores are expressed as a percentage, with scores below 70% or above 85% considered below or above normal, respectively, in comparison to the general population. With a mean resilience score of $82.9\% \pm 14.4$, this umpiring sample on average fell within the normal range for the overall population. Approximately 14% of the participants fell below the population norm, 33% scored within the normal range, and the remaining 53% scored in the above normal range. Sixty-three participants, or 30% of the entire sample, received scores of 100%. The three-way univariate ANOVA procedure revealed no significant differences by sex, age, or officiating location and no interaction effects. Although not statistically significant, it is interesting to note that the mean percentage score for females was lower at 78.6 ± 17.3 than that for males at 83.0 ± 14.3 .

Perceived Organizational Support (POS). POS, the final dependent measure of interest, yielded no significant differences by age ($F_{(3,193)} = 1.15, p < .33$), sex ($F_{(1,193)} = 0.01, p < .95$), or officiating location ($F_{(2,193)} = 0.53, p < .59$). There were also no significant interaction effects.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

For more than a century, verbal confrontation between umpires and others has been a well-documented part of the culture of American baseball. Contemporary studies of baseball in the United States provide evidence that constant heckling from coaches, players, and fans remains pervasive within the sport.⁵⁵ If such verbal commentary contributes to officiating drop-out, then why do so many enter into and persist as umpires in the sport? The purpose of this investigation was to gain a better understanding of currently active amateur baseball umpires, including their decisions to enter into and remain active in the sport, as well as their resilience, participation motivations, and perceptions of the support they receive from their sports organizations.

A growing body of recent literature identifies numerous factors which contribute to the decision to enter into sports officiating. In particular, having an explicit prior connection to a sport appears to weigh heavily on the decision to enter into an officiating role in that same sport.⁵⁶ The observation that more than 90% of the umpires in this investigation were connected to the game

of baseball through their prior participation as players mirrors the findings of others. For about one in five participants, moreover, entry into officiating was influenced by another form of connection to the game, either via immediate family members who were active as umpires or by their children who were actively playing the game. The literature has also previously documented individuals' expressed "love" for their sport and the desire to stay connected to it as key intrinsic sources of motivation to entry into and persistence in officiating roles.⁵⁷ More than a third of the baseball umpires in this study explicitly used the term "love" to describe their feelings of enjoyment and emotional linkages to the game. Many also alluded to the fact that they readily enjoyed and intrinsically derived pleasure from their involvement as umpires.

In contrast, a smaller proportion of the sample, one consisting primarily of younger umpires, was grateful for the money that could be earned in return for their participation. This subjective finding was validated by the finding of a statistically significant difference for the dependent variable of extrinsic motivation by external regulation (i.e., the receipt of monetary rewards), with this type of motivation being higher for those 25 years of age and under. This was somewhat expected given that remuneration has been previously identified as a key extrinsic motivator for younger officials in other sports.⁵⁸ However, for the first time we saw these younger officials (i.e., high school-, college-, and university-aged) overtly identify sports officiating as a "well-paying" job. Whether it is the rate of pay, the acute need for umpires and hence the frequency with which umpires can be assigned games, the time of year (i.e., summer when students are not typically enrolled in classes and therefore have more time to umpire), or a combination of all three factors which contributes to the notion of being well-paid is unknown. However, it does lead us to speculate that the sport of baseball—which is played during the summer months and as such does not conflict with the traditional academic school year—may have an advantage in using remuneration to attract young officials to the sport in comparison to other sports (e.g., ice hockey) where school-related time commitments present competing scheduling priorities.

It is important to note that recruitment and attraction into the role of an umpire is only the first step along a participation continuum which may be followed by sustained involvement and advancement to higher levels of involvement over time.⁵⁹ Persistence as an umpire in baseball, a game notably filled with what some have described as the constant presence of

moderate to low levels of dismissive verbal commentary, can be challenging.⁶⁰ This study provides ample evidence that baseball umpires are frequently critiqued by coaches, players, and spectators. The umpires studied herein commonly expressed their displeasure with being on the receiving end of antagonistic and dismissive remarks. However, they acknowledged it as an explicit and expected part of the game. The ability to withstand the negativity, moreover, appeared to be strongly linked to their ability to be resilient; that is, to find ways to routinely handle (or normalize) it as part of their umpiring experience. As an illustration of this, consider the following quotations:

Eventually you grow a thick hide and get used to the threats. Keep at it and eventually they go away.

– Male, Age 21–25 years

That is the nature of sports officiating where hundreds of judgments are made every game and where the participants' view of you is highly partisan, highly myopic and their reactions are often intended to influence your future decisions rather than the one you just made. One needs to understand this and take this less personally, have confidence in your ability (presuming that you have ability on some objective scale), and continue to enjoy participation in the game.

– Male, Age 61 + years

Throughout the last decade numerous investigators have reported that sports officials learn to normalize their experiences and that they are highly resilient in the face of adversity.⁶¹ The CD-RISC2 questionnaire results indicated that more than 85% of our sample scored in the normal (33%) or above normal range (53%) on an objective measure of resilience. Moreover, approximately 60% of the umpires studied herein self-identified as being highly resilient as a result of experiencing no stress when officiating or being highly confident in their abilities to manage stressful situations. What is unknown is whether these high levels of resilience existed before they entered into umpiring or whether they developed as a result of their officiating experiences, or both. The following quotations suggest that both mechanisms may be at play and of benefit to active umpires:

I have learned to be resilient. Sure there are times you have to hold back, but in the end the players for the most part understand that officials are

part of the game and we are human. I have learned to let the small stuff slide off my back and give them a second chance especially the younger ones.

– Male, Age 51–55 years

I am certainly resilient. I don't let the criticisms of coaches and players bother me. I suspect my other career (34 yrs of policing) may have something to do with it in that nothing that happens on the field intimidates me. As a coach I taught my players to learn and grow from their mistakes. I do the same thing with my umpiring. Most of the time only my partner and I are aware of an error on my part.

– Male, Age 61 + years

The umpires in this study identified a number of different strategies (e.g., physical fitness regimes, other leisure activities, etc.) that they used to cope with their stress. However, in response to the question "How do you maintain a sense of wellness in times of difficulty or stress associated with officiating?" the most frequently cited approach was that of talking through stressful situations with their umpiring partners or other experienced umpires. Such nurturing relationships are thought to play a critical role in retaining individuals in the officiating corps.⁶² Support via discussion with members of on-field umpiring crews was mentioned most often and this makes sense, given that they are present and readily accessible immediately following games, as well as the fact that they are often first-hand witnesses to the disputes that arise. Umpires-in-Chief were also frequently cited as key sources of support by many, as were league and tournament convenors, and on occasion municipal, provincial, and national sports governing bodies. A number of individuals explicitly mentioned that they relied on the use of technology (e.g., on-line websites, chatrooms, or blogs; e-mail groups; organizational hotlines) to facilitate umpire-to-umpire communication and/or to find support.

Overall, from the grassroots to international levels, the umpires studied herein seemed highly satisfied with the support they receive from their Umpires-in-Chief and their sporting organizations. This finding is naturally in stark contrast to observations from previously completed studies of ice hockey referees and linesmen who have dropped out of officiating.⁶³ For these ice hockey officials, favoritism in game or tournament assignments, lack of opportunities to excel or advance to higher levels, failure to support officials' problems in dealing with player and/or coach disciplinary issues, and similar issues were identified as highly problematic. In ice hockey and other sports,

moreover, levels of POS have been seen to consistently decline after initial entry into and training within the sport officiating ranks.⁶⁴ In this study of baseball umpires, significant differences in POS by age or officiating location were not observed.

This finding may be explained in one of two ways. It could be that the sample studied herein largely consists of those officials who have been given plenty of opportunity to excel as officials within the game and who have been well supported throughout their training. The lack of significant difference in POS measures across experience levels, however, also suggests that another mechanism is at play. Based on the testimonials provided by our participants, it appears that in Canada the sport of baseball has created and successfully implemented a consistent, transparent, and objective system for officiating training and advancement through the ranks. It also suggests that there are a number of procedures, processes, or programs in place in support of umpires regardless of their stage of career. For example, frequent references were made to game and/or tournament supervisors and their role in providing immediate performance-related feedback to umpires following games. We also gleaned that there is a mentorship culture within umpiring that is highly supportive of umpires at all levels.

Cuskelly and Hoyer have identified that attrition from the sports officiating ranks is a significant sport management problem now being experienced on a global scale.⁶⁵ To counteract attrition, providing an experience which allows officials to thrive and excel in their roles as officials seems imperative. In Canada, the sport of baseball seems to be doing a very good job in this regard with its umpires. Therefore, we were somewhat surprised to observe in response to the query "Have you ever considered leaving officiating? If so, why and what helped you decide to continue as an official?" that four out of every five of our participants admitted that they had either previously thought about dropping out, had already left at least once and returned, or that they were currently thinking of leaving. Not all of the respondents provided a reason for contemplating discontinuation, but for those that did, 19% (or about one in every five individuals) cited competing personal priorities including school- or career-related demands, or health issues as the most influential factor. Verbal abuse was also cited, but to a lesser degree: by approximately 7% of the respondent pool. The underlying reasons for considering departure appear to be largely individual in nature (i.e., associated with personal circumstances) rather than related to circumstances beyond their control (e.g.,

verbal abuse, dissatisfaction with game assignments, lack of opportunity to excel). It appears also that it is only when these personal challenges outweigh the benefits of participation that the decision to depart is finalized. Indeed many of the participants talked about the significant physical challenges they were experiencing while umpiring, yet they felt obligated to stay to support the young officials and/or young athletes in the game.

In a different vein, several individuals mentioned that they felt obliged to remain in umpiring despite their personal circumstances, a finding that was corroborated by the observed statistically significant difference for the dependent variable of extrinsic motivation through introjection (i.e., feelings of guilt, anxiety, or pressure to continue). For males, scores for extrinsic motivation through introjection remained relatively the same, regardless of whether they were officiating in urban and/or rural locations. For females, however, these same scores varied across environments. Given the small sample of female umpires that engaged in this study, we are cautious about attempting to provide any further explanation of this statistical finding. With that said, recent investigations are clearly beginning to illustrate that female officiating experiences are significantly different from that of their male counterparts and deserving of more in-depth investigation.⁶⁶

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

As with all research undertakings, there are limitations which must be acknowledged. This study focused on amateur baseball umpires who resided in nine provinces in Canada. The results may not be reflective of umpires residing in other countries. The sample was also one of convenience recruited through a snowball sampling technique promoted by national, provincial, and local officiating organizers. Therefore, those who volunteered may have already had an enhanced affinity with the sport and their role within it. We also purposely conducted this study on a national scale, yet 73% of the participants resided in the one province (Ontario). Over 91% of the sample self-identified as officiating in urban and rural, or exclusively urban environments. Therefore, the sample was overly representative of this one region, and its urban locations, and the results may be largely reflective of the officiating programs, administrative practices, and resources more typically found in urban centres. The sample was almost entirely made up of male participants with few female respondents. As such, these findings provide limited information on the female experience in baseball umpiring.

