



# The Next Pitch

*A newsletter from the Jack Graney Chapter of  
the Society for American Baseball Research  
in Cleveland, Ohio*

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## New SABR Book To Be Released in 2025

*A Deeper Look At the 1945 Cleveland Buckeyes*

The latest book in SABR's Negro League team book series will focus on the 1945 Cleveland Buckeyes. That was the year that the Buckeyes, playing home games at both League Park and Cleveland Stadium, advanced to the Negro World Series and swept the Homestead Grays for the only title in Cleveland Negro League history.

The 1945 Buckeyes saw many different elements come into play before winning a title, from a new manager, to almost losing a star player in the early discussions of integration of Major League Baseball to a season played amongst the societal restrictions surrounding World War II, to finally a World Series sweep of a Homestead Grays team that featured five future Hall of Famers.

The book, the eighth in SABR's series, is planned for publication in the spring of 2025. Like other SABR books, it will contain a variety of biographies of relevant figures, stories of games from that season, and other essays. Anyone who is interested in contributing to the book should contact SABR Jack Graney Chapter Secretary-Treasurer Vince Guerrieri at [vaguerrieri@gmail.com](mailto:vaguerrieri@gmail.com).

### SABR Day 2024

We conducted our annual chapter winter meeting on Saturday, February 3 which coincided with SABR Day. The meeting shifted to virtual due to ongoing renovations at Progressive Field. A total of 33 members and guests attended and judging from the post meeting feedback enjoyed the speakers and what they had to say. Kyle Burris, Guardians' Director of R&D, gave some insight into how the team uses analytics to support player identification, performance tracking/development, and game preparation. Zack Meisel, from *The Athletic*, and a great friend of our chapter, offered his perspectives on the outlook for 2024 and then engaged in his usual lively interaction with those who attended. SABR Member Scott Jarrett, who lives in Texas, gave us an update on the book he is writing and about to self-publish on Ten Cent Beer Night. We wrapped up our meeting with chapter member John McMurray giving an overview of SABR's Oral History project and how members can get involved.

### The First Number...

*As an homage to Jack Graney being the first modern player to wear a number on his uniform, each issue will feature one key number in relation to the stories being told amongst our SABR chapter. This month's number is...*

# 216

A Cleveland-appropriate number if there ever was one. Jose Ramirez enters the 2024 season with 216 home runs, in fifth place all-time for the franchise and only 26 home runs behind Albert Belle for the second spot in franchise history.

## SABR At Guards Fest 2024

Our chapter once again had a presence at Guards Fest. The all-day event was held on Saturday January 20 at the Huntington Convention Center