Further research is needed to understand how being female and umpiring in exclusively rural settings informs involvement within baseball umpiring. Future investigations should invest effort in understanding the specific programs, policies, and administrative structures that are in place to support amateur baseball umpires. Such an approach would allow for a better understanding of the environment in which baseball umpires perform, while at the same time perhaps providing an opportunity to further examine the confluence of SDT and POS related approaches to the study of officiating retention and development. Conducting similar investigations of officials in other sports and sport categories (e.g., invasion games, court sports, combat sports), moreover, would provide important points of comparison across sports and broaden our understanding of what needs to be done to better understand the unique challenges faced by all sports in their efforts to recruit, retain, and support their officials. ■

Table 1. Description of the sample (n) by officiating location, sex, and age group

Location	Sex	Age Group (years)				Total
		25 or under	26–40	41–55	56+	
Rural	Female	0	0	0	0	0
	Male	5	2	9	2	18
Urban	Female	1	0	2	0	3
	Male	28	31	31	32	122
Urban and Rural	Female	0	1	2	1	4
	Male	8	17	16	23	64
Total		42	51	60	58	211

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Baseball Swing Stride and Head Movement Relationships

Samuel J. Haag

ABSTRACT

Some have suggested that a baseball batter must keep their head still in order to visually track a pitched baseball, and that striding with the front foot during the swing leads to excessive head movement and disrupts the tracking of the pitch. However, previous research has shown the head does move during the swing, and striding with the front foot contributes to weight transfer and timing of the swing. The author is aware of no research that has examined the relationship between head movement and stride foot movement during the baseball swing. The present study analyzed the swings of 18 collegiate baseball players using a video camera and two-dimensional motion analysis program. No meaningful correlations were found between movements of the head and stride foot in either the vertical or horizontal axes. These findings suggest striding with the front foot is not associated with head movement and support the notion that a stride can be a beneficial component of a baseball swing.

INTRODUCTION

The task of hitting a baseball has been identified as one of the most difficult skills in sports, and numerous instructions are employed to aid performance.¹ One such instruction is for baseball batters to use a minimal stride with the front foot when performing the baseball swing. Several research studies have examined the role of the stride in the baseball swing. Smith suggests overstriding produces excessive head movement, changing the batter's eye level and making it more difficult to judge the pitch.² Fortenbaugh et al. argue the most common approach for a baseball batter is to initially load the body's weight toward the back foot and raise the front foot off the ground, and striding with the front foot then promotes proper timing and weight shift during the swing.³ Katsumata states that striding plays a role in fixing the front foot on the ground for rotation of the hip and upper body, thus transferring force from the lower body to the upper body when executing the swing.⁴

But while the baseball swing has received considerable attention in the research literature, relatively few studies have analyzed head movement during the

baseball swing. Welch et al. provide a detailed description of the biomechanics of the baseball swing after testing 39 professional baseball players but do not include measures of stride height or head movement.⁵ Using a multi-camera video analysis, Inkster et al. have studied the kinematics of the baseball swing in 20 experienced Australian baseball players and found participants tended to lower their head about 9 cm on average during the baseball swing.⁶ A comparison study of eight skilled baseball players and nine novices by Nakata et al. analyzed head movement in both the horizontal and vertical axes with three high speed video cameras.⁷ They found no significant differences in vertical head movement between the two groups, and the average amount of vertical head movement was similar to that reported by Inkster et al. Nakata et al. did find that skilled players demonstrated more head movement in the horizontal axis (toward the pitcher) and their head movements were more stable (less variable) than the novices. In a related study, Mann et al. examined the head movements and visual gaze of four experienced cricket batters. They conclude that skilled batters possess a superior ability to couple the direction of their head to the movement of the ball, and argue that head movement may be needed to keep a target in a consistent frame of reference.⁸

While it is commonly thought that elite athletes maintain a still head during hitting actions, the available (though limited) research to date shows the head does move during the baseball swing.⁹ Even though some baseball coaches and hitting instructors may encourage batters to minimize their stride to keep the head still, the association between movement of the stride foot and the head during the baseball swing has not been thoroughly studied. This anecdotal suggestion may be hindering the swing mechanics of players that would normally rely on a stride for proper weight shift and timing. Therefore, the purpose of the present study was to examine the relationship between stride foot movement and head movement during the baseball swing. Since this study was exploratory in nature, it was hypothesized that movement of the head would not be correlated with movement of the stride foot during the swing. Greater understanding of this

relationship could help enhance baseball batting performance and allow coaches and instructors to provide the most accurate information for their players.

METHODS

Participants

Eighteen members of a National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division II baseball team participated in the study. Since the participants were experienced collegiate players, it was assumed they would each demonstrate a consistent baseball swing. The average age for the group was 20.1 years ($SD = 1.1$ years), with an average height of 1.82 m ($SD = .05$ m) and average weight of 85.6 kg ($SD = 9.8$ kg). Fourteen of the participants batted right-handed, and four batted left-handed. Each participant was free from injury and completed a consent form prior to the study.

Procedures

During an organized team practice in an indoor facility, participants performed five swings at a baseball placed on a batting tee at the height of each participant's waist. Participants were instructed to perform a normal swing to make solid contact on each trial, and each participant used his own bat.

A digital video camera recording at 60 frames per second was positioned on a tripod about 3.8 m from the tee, providing a side view of the swing. Pieces of white tape (2 cm by 2 cm) were placed on the anterior aspect of the participant's stride (front) foot and on the lateral aspect of the participant's hat facing the camera to serve as markers for motion analysis (see Figure 1). Each participant completed the trials in about two to three minutes. All procedures were approved by a university institutional review board.

Figure 1. Phases of the baseball swing from initiation to ball contact. Foot and head landmarks used for motion analysis are circled.



PROVIDED BY THE AUTHOR

Video Analysis

Video recordings were analyzed with a personal computer using Kinovea, an open-source video analysis software program that has been employed in previous kinematic studies.¹⁰ A two-dimensional coordinate system was used to measure the change in position of the head and foot landmarks in both the vertical and horizontal axes. The coordinate system was calibrated by using the length of the base of the batting tee as a reference line. This calibration was done separately for each video file.

Vertical and horizontal head displacement measures were calculated as the difference between the respective coordinates of the head marker at initiation of the swing and at ball contact. Likewise, horizontal foot displacement (stride length) was calculated as the difference between the horizontal coordinates of the foot marker at initiation of the swing and at ball contact. Vertical foot displacement (stride height) was calculated as the difference between the vertical coordinate of the foot marker at initiation of the swing and at the foot's highest position during the swing. The displacement measures were deemed reliable, as coefficient alpha values were greater than .90 when comparing two consecutive trials. Each of the displacement measures for the head and foot were averaged across the five trials for each participant.

Statistical Analysis

Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to determine the magnitude of the associations between the average head and foot displacement measures. With 18 participants and $\alpha = .05$, a Pearson $r \geq .47$ would be required to be considered statistically significant.¹¹ Effect sizes were interpreted according to Cohen's

criteria: .10 = small, .30 = moderate, .50 = large. Statistical tests were computed using SPSS 19.

Results

For the 18 participants, average head movement during the swing was about 4.4 cm downward (SD = 6.2 cm) and 4.5 cm backward (SD = 3.3 cm). Average stride length during the swing was about 8.5 cm forward (SD = 5.2 cm), and the average stride height was about 3.7 cm (SD = 4.6 cm). Stride height was not significantly correlated with head displacement in either the horizontal ($r = .16$) or vertical axis ($r = .38$) during the baseball swing. (See Figure 2.) Likewise, stride length was not significantly correlated with head displacement in either the horizontal ($r = .12$) or vertical axis ($r = -.44$; see Figure 3). Overall, displacement of the head was not associated with displacement of the stride foot during the baseball swing.

Discussion

While keeping the head still is often recommended for baseball batters, the head does move during the swing.¹³ Despite this evidence, baseball coaches and instructors may advise against using a stride because they believe it causes excessive head movement and interferes with visual perception of the pitch. As the author could locate no prior research that specifically addressed this issue, the present study examined the relationship between stride foot movement and head movement during the baseball swing in collegiate baseball players.

No meaningful correlations were found between movements of the head and stride foot during the baseball swing, supporting the author's hypothesis. Even though the correlation between stride height and vertical head displacement could be considered moderate according to Cohen's criteria, a closer examination of the data shows that the

direction of the correlation was in the opposite direction of what might be expected by those who believe striding results in additional movement of the head.¹⁴ Many of the participants that displayed the greatest amount of vertical head displacement actually had minimal or no height in their stride, while the participant with the highest stride showed almost no vertical head displacement (see Figure 2). The correlation between stride length and vertical head displacement could also be considered moderate, which may indicate that those with a longer stride during the swing may also exhibit greater vertical displacement of the head (see Figure 3). However, this correlation only demonstrates 19% common variance between the two variables.

Mann et al. proposed coupling head movement to movement of the ball may be an important element in interceptive tasks like baseball batting.¹⁵ In the present study, head movement was observed during the swing, which is consistent with previous research.¹⁶ Head movement was highly variable between players, as standard deviations were relatively large, especially in the vertical axis. Additionally, while most players displayed downward and backward displacement of the head during the swing, three players moved their head forward and two players moved

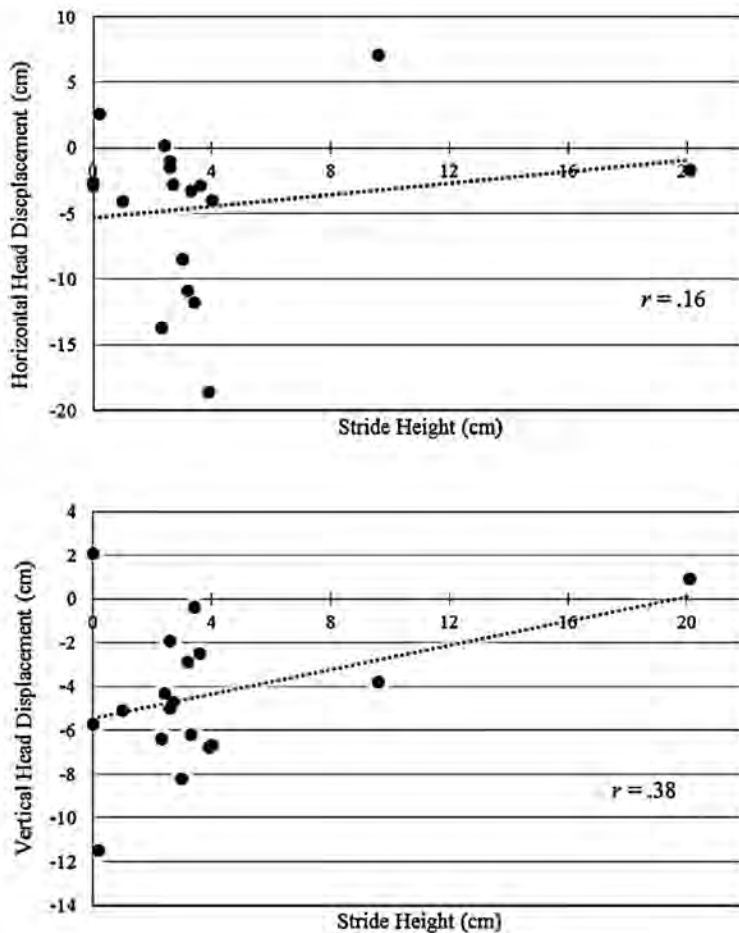


Figure 2. Correlations between stride height (vertical foot displacement) and head displacement during the baseball swing ($n = 18$). Positive values for Horizontal Head Displacement indicate forward movement of the head. Negative values for Vertical Head Displacement indicate downward movement of the head.

their head upward. The high degree of variability between participants demonstrates that each player has acquired an individualized movement pattern that involves coordinating his head movement with the rest of the swing.

As this was a pilot study meant to spur further investigation in a relatively unstudied area, several limitations were present. First, since a batting tee was used, this study can't account for changes in the baseball swing resulting from different pitch speeds and types. Fortenbaugh et al. compared the ground reaction forces produced by 29 minor league baseball players when swinging at fastballs and changeups.¹⁷ They found baseballs pitched at slower speeds (changeups) produced significant changes in the timing of the swing and the braking forces of the front foot, though the initial loading mechanism of the swing was not affected. While different pitch speeds

can influence certain aspects of the baseball swing, other studies have utilized a tee, and an intention of the present study was to maintain a consistent swing pattern across trials.¹⁸ Second, since the main focus of this study was the overall height and length of the stride, foot and head movement were not measured throughout the swing. Rather, vertical and horizontal positions of the head and foot were measured at the initiation of the swing, at the highest point of the stride (if one occurred), and at ball contact. A more sophisticated motion analysis system would provide more specific measurements of head and foot movement throughout the swing. For example, several groups of researchers have performed three-dimensional motion analysis using multiple cameras.¹⁹ It should be noted, however, that research on head movement during swinging skills is limited, and there is not an established definition for keeping a "still head" during this

type of skill.²⁰ Finally, while some studies have asked participants to perform 10 or more swings, the number of trials in this study was chosen to minimize interruption of the team's practice while still providing multiple trials for each participant.²¹ It can also be noted that Welch et al. measured only three swings for each participant in their biomechanical study of the baseball swing and Inkster et al. included data from only the best five swings for each participant in their analysis.²² While some aspects of this study may limit its generalizability to the larger population of baseball players in general, the results are still useful for baseball coaches, instructors, and players.

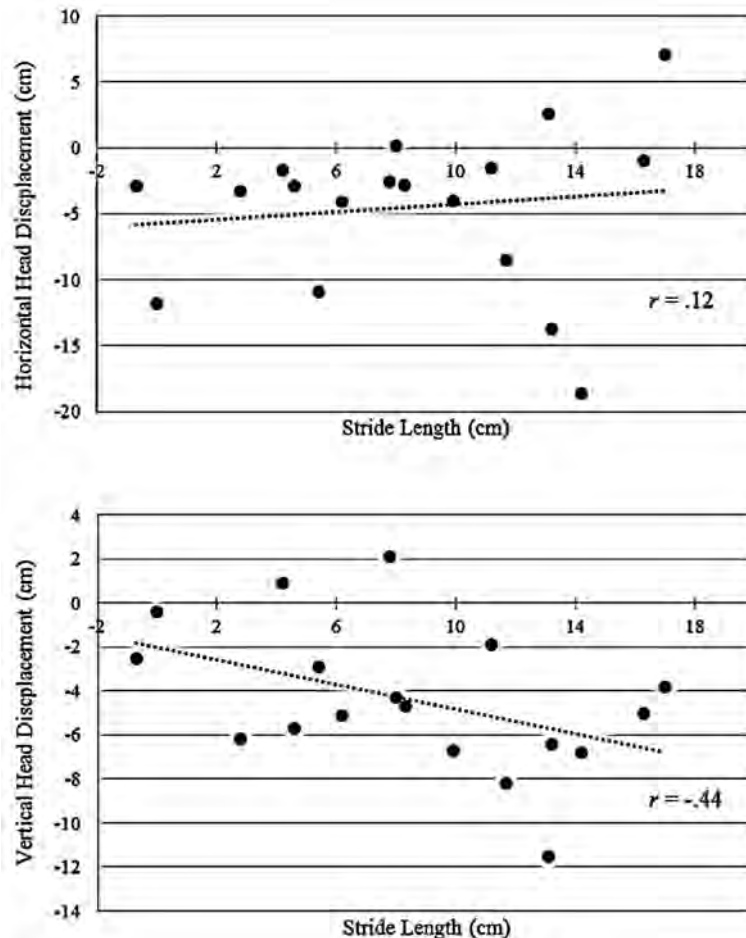


Figure 3. Correlations between stride length (horizontal foot displacement) and head displacement during the baseball swing ($n = 18$). Positive values for stride length indicate a forward step. Positive values for Horizontal Head Displacement indicate forward movement of the head. Negative values for Vertical Head Displacement indicate downward movement of the head.

Conclusions

The present findings suggest stride height and stride length are not associated with displacement of the head during the baseball swing in experienced collegiate baseball players. Head movement during the baseball swing may be beneficial if it is purposeful and consistent. Researchers should continue to examine head movement and its coupling with visual perception during the baseball swing. Future research in this area should also include participants of varying skill level, as several studies have shown differences in swing mechanics when comparing skilled and unskilled players. Other outcome measures such as bat velocity could also be considered.

Current research evidence indicates baseball batters can be encouraged to use a stride provided it doesn't interfere with their balance and swing mechanics. An efficient stride can be an essential element of a proficient baseball swing. ■

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14. Cohen, *Statistical Power Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences*.
15. Mann, "The Head Tracks and Gaze Predicts."
16. Nakata, "Differences in the Head Movement...."; Inkster, "Differences in Kinematics of the Baseball Swing....".
17. Fortenbaugh, "The Effect of Pitch Type....".
18. Christian Welch, "Hitting a Baseball"; Inkster, "Differences in Kinematics of the Baseball Swing....".
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20. Mann, "The Head Tracks and Gaze Predicts."
21. Fortenbaugh. "The Effect of Pitch Type...."; Nakata, "Differences in the Head Movement...."; Inkster, "Differences in Kinematics of the Baseball Swing....".
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Quasi-Cycles—Better than Cycles?

Herm Krabbenhoft

One of baseball's most highly-regarded accomplishments by an individual player is hitting for the cycle: collecting at least one of each of the four types of safe hits (single, double, triple, and home run) in the same game. While recognized as a rare and remarkable feat, the cycle has been achieved 286 times during the history of Major League Baseball, according to MLB.com, the official website of Major League Baseball. MLB.com presents a team-by-team list of (supposedly all) players who have hit for the cycle in the American and National Leagues through the 2016 season.¹ However, cycles achieved in the defunct American Association (1882–91), Union Association (1884), Players League (1890), and Federal League (1914–15) are not included. Fortunately, other sources such as *The Great All-Time Baseball Record Book* (1993) and *The (Sporting News) 2008 Complete Baseball Record Book* do include cycles hit in these leagues.^{2,3} Thus, according to Retrosheet, 313 major-league cycles have been identified 1876–2016: 159 in the National League, 134 in the American League, 18 in the American Association, one in the Players League, and one in the Federal League.⁴ All of these cycles have come in the regular season; there has not yet been a postseason cycle.

What makes the cycle special? For collectors of anything—Norman Rockwell calendars, Betty Crocker cookbooks, Red Man Tobacco baseball cards, etc.—there is a special satisfaction when the collector succeeds in completing the entire set. Achieving a complete set of each type of safe hit in the same game provides an analogous feeling, and the rarity of the occurrence makes it feel exceptional. More importantly, however, the cycle is special because it achieves each of the three tools of offense: (1) hitting for average, i.e. collecting four hits in four—or five or so—at bats; (2) hitting for power, i.e. collecting three long hits with a total of six extra bases—one from the double, two from the triple, and three from the homer; and (3) baserunning skill and speed, i.e. a double and a triple in the collection of hits, which requires three baserunning bases—one from the double and two from the triple. (Not to mention that some singles—bunt singles and scratch infield singles—also require baserunning prowess and speed.)

Now, since a batter's primary objective is to get on base and ultimately make his way around the bases and touch home plate to count a run—irrefutably baseball's most important statistic—it stands to reason that

CYCLES AND THE RECORD BOOKS

The use of the term “cycle” to mean “a single, a double, a triple, and a home run hit by a player in the same game” goes back to at least 1921.^{5,6} The first comprehensive list of players who hit for the cycle (of which I'm aware) is the one published in the 1937 edition of *The Little Red Book of Baseball*—in a table with the heading “Hitting For A Cycle” and a sub-heading “Making a single, a double, a triple, a homer in a game. A unique and unusual achievement. 1901 to 1936.”⁷ The list included 32 cycles from the National League and 13 from the American League. The cycles list was updated in the 1938 and 1939 editions, but then discontinued (permanently) with the 1940 edition. Compared to the list of cycles presented on Retrosheet, *The Little Red Book of Baseball* has several errors—mostly of omission. For instance, the first AL cycle listed is the one achieved by Bobby Veach on September 17, 1920, while Retrosheet lists ten cycles in the Junior Circuit before Veach's. The first comprehensive list of cycles that included the nineteenth century (that I'm aware of) was the one in the second (1964) edition of the *Ronald Encyclopedia of Baseball* (authored by Joseph Reichler).⁸ We now know Reichler's list was fraught with errors, both of omission and commission. Nearly twenty years later, in 1981, Joseph P. Donner reported his (apparently independently-generated) list of cycles in the *Baseball Research Journal*.⁹ Also in 1981, Macmillan published *The Great All-Time Baseball Record Book* (authored by Joseph L. Reichler) which presented his comprehensive list of cycles.¹⁰ When compared to the Retrosheet list of cycles, Donner's list has three discrepancies, Reichler's 58. Unlike other notable batting feats (such as three-homer games, five-hit games, grand slam homers, etc.), cycles were not always included in the various annual baseball guides and books published by *The Sporting News*.¹¹

a priori a double is more valuable than a single, and a triple is more valuable than a double, and a homer is more valuable than a triple. With that premise, let's consider the following:

Player A has a game batting line of two doubles, one triple, and one homer. Player B has a final batting line of one single, one double, one triple, and one homer—i.e., Player B has hit for the cycle. As it is now—and has been for decades—Player B gets special recognition by being eternally listed in baseball's record books for the feat. In contrast, Player A merely gets a fleeting “atta boy!” before his accomplishment vanishes into obscurity. (See the “Cycles and the Record Books” sidebar.) Shouldn't there be some long-lasting special recognition for the superb performance of Player A? What about an enduring special acknowledgment for the player who collected one double, two triples, and one homer—but no single? Or the player who connected for one two-baser, one three-baser, and two four-basers—but no one-baser? Each of these combinations is just like the traditional cycle, except that the cycle's single has been replaced by a more valuable hit—an extra base hit. Let's call these accomplishments *quasi-cycles*—four long hits in a game with at least one double, at least one triple, and at least one homer.^{12,13}

The quasi-cycle embodies all of the definitive characteristics of the standard cycle except for the single. Now one can ask, “Which players have achieved quasi-cycles?”

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

The first thing to compile is a list of all players who collected at least four extra base hits in a game, with the long hits distributed according to the definition of a quasi-cycle. That is an enormous task. Thanks to the research of Joseph L. Reichler, the workload was greatly reduced. In the 1993 edition of *The Great All-Time Baseball Record Book*, Reichler presented his list of players with five or four extra base hits in a game from 1876 through 1992.¹⁴ Similarly, in the 1993 edition of *The Baseball Research Journal*, Joseph Donner presented his “complete” list of players with five or four long hits in a game from 1876 through 1992.¹⁵ According to Donner, the feat was accomplished 301 times. Reichler's list includes 27 players not given on Donner's list, while Donner's list includes 50 players not given on Reichler's list. Examination of the two lists provided a sub-list of the players who collected or may have collected a quasi-cycle.

The next step was to ascertain which players hit a quasi-cycle 1993–2016. That is also a prodigious task. Fortunately, thanks to the Herculean efforts put forth by

Retrosheet volunteers to generate box score files (and derived player daily files), extracting the necessary information was greatly facilitated. The extraordinarily helpful “Play Index” tool on the Baseball-Reference website utilizes the Retrosheet database for the seasons back to 1913. In addition, Retrosheet's Tom Ruane graciously wrote a computer program to extract quasi-cycles achieved back to the 1911 season. (Note that the quasi-cycle information obtained from the Baseball-Reference Play Index and from Ruane's computer program identified several instances in disagreement with Donner's and/or Reichler's findings. The Appendix to this article, available on the SABR website at <https://sabr.org/node/47842>, provides detail on the discrepancies.)

Finally, each of the quasi-cycles identified as described above was verified by checking the game accounts in the relevant newspapers or the play-by-play descriptions given on the Retrosheet website.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the pertinent information for each of the 88 quasi-cycles identified. Since Joe DiMaggio collected two quasi-cycles, the total number of players who connected for a quasi-cycle according to my research is 87. Just over a third of the players (31) who achieved a quasi-cycle also collected a single and thereby simultaneously accomplished a traditional cycle—the names of those players are shown in bold-face—including DiMaggio twice. Thus, from 1876 through 2016, only 56 major-league players managed to assemble the critical three-tool components of the cycle, but didn't connect for a simple single to complete the classic cycle. Of these 56 quasi-cycle achievers, only five also accomplished a traditional cycle in some other game during their big league careers—Lou Gehrig (twice), Bob Fothergill, Jimmie Foxx, Johnny Mize, and Willie Stargell.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Now we can answer the question, “Is a quasi-cycle better than a cycle?” Technically, the answer is “Yes!” Both from the standpoint of a player's contribution to his team's offense and from the rarity of the achievement demonstrated by this research, the quasi-cycle deserves to be noted and recorded along with other hitting feats usually included in the record books such as the classic cycle or hitting four homers in a game. This leads to a follow-up question, “Will the quasi-cycle achievers ever be listed as such in baseball's record books?” At least at this time they are now recorded here in the *Baseball Research Journal*. ■

Table 1. Players Who Hit for Quasi-Cycles (1876–2016)

#	Player	Team (League)	Game	AB-D-T-HR
1	Lon Knight	ATH (AA)	7-30-1883	6-2-1-1
2	Dave Orr	MET (AA)	6-12-1885	6-2-1-1
3	Henry Larkin	ATH (AA)	6-16-1885	6-2-1-1
4	Bob Caruthers	STL (AA)	8-16-1886	5-1-1-2
5	Jack Rowe	DET (NL)	9-13-1886	6-2-1-1
6	Tip O'Neill	STL (AA)	4-30-1887	7-1-1-2
7	Jimmy Ryan	CHI (NL)	7-28-1888	6-1-2-1
#	Player	Team (League)	Game	AB-D-T-HR
8	Larry Twitchell	CLE (NL)	8-15-1889	6-1-3-1
9	Farmer Weaver	LOU (AA)	8-12-1890	6-1-2-1
10	*Tommy McCarthy *	BOS (NL)	10-7-1892	5-1-1-2
11	George Decker	CHI (NL)	9-16-1894	5-1-1-2
12	Bill Bradley	CLE (AL)	9-24-1903	5-2-1-1
13	Frank LaPorte	STL (AL)	8-7-1911 (2)	5-1-2-1
14	Mike Mitchell	CIN (NL)	8-19-1911 (2)	4-2-1-1
15	Ed Lennox	PIT (FL)	5-6-1914	5-1-1-2
#	Player	Team (League)	Game	AB-D-T-HR
16	George Burns	NY (NL)	9-17-1920	5-2-1-1
17	*Ty Cobb*	DET(AL)	5-8-1921	5-2-1-1
18	*George Sisler*	STL (AL)	8-13-1921	5-2-1-1
19	*Ross Youngs*	NY (NL)	4-29-1922	5-2-1-1
20	Russ Wrightstone	PHI (NL)	6-11-1926	6-2-1-1
21	*Heinie Manush*	DET (AL)	7-11-1926	5-1-2-1
22	Ben Paschal	NY (AL)	6-13-1927	5-1-1-2
23	*Travis Jackson*	NY (NL)	6-15-1929	7-1-2-1
#	Player	Team (League)	Game	AB-D-T-HR
24	Pinky Whitney	PHI (NL)	7-30-1929	5-1-2-1
25	*Joe Cronin*	WAS (AL)	9-2-1929 (1)	5-2-1-1
26	*Lou Gehrig*	NY (AL)	7-29-1930	5-1-1-2
27	Bob Fothergill	CHI (AL)	7-28-1931	5-2-1-1
28	*Jimmie Foxx*	PHI (AL)	7-2-1933 (2)	4-1-1-2
29	Sam West	STL (AL)	8-5-1933	5-1-2-1
30	Wally Berger	BOS (NL)	8-11-1935 (1)	5-2-1-1
31	Hank Leiber	NY (NL)	8-18-1935	5-2-1-1
#	Player	Team (League)	Game	AB-D-T-HR
32	*Joe DiMaggio*	NY (AL)	7-9-1937	5-1-1-2
33	*Johnny Mize*	STL (NL)	7-3-1939	4-1-1-2
34	Chet Laabs	STL (AL)	7-16-1941	4-1-1-2
35	Phil Weintraub	NY (NL)	4-30-1944 (1)	5-2-1-1
36	Grady Hatton	CIN (NL)	8-11-1947	4-2-1-1
37	*Joe DiMaggio *	NY (AL)	5-20-1948	6-1-1-2
38	George Vico	DET (AL)	8-14-1948	6-2-1-1
39	Gil Hodges	BRK (NL)	6-25-1949	6-1-1-2
#	Player	Team (League)	Game	AB-D-T-HR
40	*Ralph Kiner*	PIT (NL)	6-25-1950	6-1-1-2
41	Hoot Evers	DET (AL)	9-7-1950	6-1-2-1
42	*Al Kaline*	DET (AL)	6-30-1956	6-2-1-1
43	Daryl Spencer	SF (NL)	5-13-1958	6-1-1-2
44	Roger Maris	KC (AL)	8-3-1958 (1)	5-1-1-2
45	*Hank Aaron*	MIL (NL)	5-3-1962	5-1-1-2
46	Joe Christopher	NY (NL)	8-18-1964	5-1-2-1
47	*Carl Yastrzemski*	BOS (AL)	5-14-1965	5-1-1-2

Table 1. Players Who Hit for Quasi-Cycles (1876–2016) (cont.)

#	Player	Team (League)	Game	AB-D-T-HR
48	Don Baylor	BAL (AL)	4-06-1973	4-2-1-1
49	Hal Breedon	MON (NL)	9-2-1973	5-1-2-1
50	*Willie Stargell*	PIT (NL)	9-17-1973	4-2-1-1
51	Jack Brohamer	CHI (AL)	9-24-1977	5-2-1-1
52	*George Brett*	KC (AL)	5-28-1979	7-1-1-2
53	Dan Ford	CAL (AL)	8-10-1979	7-2-1-1
54	Johnny Grubb	TEX (AL)	8-8-1982 (2)	5-2-1-1
55	Lou Whitaker	DET (AL)	6-8-1983	5-2-1-1
#	Player	Team (League)	Game	AB-D-T-HR
56	Bob Horner	ATL (NL)	7-13-1985	5-2-1-1
57	Kevin Bass	HOU (NL)	6-27-1987	4-2-1-1
58	*Tim Lincecum*	MON (NL)	8-16-1987	5-2-1-1
59	Darryl Strawberry	NY (NL)	8-16-1987	5-2-1-1
60	Chris Sabo	CIN (NL)	6-18-1988	4-2-1-1
61	Chris Speier	SF (NL)	7-9-1988	6-2-1-1
62	Kevin Mitchell	CIN (NL)	6-22-1993	5-2-1-1
63	Travis Fryman	DET (AL)	7-28-1993	5-2-1-1
#	Player	Team (League)	Game	AB-D-T-HR
64	Gary Sheffield	FLA (NL)	4-10-1994	5-1-1-2
65	Scott Cooper	BOS (AL)	4-12-1994	6-2-1-1
66	Mike Blowers	SEA (AL)	5-24-1995	5-2-1-1
67	Rondell White	MON (NL)	6-11-1995	7-2-1-1
68	Melvin Nieves	DET (AL)	4-6-1996	5-2-1-1
69	Larry Walker	COL (NL)	5-21-1996	5-1-1-2
70	Alex Ochoa	NY (NL)	7-3-1996	5-2-1-1
71	Rich Becker	MIN (AL)	7-13-1996	6-1-1-2
#	Player	Team (League)	Game	AB-D-T-HR
72	Juan Gonzalez	TEX (AL)	8-31-1998	5-2-1-1
73	Carl Everett	BOS (AL)	8-29-2000	5-1-1-2
74	Chris Richard	STL (NL)	9-3-2000	6-1-1-2
75	Roger Cedeño	DET (AL)	7-18-2001 (2)	5-1-1-2
76	Greg Colbrunn	ARZ (NL)	9-18-2002	6-1-1-2
77	Eric Byrnes	OAK (AL)	6-29-2003	5-2-1-1
78	Mark Teixeira	TEX (AL)	9-13-2004	5-2-1-1
79	Raul Ibanez	SEA (AL)	6-11-2007	5-1-1-2
#	Player	Team (League)	Game	AB-D-T-HR
80	Dustin Pedroia	BOS (AL)	7-2-2008	5-2-1-1
81	Stephen Drew	ARZ (NL)	9-1-2008	5-2-1-1
82	Ian Kinsler	TEX (AL)	4-5-2009	6-2-1-1
83	Ryan Howard	PHI (NL)	6-18-2010	4-1-1-2
84	Sam Fuld	TB (AL)	4-11-2011	6-2-1-1
85	Kelly Johnson	ARZ (NL)	5-30-2011	6-1-1-2
86	Carlos Beltran	STL (NL)	5-11-2012	5-1-1-2
87	David Wright	NY (NL)	6-23-2013	5-2-1-1
88	Kyle Seager	SEA (AL)	6-2-2014	5-1-2-1

NOTES

(1) Players listed in boldface also collected a single and therefore simultaneously also achieved a traditional cycle. (2) A player's name bracketed with asterisks indicates that he was subsequently elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame.

Dedication

Herm Krabbenhoft gratefully dedicates this article to his good friend Ron Kabacinski. Together they have enjoyed many games at Tiger Stadium and Comerica Park—including the one on July 18, 2001, when Roger Cedeño of the Tigers hit a quasi-cycle. Thanks, Ron!—for all the great times playing catch down on the farm and the wonderful memories of our fantastic times at the ballpark—including especially the 1968 and 1984 World Series and the final game at Tiger Stadium. All the best to you and Barbara!

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Notes

1. "History of the Game, Doubleday to Present Day—Players who have hit for the cycle," MLB.com, accessed June 10, 2017.
2. Joseph L. Reichler (Revised by Ken Samelson), *The Great All-Time Baseball Record Book*, Macmillan, New York (1993) 126.
3. Steve Gietschier, Editor, *The 2008 Complete Baseball Record Book*, Sporting News, Chesterfield, MO (2008) 130.
4. "Cycles," Retrosheet.org, accessed July 3, 2017.
5. Chuck McGill, personal communication (email) to Herm Krabbenhoft, June 01, 2017—from the *Tennessean* [Nashville, Tennessee, August 21,

- 1921 (p12)] was the following news item: "George Sisler on August 13 hit the cycle by getting on a single, double, triple, and home run, and by getting an extra double in the same game."
6. According to *The Dickson Baseball Dictionary*, the first use of the term "cycle" to mean hitting a single, double, triple, and home run in the same game was in a 1933 *Washington Post* article: Paul Dickson, *The Dickson Baseball Dictionary*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York (2009) 237.
7. Charlie White, *The Little Red Book of Baseball*, Cortland, NY (1937), 26.
8. Joseph Reichler, *The Ronald Encyclopedia of Baseball*, Ronald Press Co., New York (1964), 80.
9. Joseph G. Donner, "Hitting for the Cycle," *Baseball Research Journal*, Society for American Baseball Research (1981) 75.
10. Joseph L. Reichler, *The Great All-Time Baseball Record Book*, Macmillan, New York (1981) 110.
11. For example, beginning with the 1951 edition of *The (Sporting News) Official Baseball Guide*, in the section titled "Batting Feats of 1950," lists of players with 5-hit games, 3-homer games, grand slam homers, and cycles were presented. In the 1952–1954 editions, only 5-hit games and grand slam homers were provided. Then, starting in 1955 (and continuing until the very last edition in 2006) 5-hit games, 3-homer games, and grand slams were presented; the lists of pinch homers were discontinued (permanently) with the 1974 edition. A list of cycles was not presented in any edition other than the 1951 edition. With regard to cumulative lists of batting feats, beginning with the 1951 edition of *One for the Book*, a list of players who achieved "Six or More Hits in One Game" (p30) was presented. Beginning with the 1952 edition, lists of players who hit (a) hit "Four Home Runs in One Game" (page 45) or (b) "Three Home Runs in One Game" (page 45) were presented. These batting feats were published in each subsequent annual edition through the final edition [then titled *The (Sporting News) Complete Record Book*] published in 2008. Curiously, a comprehensive list of cycles was not included until the 1998 edition (page 177).
12. The modifier "quasi" is defined by *Merriam-Webster* as follows: "having some resemblance usually by possession of certain attributes." Similarly, the combining form "quasi-" is defined as follows: "in some way or sense, but not in a true, direct, or complete way; resembling in some degree." Also *Merriam-Webster* defines "cycle" as follows: "the series of a single, double, triple, and home run hit in any order by one player during one baseball game." Thus, a "quasi-cycle" is a cycle in some way or sense (i.e., it has four hits like a cycle, including a double, triple, and home run), but is not a true or complete cycle since it lacks the single, the single having been replaced by an additional long hit. Some common "quasi-" words are quasi-governmental, quasi-judicial, quasi-legislative, quasi-public.
13. One might also ask, "What about a player who hits one homer and three doubles—should that combination also be a quasi-cycle?" Or the player who blasts out two doubles and two homers or three homers and one double or even four homers? The answer for these "tripleless" combinations of four long hits is, "No—because the definition of the quasi-cycle mandates that at least one of each of the three types of extra base hits (double, triple and home run) must be included in the combination of four long hits."
14. Joseph L. Reichler (Revised by Ken Samelson), *The Great All-Time Baseball Record Book*, Macmillan, New York (1993) 89.
15. Joseph Donner, "Four or More Long Hits in a Game—The Complete List," *The Baseball Research Journal*, Society for American Baseball Research, Cleveland (1993) 54.

A Comprehensive Analysis of Team Streakiness in Major League Baseball: 1962–2016

Paul H. Kvam and Zezhong Chen

A baseball team would be considered “streaky” if its record exhibits an unusually high number of consecutive wins or losses, compared to what might be expected if the team’s performance does not really depend on whether or not they won their previous game. If an average team in Major League Baseball (i.e., with a record of 81–81) is not streaky, we assume its win probability would be stable at around 50% for most games, outside of peculiar details of day-to-day outcomes, such as whether the game is at home or away, the starting pitcher, and so on.

In this paper, we investigate win outcomes for every major league team from 1962 (the year both leagues expanded to play 162 games per season) through the 2016 season in order to find out if any teams exhibited significant streakiness. We use a statistical “runs test” based on the observed sequences of winning streaks and losing streaks accumulated during the season. Overall, our findings are consistent with what we would expect if no teams exhibited a nonrandom streakiness that belied their overall record. That is, major league baseball teams, as a whole, are not streaky.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF STREAKINESS

The idea to quantify streakiness grew after Gilovich, Vallone, and Tversky questioned whether a “hot hand” phenomenon exists in sports.¹ Their research focus on basketball data showed that players who made a successful basket did not measurably alter their chance of making the next one. Other researchers systematically reviewed sports data for related hot-hand results, and showed that empirical evidence for the hot-hand phenomenon is quite limited.^{2,3} This article investigates how the hot-hand fallacy relates to major league baseball teams winning (or losing) consecutive games by measuring their streakiness.

Several statistical models have been developed to detect and fully characterize sports-related streakiness in various forms. Unlike in this paper, many researchers investigate an occurrence of streakiness, perhaps even an outlying event. For example, Albert singled out streaky hitting patterns from the 2005 season, and later examined historic baseball streaks such as the 2002

Oakland A’s, a team that won 20 games in a row en route to an AL West Division title and a 103–59 record.^{4,5} Albert and Williamson use a Bayes model to describe parameters of a model of individual player streakiness, while emphasizing the utility of a more basic runs-test for detecting streakiness.⁶

The nonparametric Wald-Wolfowitz test (known as the runs test) is a standard way to examine a sequence of binary events (in this case, wins and losses) to detect patterns that cannot be explained by simple randomness.⁷ We outline how the runs test is applied to find streaks in a team’s win-loss sequences, and we also consider teams that lack an expected amount of streakiness, that is, teams that fail to come up with occasional long winning streaks or losing streaks that are an inevitable outcome of long sequences of events.

Sire and Redner considered a similar problem for individual match-ups between teams of varying quality, and their research is based on the Bradley-Terry model, which contrasts team strengths to determine the probability each game is won or lost.⁸ They concluded “the behavior of the last half-century supports the hypothesis that long streaks are primarily statistical in origin with little self-reinforcing component.” Albert and Williamson used simulated data from a Bayesian model to detect streakiness in individual sports performances, including baseball hitting probabilities.

THE RUNS TEST

Suppose we have a sequence of outcomes that are each classified as a win (W) or a loss (L). If the sequence is random, the wins and losses will be well mixed, and exaggerated clustering of wins or losses, as well as any lack of expected clustering, indicates a violation of the assumption of randomness. In statistics, a sequence of homogenous outcomes is traditionally considered a “run,” but we will more often refer to it as a “streak” to avoid a confusing overlap with baseball terminology. However, the statistical procedure is still referred to here as the “runs test.”

The Wald-Wolfowitz runs test counts R = the number of homogenous streaks in any sequence of wins or losses (i.e., R represents the number of times a winning streak or a losing streak ends). If R is too

large given a fixed number of trials, the sequence is showing anti-correlation (a disinclination to have two wins or two losses in a row) and we should reject the assumption of independence in the sequence of wins and losses. On the other hand, if R is too small, then there exist too many sequences of consecutive wins or losses that are considered highly improbable under the independence assumption.

In testing sequences with 100 or more binary events, the distribution of runs is very close to a bell curve and can be accurately gauged using the normal distribution. As a result, we can efficiently judge a team's streakiness based on how many standard deviations away from the number they are expected with independent random trials. For example, we expect around 95% of the sequences to be within two standard deviations, so sequences falling outside this range are suspect, in terms of streakiness.

If an interesting pattern is discovered using the runs test, there are numerous artifacts of the win/loss sequence that can be further investigated using run-related statistics.

MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL DATA

To understand how we compute the runs statistic, consider the win-loss data from the 1972 Philadelphia Phillies. We did not choose this Phillies team randomly; this team was known not only for being a bottom-rung team, but one that had a pitching ace, Steve Carlton, who finished with a 27–10 record in 41 starts, with a 1.97 ERA. The other three main starting pitchers on the team had a combined 10–39 record, and Carlton earned nearly half the team's wins that season.

For that reason, one might conjecture the 1972 Phillies would have a peculiar kind of streakiness: abbreviated winning streaks along with longer losing streaks that were halted when Carlton was the starting pitcher. In fact, this happened 19 times when a Phillies loss was followed by a winning game started by Carlton. But in the course of the year, we will see that peculiarity did not give the Phillies an unusual pattern of losing streaks that were truncated at four or so games. Overall, we will show the Phillies team was no streakier than we would expect from a team that has the same 37.8% chance of winning any game.

Here is how the 1972 Philadelphia Phillies season is summarized in terms of daily wins (W) and losses (L):

```
WLLWWLWWLWWLWWLWWLWLLWLLLLLLLLLWLLL
LLLLLWWLWLLLLLWLLWLLWLLLLLWLLWLLWLL
WLLWLLWLLWWLLLLWWWWLWLLWLLWLLWLLWLL
LLLWLLWLLWLLLLLLLWWLWWLWLLWLLWLLW.
```

For example, the first streak is a winning streak, which lasts only one game. The next streak must be a losing streak, which lasted two games.

Figure 1 plots these streak sequences for the 1972 Phillies as a step function, stepping up each time a new streak starts. The flat part in the line that starts at 25 games represents a 10-game losing streak the Phillies began on May 16, and ended with a win on May 27. The step function will jump over and up with apparent randomness, but if the final statistic (after 162 games) ends up within the darkest gray (middle) region, then the runs statistic is within one standard deviation of the number of runs we would expect if the sequence was based on random Bernoulli trials. By graphing the path of the runs statistics, we are able to assess when and why a team's streaks were notable. In this particular case, the final number of runs (for a 59–97 team) is well within the expected bounds we would expect if the Phillies had the same probability of winning each game (e.g., $59/156 = 0.378$. Note that only 156 games were played due to the strike.).

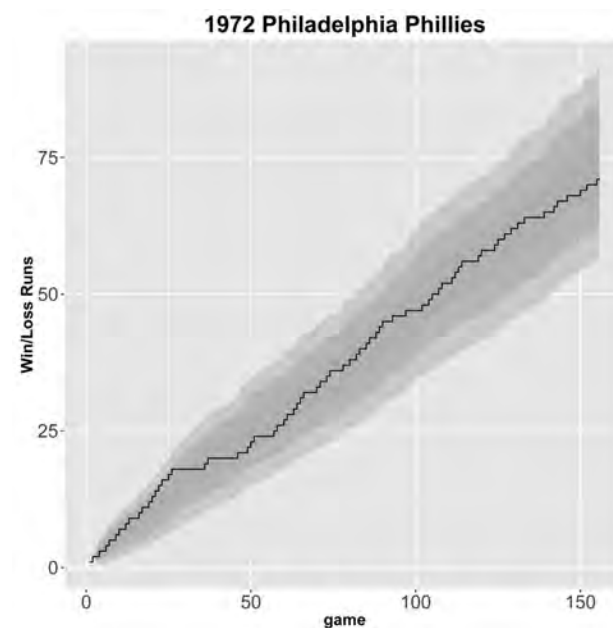


Figure 1.

The runs test will signal non-randomness (a potential streaky sequence) if the plotted step function ends up outside two standard deviations after 162 games. The two standard deviation interval is represented by the second, slightly lighter gray band in Figure 1. The lightest band represents a runs statistic within three standard deviations. If the win-loss sequence is truly random, we would expect a team to fall outside three standard deviations once every 370 seasons. In terms of our accumulated data across 55 years, that is equivalent to saying we would expect to see 3.93 teams

experience having a runs statistic more than three standard deviations from the expected value. We actually found only one such team matching a standard deviation over three—the 2005 St. Louis Cardinals (discussed below). We also found 94.5% of the runs statistics were within two standard deviations, which is very close to what would be expected if there is no streakiness.

2005 ST. LOUIS CARDINALS

As the sole outlier in over 50 years of accumulated data, the 2005 St. Louis Cardinals are worthy of extra scrutiny. In that year, the Cards went 100–62 (but lost to the Houston Astros in the National League Championship Series). They were led by 25-year-old first baseman Albert Pujols, who garnered 41 home runs, 117 RBIs, and batted .330. Chris Carpenter led the pitching staff with a 21–5 record and a 2.83 ERA. What made this team's runs sequence exceptional is not the long winning streaks, but the lack of losing streaks.

The Cardinals recorded 99 streaks (50 winning streaks and 49 losing streaks). The table below shows that St. Louis stopped losing streaks at one game 39 times, which is over 30% more frequent than expected for a team with a 0.617 winning average. That is, if we observe 49 independent random trials representing the number of games (after their initial loss) until they win a game, then the probability the streak ends on the next game is 0.617, which should happen $(0.617)49 = 30.2$ times out of 49. For the 2005 St. Louis Cardinals, the losing streak ended after one game 39 out of 49 times.

Table 1.

Streak (in games)	1	2	3	4	5	6
WIN	24	14	6	2	3	1
<i>expected</i>	<i>19.1</i>	<i>11.8</i>	<i>7.3</i>	<i>4.5</i>	<i>2.8</i>	<i>1.7</i>
LOSS	39	7	3	0	0	0
<i>expected</i>	<i>30.2</i>	<i>11.6</i>	<i>4.4</i>	<i>1.7</i>	<i>0.6</i>	<i>0.2</i>

Figure 2 shows how the Cards' season became less streaky as the season progressed. The Cardinals' year of 99 streaks is among the highest recorded over the past 55 years, but the highest number of streaks—100—belongs to the 1971 California Angels. The Angels had a mediocre record of 76–86 but had fewer than expected long streaks of wins or losses. Out of 50 winning streaks, 34 were ended after one game (much higher than the 23.5 expected).

2003 DETROIT TIGERS

The streakiest team of the past 55 years is the 2003 Detroit Tigers, one of the worst teams in major league

baseball history. The Tigers compiled a record of 43–119, breaking a record for AL teams by recording more losses than the 1916 Philadelphia Athletics. With 27 winning streaks and 27 losing streaks, the Tigers had the fewest number of streaks of all major league teams since 1962, not counting the 1981 and 1994 strike-shortened seasons. Figure 3 shows how their accumulation of streaks developed over the season.

For a team with a 43–119 record, long losing streaks are inevitable. If we treat each game as an independent trial, then we would expect $27(0.2654) = 7.2$ losing

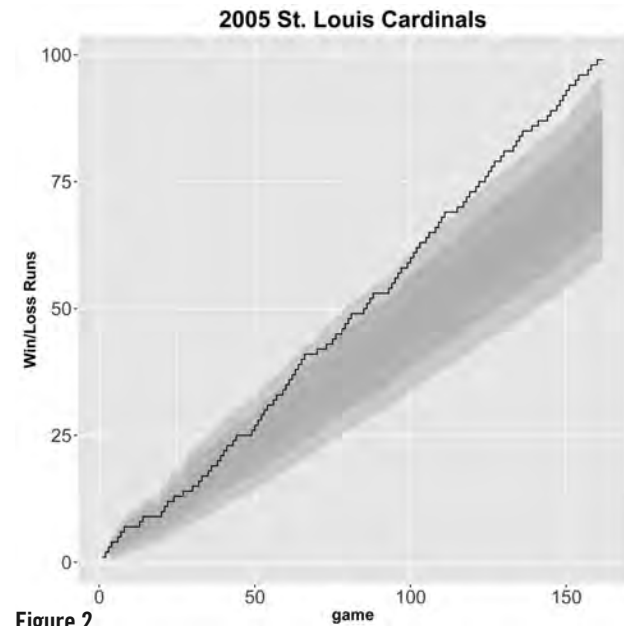


Figure 2.

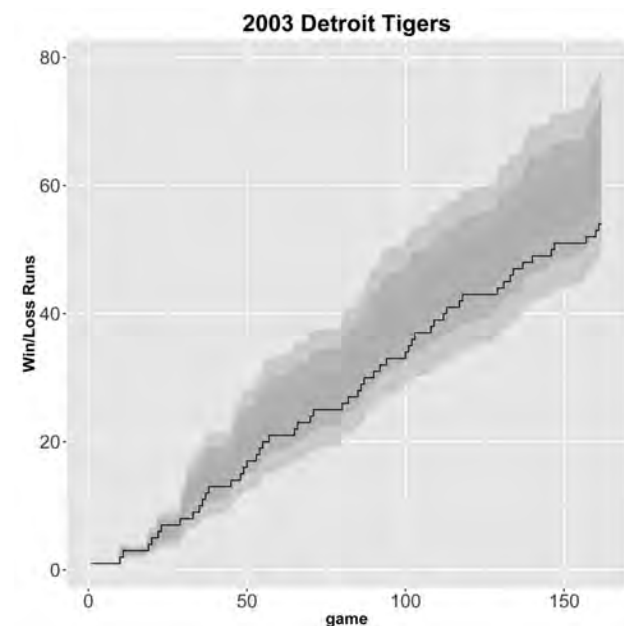


Figure 3.

streaks that would end at one game (actually, 6 streaks ended at one game). On the other hand, we would expect between two and three losing streaks of six games or more. In 2003, the Tigers endured ten different losing streaks of six or more games, including a 10-game losing streak in September and an 11-game losing streak in August. These long streaks account for why the '03 Tigers runs statistic is such an aberration. In the seven losing streaks of seven or more games, the Detroit Tigers accumulated more than half of their losses for the season (62 out of 119). (Table 2)

CONCLUSIONS

Once any non-random pattern is determined from a runs test, more advanced statistical methods may be used to characterize how each team's win probability changes depending on whether the last game is a win or a loss. In related research, Quintana, et al. analyzed individual batters' streakiness with regard to hits, and looked at how a player's performance varied from

season to season (across four seasons).⁹ Some obvious factors were helpful in predicting how a player's success rate might change, such as the quality of the opposing pitcher, but for the most part, explanatory variables such as game score or inning were not helpful in the prediction.

According to the distribution of the nonparametric Wald-Wolfowitz runs test, we found close to the expected number of results within one and two standard deviations of what was expected. Interestingly, we found fewer than expected cases outside of three standard deviations. Obviously, the simplicity of the applied runs test does not reveal the subtle win probability factors that change from day to day, from series to series, from pitching match up to who is on the disabled list. But the data show that detailed investigations into team streakiness are not warranted due to the overwhelming evidence that winning streaks and losing streaks fall into a pattern that is consistent with independent, random trials. ■

Table 2.

Streak (in games)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
WIN	17	5	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>expected</i>	<i>19.8</i>	<i>5.3</i>	<i>1.4</i>	<i>0.4</i>	<i>0.1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
LOSS	6	4	4	2	1	3	1	2	2	1	1
<i>expected</i>	<i>7.2</i>	<i>5.3</i>	<i>3.9</i>	<i>2.8</i>	<i>2.1</i>	<i>1.5</i>	<i>1.1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>

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The Struggle to Define “Valuable”

Tradition vs. Sabermetrics in the 2012 AL MVP Race

Peter B. Gregg, PhD.

When you cannot express it in numbers, your knowledge is of a meager and unsatisfactory kind.
—Lord Kelvin

One absolutely cannot tell, by watching, the difference between a .300 hitter and a .275 hitter. The difference is one hit every two weeks. It might be that a reporter, seeing every game that the team plays, could sense that difference over the course of the year if no records were kept, but I doubt it. —Bill James (as quoted in *Moneyball*)

Today, statistics have become a fundamental component of the fabric of baseball analysis and have gained appreciation at the major-league level.¹ As Ron Von Burg and Paul E. Johnson note, “For many, statistics are the main way of understanding and relating to the game of baseball.”² Broadcasters employ color commentators whose job entails unpacking the nuances of the game, including explicating various statistics and in-game strategies. Fans and media can go to websites like Baseball-Reference.com to see era-by-era comparisons of teams or players and new statistics like WAR (“wins above replacement”) and wRC+ (“weighted runs created plus”).

These newer statistics and data analyses fall under the label “sabermetrics,” defined by Bill James as “the mathematical and statistical study of baseball records” and later broadened to “search for objective knowledge about baseball.”³ Fundamentally, sabermetrics is a search for new ideas in an old game. Nathaniel Stoltz points out, “...as time has progressed and media have diversified, the sabermetric movement has made an increasingly sizeable impact on baseball discourse.”⁴ Being relatively new, sabermetrics is not steeped in baseball tradition, and this makes it a potential threat to more traditional ways of thinking about the game. Although Michael Lewis’s *Moneyball* put these advanced analytics into the public’s mind and teams have come to depend on these advanced analytics, sports journalists have been slower to appreciate or incorporate them, generally favoring traditional evaluation methods with which they are comfortable.^{5,6} Detractors see sabermetrics as a threat to baseball’s past because it facilitates a departure from traditional statistics and “intangibles” like heart, grit, and character in celebrating player achievement.⁷ With the growth of sabermetrics, the traditional terminology employed

when using those statistics is undergoing some transformation and causing a bit of upheaval in the process. One of these terms under scrutiny is “valuable” as used in the award for the “most valuable” player.

In Major League Baseball, the “Kenesaw Mountain Landis Memorial Baseball Award” is given by the Baseball Writers’ Association of America (BBWAA) to the “most valuable” player (or “MVP”) in each league, as voted by two organization members from each city. The vote follows consideration by and discourse among member and non-member journalists, bloggers, and fans in and outside the press. In their memo to voters, the BBWAA notes that there is no formal definition of “most valuable” and the meaning is left to the discretion of the voter.⁸ Because the definition of “value” is the result of discourse and a majority consensus, it is fundamentally determined rhetorically, and as such it is not without debate or controversy.

Statistics are among the key criteria the writers use to determine for whom they should vote and around which the debate revolves in defining the value of the “most valuable” player; consequently, discourse around MVP races tends to focus on performance seen through a statistical lens. For example, in 1941, Joe DiMaggio beat out Ted Williams for MVP largely because of his notable 56-game hit streak despite Williams having a solidly better season.⁹ In 1999, catcher Pudge Rodriguez beat out pitcher Pedro Martinez in part because some writers felt that a pitchers do not contribute enough to their team to merit “most valuable” because they are not everyday players.¹⁰ In 2001, Ichiro Suzuki won the MVP award over Jason Giambi, whose supporters pointed out he led the league in on-base percentage and slugging and beat Ichiro in walks, home runs, and RBIs with 170 fewer at bats.¹¹

One of the more significantly controversial MVP debates in recent years occurred during the summer and autumn of 2012 on the merits of Miguel Cabrera of the Detroit Tigers and Mike Trout of the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim, both of whom were having notable seasons (see Table 1). Cabrera’s supporters pointed out that he was on pace to win the Triple Crown, leading the league in batting average, home runs, and runs batted in, a historic feat that had not happened since 1967. Mike Trout was a rookie sensation; his supporters argued that not only was he running neck-and-neck with Cabrera for batting average and hitting for power, sabermetric analysis showed he was scoring runs and stealing bases at a historic pace, as well as being an exemplary defender.

This noteworthy public crisis between “traditional” and “sabermetric” player evaluation methods formed an important transition point in baseball discourse by the press regarding the use of sabermetrics to evaluate players. “Claims to know are claims of power,”¹² and in the case of the 2012 American League Most Valuable Player award, the debate hinged on what knowledge claims constituted the definition of “valuable.” For Joe Posnanski, “...the argument seemed to split baseball fans between those who embrace the new baseball metrics and those who do not.”¹³ This race served as an important representative anecdote in the ways that sports journalists talked about sabermetrics.¹⁴

In this paper, to examine the rhetorical strategies used by reporters to define “valuable,” I apply Edward Schiappa’s methodology for exploring “definitional ruptures.”¹⁵ I unpack the factions’ stated purpose or intent of defining, the interests advanced by the definitions, and the consequences of the definition. This three-layer approach reveals that the heart of this tension revolves around the power to define “valuable” as an institutional norm among baseball journalists, with mainstream journalists relying on older statistics and baseball history and newer journalists using sabermetric measures to define “valuable.” I then discuss the consequences of that tension in 2012 and beyond.

I examined published articles and analyses by sports journalists and bloggers starting from late July 2012 and continuing through early November after the award was announced. I emphasized writing

by BBWAA members and the responses to their articles. The articles constituted the primary discourse since they came from the BBWAA voters or in response to their analysis and argumentation.

METHODS OF ANALYZING DEFINITIONAL RUPTURES

Schiappa notes that the “rhetorical analysis of definition... investigates how people persuade other people to adopt and use certain definitions to the exclusion of others.” He argues that definitions are strategies to respond to situations or questions, and they “posit attitudes about situations.” Definitions are constituted by “rhetorically induced social knowledge.”¹⁸ This social knowledge often comes in the form of authority-based “articulation of what particular words mean and how they should be used to refer to reality.”¹⁹ While most definitions are not contested, at times the meaning of a particular word or how it ought to be used is a site of dispute or controversy. The various sides involved in the dispute take on the “natural attitude” that their usage in that specific context is correct.²⁰ For example, a baseball fan who disagrees with an official scorer’s definition of an error has in a small way participated in a definitional dispute; when a team petitions the league for a ruling change on the play, they are arguing over a definition.

These definitional controversies “can be understood, in part, as definitional ruptures.”²¹ This necessitates not treating definitions as factual claims based on observations about the world and instead treating them as attempts to establish social or institutional norms based on theories of how the world ought to be. Seen in this way, a struggle among journalists to define a term like “valuable” is a struggle for “denotative conformity,” or intersubjective agreement about the meaning of a word.²² Words with high denotative conformity are usually seen as factual observation statements, resulting from their agreed-upon usage and the context of the use. Words with low denotative conformity are usually seen as theory statements about the world. For example, the strike zone has a clear definition in the MLB rulebook, but the strike zone as defined in practice by umpires varies on many different constraints, including the catcher behind the plate.²³ Seen in this light, the sides in a definitional rupture in baseball journalism over the meaning of the

word “value” use the same word with a different definition and thereby construct or endorse different institutional norms for how it should be used.

Table 1.

	R	H	HR	RBI	AVG	OBP	SLG	OPS+	SB	Off	Def	WAR
Trout	129	182	30	83	.326	.399	.564	168	49	64.2	13.0	10.3
Cabrera	109	205	44	139	.330	.393	.606	164	4	46.4	-8.2	6.4

League leader is in italics

2012 MLB Leaderboard, Fangraphs.com

Definitions entitle something, giving both a label and a status to that which is defined.²⁴ This entitling places the phenomenon in a set of beliefs or frames about the world that includes what is real and what qualities constitute the phenomenon.²⁵ When a new definition arises in discourse, the interrelated attitudes and beliefs are brought into the debate, and they too must be negotiated. “Whole sets of normative and factual beliefs must be changed before someone may be convinced to accept a new institutional fact.”²⁶ When advocates push for a new definition, they must persuade others to change their linguistic behavior.

Schiappa outlines three major areas for the critic to identify and analyze within a definitional rupture: purpose or intent, use of power, and definitional practice. In exploring purpose or intent, the critic should examine the shared purposes in defining the word, the interests and values advanced by the competing definitions, and the practical consequences of the definition as it affects “the needs and interests of a particular community of language users involved in a dispute.”²⁷ In examining questions of power, the rhetorical critic should identify who has the power to define or speak as an authority and how that power is used within the social institution. “A proposed definition is a request for institutional norms: When should X count as Y in context C?”²⁸ and “[t]he acts of framing and naming always serve preferred interests, even if those interests are not noticed or are uncontroversial.”²⁹ As it pertains to definitional practice, the critic should identify or discover questions within the rupture involving how members do (or do not) achieve denotative conformity with a definition or whether denotative conformity is a reasonable goal.³⁰

SEEING “VALUABLE” AS DEFINITIONAL RUPTURE

The 2012 American League MVP race constituted a crisis among baseball journalists in defining “valuable” as an observation statement (with high denotative conformity) or a theory statement (with low denotative conformity) about the world. Because the BBWAA does not provide a definition for “valuable,” the onus is on the voters themselves to create theory statements to determine it. For traditionalists, value is best defined by an already-recognized significant historical achievement and the success of the team; for sabermetricians, value is defined by stats like WAR, a complex statistical aggregate accounting for the entirety of play. Both factions’ definitions of value included a sensitivity to fairness and egalitarianism. Traditional journalists’ goal was to fairly and equally treat this season’s achievements with the ways past seasons’ achievements had

been treated for other players. Sabermetrically-oriented journalists’ goal was to fairly and equally represent all the achievements of players in a season and reward the player who contributed the most. Sean Hartnett contended, “You couldn’t conceive two MVP candidates that provide such conflicting cases for their candidacy... You’ll have old guard writers who will cling to the importance of the Triple Crown and new-age writers who will favor sabermetric measures such as WAR and range factor (RF)—and you’ll never get either side to agree with one another.”³¹ Ultimately Cabrera won the American League MVP vote, earning twenty-two first place votes over Trout’s six. “After all the debate, all the rhetoric, all the statistical and historical analysis, it wasn’t close.”³²

PURPOSE AND INTENT OF DEFINING “VALUABLE”

The debate over the definition of “valuable” was an attempt to alter or maintain linguistic behavior. Supporters of both players had the shared purpose of wanting the award to go to the “most valuable” player. In their discourse, they frequently used “valuable” as the key term in determining their vote, and so it was “the term ‘valuable’ that appears to foster differing viewpoints.”³³ Numerous other writers noted that the argument was less about statistics versus intangible qualities and more about which statistics should be counted.³⁴ For David Roth “...this vote...was more than just the usual MVP vote. It was also a fairly impassioned contest between two different philosophies and between old-fashioned counting stats and newfangled metrics.”³⁵

Mike Trout’s 2012 performance was emblematic for sabermetricians struggling for acceptance of sophisticated player valuation methods.



IAN D'ANDREA

Schiappa notes that a definitional rupture “should be addressed in part by re-asking such questions as ‘How should we use the word X?’”³⁶ For Trout supporters, the definition of valuable was driven by the need for statistical accuracy and precision and a search for fairness to other players that year. They generally attempted to quantify his contributions statistically and held a belief in statistical proof as more valid than unmeasurable contributions players might make to a team. Tim Britton suggested, “This is about recognizing Trout’s uniquely comprehensive skill set and the myriad ways he contributed to his team winning baseball games. It’s about appreciating the athletic versatility that baseball, let’s face it, isn’t always known for.”³⁷

For the supporters of Cabrera, the definition of valuable consisted of a player making significant contributions to a team that made the playoffs, and included historically important statistical achievements as part of what merited the award, regardless of other measures of value. Bill Madden summarized the position:

Here’s a guy having one of the greatest offensive seasons in history, on the cusp of being the first Triple Crown winner since Carl Yastrzemski in 1967, and yet there is this clamor from the sabermetrics gallery that Cabrera must be penalized for his slowness afoot and supposed defensive shortcomings. To hear them tell it, if Cabrera winds up leading the league in batting, homers, RBI, slugging and total bases, and being second in hits and runs, it will still pale in comparison to L.A. Angels super rookie Mike Trout leading the league in runs, stolen bases and...WAR.³⁹

Traditional sports journalists tended to emphasize baseball history and significant achievement in their definition of “value.” Cabrera’s Triple Crown played a decisive role in their votes for him. “The MVP is the Big Dog of individual awards in sports. It often serves as a Hall of Fame deal-breaker. Yet the word ‘valuable’ restricts it to those whose brilliance made a difference, even though the electors are specifically told that it really isn’t tied to team performance. They decide their own criteria.”⁴⁰ The fact that Cabrera played better in the last months of the season and the Tigers made the playoffs also contributed to his case for most valuable player. “We more ‘traditional’ baseball journalists do tend to weigh postseason appearances highly when it comes to the MVP because, really, what else is value for? Cabrera got his team to the playoffs. Trout did not.”⁴¹ Other Cabrera voters felt this was an

opportunity to support Cabrera as the exemplar of valuable production. “If Cabrera wins the MVP it will repudiate nothing Trout did. It will simply be a... reaffirmation of value.”⁴² For Mark Feinsand, there was a distinction between best player and most valuable player. “I think Trout was the best overall player in the game this season, especially when you factor in his defense and baserunning. But that doesn’t mean I thought he was the most valuable.”⁴³

The idea of fairness and equal treatment in a single season is partially what drove the Trout supporters to WAR as a key statistic in measuring value. “Baseball experts have spent decades trying to find a way to quantify all of a player’s contributions and boil it down into one number. The best measurement we have right now is what’s known as Wins Above Replacement (WAR).”⁴⁴ Traditional baseball statistics tend to be “counting” statistics, where an event is tallied: a batted ball leaves the field of play in fair territory without hitting the ground and is counted as a home run, the batter hits the ball in fair territory and reaches base safely without a fielding error and it is counted as a hit, and so forth. More complex statistics are derived from averages: average hits per at bat yields a “batting average,” average of earned runs per nine innings equals “earned run average.” Almost all are easily seen, tallied, and understood.

Advanced baseball statistics tend to be derived from more complex formulae. In the case of WAR for position players, the final number is the product of various measures including hitting, baserunning, and defense, some of which rely on other advanced statistics, and then that statistical value is normalized against the standard performance in that season. This formula allows the player to be compared against his peers and in a manner that includes the complex ways the player contributes that may not be easily tallied and seen. For Carl Bialik, “Wins above replacement [is] an imperfect stat that still does a better job than any other of encapsulating a player’s overall on-field value,”⁴⁵ and for Neil Paine WAR is “the single-number metric of choice for most sabermetricians when it comes to measuring a player’s all-around value.”⁴⁶

For sabermetricians in 2012, Trout clearly created the most value as a player. “Basically WAR—and some other advanced metrics—showed that whatever advantages Cabrera had in terms of power and batting average and timely hitting were swamped by Trout’s advantages as a fielder, base runner and player who gets on base. The argument made sense to many of us who champion the advanced statistics and their power to get closer to a player’s true value.”⁴⁷ Journalists supporting

Trout's case noted that not only did he lead the league in WAR, but he did so in a historically significant way. "Trout's is the clearest case in 99 years as the majors' MVP... That's just how much better he's been than his peers." Writers also addressed some "intangible" or non-quantifiable factors often used by Cabrera supporters, as Mark Reynolds wrote at Bleacher Report:

As long as you think the MVP award should go to the player who produced the most value, then Trout should have been the winner because Cabrera's offense was not superior enough to make up for the difference in the other categories. Cabrera might have been great in the locker room, but there's no evidence that Trout wasn't a great teammate, too. Cabrera's team made the postseason, but Trout's team won more games.⁴⁹

Many writers argued that the Triple Crown is overvalued. Zachary D. Rhymer notes that "the Triple Crown indeed *is* a relic. It's a novel accomplishment, but things have changed too much over the last half century for both writers and baseball fans to still believe that the Triple Crown is the ultimate measure of value."⁵⁰ For sabermetricians each leg of the Triple Crown represents older, less helpful statistics for evaluating player performance. The RBI (or "runs batted in") depends considerably on the quality of a hitter's teammates, because they need to be on base for the batter to drive them in for runs. The home run shows power potential but is also dependent on factors like the depth of the outfielders where the batter hits; since a team plays half its games at home, some batters are fortunate to play half their games on a field that is favorable to hitting home runs. Batting average is a fine descriptor of how often the batter reaches base safely on a hit, but does not capture the ability of the batter to reach base without getting out or to reach base with a double or triple. For many sabermetricians, the preferred statistic is either on-base percentage (OBP) or on-base plus slugging average (or "OPS").

USE OF POWER

Craig Calcaterra thought that the "MVP award voting, at least in the American League, has taken on political and philosophical overtones."⁵¹ Supporters of both players claimed to know what "valuable" meant within their individual set of criteria. Because the result comes via vote of two members from each American League city, the power to define ultimately resided in those (then) 28 members. Non-voting members and non-members could rally for particular

perspectives on what they would or what members should do, but they did not actually vote. The debate over value continued the tension between traditional sports journalists and an emerging group interested in newer ways of evaluating players and making strategic choices. An overwhelming majority of established writers voted for Cabrera. "The Triple Crown winner's main constituency was old people in old media. Twenty-four of the MVP voters work for newspapers or newspaper groups; 21 of them (88 percent) voted for Cabrera...every voter 51 and above...sided with Cabrera, the old-guard candidate."⁵²

Because the BBWAA nominates each season's voters, it is feasible that the balance of power in the organization will shift as one faction or the other jostles for power over the seasons, and so the stakes for a given debate should be seen as a part of a longer-term power struggle. The tension over Trout and Cabrera for Most Valuable Player was a struggle for authority in the press. It was a question over the type of knowledge needed to be regarded as a baseball expert. "The false Trout/Cabrera debate, stripped of Tigers and Angels fans, is just the latest in the ongoing battle between two camps in the baseball media, one of which has seen its longtime primacy usurped by new writers, mostly younger, who look at the game in different ways and have more in common with successful front offices."⁵³ Established writers saw sabermetricians as using advanced statistics to usurp their power and prestige. Sabermetricians saw established writers using traditional tools to support Cabrera and undermine the utility of sabermetric evaluation.

One technique used by traditionally-oriented journalists to subordinate the sabermetrically-oriented writers was to resort to name-calling. "The old-school columnists often trafficked in ignorance and name-calling—relying on the cliché that the statistical community consisted entirely of geeks still living in their mothers' basements."⁵⁴ This cliché is epitomized by Mitch Albom's claim:

[Baseball] is simply being saturated with situational statistics. What other sport keeps coming up with new categories to watch the same game? A box score now reads like an annual report. And this WAR statistic—which measures the number of wins a player gives his team versus a replacement player of minor league/bench talent (honestly, who comes up with this stuff?)—is another way of declaring, "Nerds win!"⁵⁵

Commonly the tone was aggressive and characterized sabermetricians as effete and weak, a position

KEITH ALLISON



Voters in the 2012 MVP race who valued the historical rarity of the Triple Crown tipped the scales overwhelmingly in Miguel Cabrera's favor.

in alignment with Michael L. Butterworth's findings regarding the treatment of statistical political and sports discourse.⁵⁶ In addition to calling sabermetricians “geeks,” Madden worried advanced analytics is “turning baseball into an inhuman board game.”⁵⁷

The pro-Cabrera writers used their definition to defer to historical tradition and significance. For them, the power to decide the meaning of “value” should rest in the hands of the people who have always decided it, not up-and-coming sabermetrician journalists. For the traditionalists, WAR is seen as a statistic “for geeks who don’t know baseball... the real argument that non-Tigers fans are making about Trout.”⁵⁸ For sabermetricians, the 2012 MVP race was a way to add clarity to the ways people think about player value. In his discussion of the race, Jonah Keri argued that Cabrera won because a player’s value is perceived by its cultural and financial incentives.⁵⁹ Players who hit home runs and drive in runs get emphasized more in the press, get more praise by their teammates, and get larger contracts, and as a result they are more likely to win the Most Valuable Player award, although Nate Silver noted that “the real progress in the statistical analysis of baseball is in the ability to evaluate the contributions that a player makes on the field in a more reliable and comprehensive way.”⁶⁰

DEFINITIONAL PRACTICE

The MVP debate arose from a lack of denotative conformity and was an attempt to attain intersubjective agreement. Unlike many definitional disputes, the MVP award is the product of a vote in which scoring reflects a majority preference. The Trout-Cabrera debate represented the changes in the makeup of the

BBWAA. “There is most definitely a growing divide among the BBWAA and the plethora of talented writers online who either are not members of the BBWAA or members that get drowned out by their older cohorts in the association.”⁶¹ Ultimately, the definition used is the one that serves the preferred or powerful interests, since those members have the power to entitle the word with specific meaning and weight. The preferred interests establish the social or institutional norms. The Trout-Cabrera MVP vote re-entitled “value” with the traditional definition: the player with the most value is the one who makes historically significant contributions on a playoff team.

While the vote did not necessarily stop the discourse or guarantee denotative conformity, it offers a resolution to that specific definitional rupture. Josh Levin suggested, “The BBWAA’s voting system empowers baseball’s most-conservative voices and disenfranchises those with non-prehistoric views.”⁶² John Shipley was more optimistic, noting, “Maybe someday WAR, BABIP (Batting Average on Balls in Play) and RC27 (Runs Created per 27 outs) will replace the old stats as the new standards. But for those who came up memorizing batting averages and RBI totals from the backs of baseball cards, they’re still relegated to the fringes of the national pastime.”⁶³

Entitling “value” as sabermetrically-defined would give power to the individuals with the expertise, knowledge, and background to understand, analyze, and discuss it. This community is largely a newer, younger generation of writers struggling for power within sports journalism. Matthew Trueblood suggested that the 2012 MVP race was one of the last gasps of power by the old guard of baseball writers, noting that “soon, the electorate for these awards will be overwhelmingly new-school.”⁶⁴ Calcaterra argued that this struggle to determine which measures should be used to gauge the value of a player exemplify a struggle over the political economy of baseball discourse.⁶⁵ The established writers defended their power to determine who should win based on the criteria they chose, and they entitled and endorsed their particular definition as best they could because their jobs were disappearing and they were losing their place as authorities in the game. The new guard of sports writers were “defensive and insecure about being taken seriously as baseball authorities”⁶⁶ and treated as “second-class citizens”⁶⁷ among baseball journalists, an ironic position since baseball front offices have recognized the value of advanced analytics and have their own proprietary set of sabermetric statistics, putting team management on a more similar

ground with newer writers than the established sports journalists.

Baseball front offices believe in statistics as the key way to evaluate players. Team officials know the value of defense and base-running and have proprietary ways of evaluating players statistically. Traditional writers and players consequently do not have the best tools to gauge the quality of a player, and Trout would almost certainly have the support of front offices but not many writers and players.⁶⁸ In recognizing the change of power in the BBWAA, Levin noted, “Eventually, reason will win out over superstition, the conventional wisdom will change, and the nerds will become the establishment. The voters of 2012 will not decide who wins the MVP in 2032, and for that we can all be thankful.”⁶⁹ Two seasons later, when Trout finally beat Cabrera for MVP after losing to him two seasons in a row, Paine noted, “In what’s quickly becoming an annual rite of summer, Mike Trout of the Los Angeles Angels once again led the American League in wins above replacement (WAR), the single-number metric of choice for most sabermetricians when it comes to measuring a player’s all-around value.”⁷⁰ Perhaps the tide finally turned for sabermetrician journalists.

AFTERMATH OF THE DEFINITIONAL RUPTURE

The Trout-Cabrera debate of 2012 was an attempt to reinforce or change institutional norms within baseball journalism, addressing the question of how player value should be defined in practice: how should we use “valuable” in determining the most valuable player? However, baseball is slow to change, and “The statistical revolution that’s permeating the baseball world hasn’t won widespread acceptance just yet.”⁷¹ Looking back at the race, Carrie Kreiswirth interviewed ESPN editor Scott Burton, who noted, “In following the MVP debate between Mike Trout and Miguel Cabrera, it was shocking to me to witness the backlash to the analytics argument in favor of Trout. It was like we were stuck in 1998. And the fact that Trout lost handily, despite being superior in almost every meaningful way to Cabrera—as encapsulated by WAR—represented a failure for the analytics community. We lost the fight, badly.”⁷²

As sabermetric discourse grows in media and front offices, it will change how writers and fans talk about and understand baseball. Any substantial shift in baseball discourse is important for the sport, a game grounded in history and tradition. In the time since Trout-Cabrera, the use of sabermetric analysis by commentators, analysts, managers, and players has

increased considerably. Today, we find discussions of WAR happening during broadcasts, fans are more comfortable with advanced analytics, and sabermetricians are gaining even more control in baseball front offices.⁷³

The rise in the use of the defensive shift, more attention to things like pitch framing by catchers and batting average on balls in play, and other new approaches to player evaluation and scouting all show greater sensitivity to sabermetric reasoning and optimizing choices, and show its increased persuasiveness on people who think about and play baseball.⁷⁴ Sabermetrics has a louder voice in baseball discourse, but there is also a risk in seeing statistics as the only way to “truth” in valuing (and evaluating) players. There is the possibility that a faith in traditional value is being replaced with a faith in statistical value, a shift from more qualitative and visual evaluation to more quantitative and abstract reasoning. Seeing baseball as a series of statistical events and choices that can and should be statistically optimized runs the risk of making baseball even more neo-liberal and governed by economic metaphors.

There also remains the possibility that with specialized discourse “that the manner in which we draw distinctions among the different spheres may, itself, contribute to the decline of public discourse.”⁷⁵ As baseball becomes more advanced statistically, we may be seeing the shifting of the permitted “speakers” moving from practitioners and lay observers to experts in elevated theory or statistics. With that shift may come alienation between traditional fans and sabermetrically-oriented ones. For example, acronyms can function in the bureaucratization of a field, alienating the laity from the bureaucratic experts and thereby entrenching the experts’ power in the field. We see this concern expressed in Albom’s infamous tirade against sabermetricians’ support of Trout: “There is no end to the appetite for categories—from OBP to OPS to WAR. I mean, OMG! The number of triples hit while wearing a certain-colored underwear is probably being measured as we speak.”⁷⁶ While it is easy to write off Albom’s ridicule as satire or sarcasm, his article also expresses a concern at the overvaluation of complex statistics and obfuscation by new acronyms over the practical or observational qualities of player evaluation and the potential alienation that results.

Baseball as an institution continues to be somewhat slower than individual teams and writers to accept the statistical revolution played out on the fields. For example, in 2015 after the heavy use of unconventional, sabermetrically-inspired defensive

shifts depressed offensive statistics, MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred said he was open to banning particular types of those shifts because of their negative effect and their deviation from traditional defensive arrangement.⁷⁷ This move received considerable pushback from the press, something that pre-2012 seemed rather unlikely in two ways: these kinds of defensive shifts were significantly less common, and the press likely would treat this as a negative instance of sabermetrics intruding on baseball in a clear, practical way that should not be permitted.

CONCLUSION

This project explores a representative anecdote of where and how definitions matter, and it shows the flexibility of Schiappa's method in exploring definitional practice.⁷⁸ It does not claim to be the last word on the matter. Since this is a single example based on a brief snapshot of time, future research in tension between sabermetrics and “traditional” baseball could look at changing definitional practice longer term, gravitating toward different crises or debates: Felix Hernandez and pitcher wins used in determining the Cy Young Award, how the RBI has been valued over time, the case for Jack Morris and the Hall of Fame. This project could also be seen as a first step in the larger fusing of rhetorical criticism and sports statistics, a move toward exploring the rhetoric of sabermetrics: the ways that baseball statisticians use words to define reality. ■

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HERM KRABBENHOFT joined SABR 36 years ago. His many and varied accomplishments in baseball research include the following: ultimate grand slam home runs, accurate triple play database [with Jim Smith and Steve Boren], Ted Williams Consecutive-Games-On-Base-Safely record, Cobb (hitter) vs. Ruth (pitcher), accurate RBI totals for Ruth, Gehrig, and Greenberg, accurate records for twentieth century leadoff batters, Zimmerman's triple crown, Hamilton's MLB runs-scored record [with Keith Carlson, Dave Newman, and Dixie Tourangeau], comprehensive compilation of Detroit Tigers uniform numbers.

PAUL KVAM is professor of Mathematics and Statistics at University of Richmond. Kvam is author or co-author of several sports-related statistics papers, including "Comparing Hall of Fame Baseball Players Using Most Valuable Player Ranks" (2011), "A Logistic Regression/Markov Chain Model For NCAA Basketball" (2006), and "Teaching statistics with sports examples" (2005).

BOB LEMOINE lives in New Hampshire, where he works as a high school librarian and adjunct professor. Especially fascinated with Boston and 19th Century baseball history, Bob has contributed to several SABR book projects. In 2016, he was a co-editor with Bill Nowlin on *Boston's First Nine: The 1871-75 Boston Red Stockings*. Inspired by Ned Martin on his black-and-white TV, Bob wanted to be a Red Sox announcer when he grew up. Instead, he settled for Martin being the subject of his first SABR biography.

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BOB THOLKES of Minneapolis is a veteran contributor to SABR publications and to *Base Ball*, concentrating on the amateur era (1845–65). Bob's past activities include several years as an officer of SABR's Halsey Hall Chapter (Minnesota), biographical research on major leaguers with Minnesota connections, and service as newsletter editor for SABR's Origins of Baseball Committee. Bob operated a vintage base ball club in Minnesota for 20 seasons.

STEW THORNLEY has been a member of the Society for American Baseball Research since 1979. He has been an official scorer since the early 1980s and an official scorer for Major League Baseball, scoring Minnesota Twins home games, since 2007.



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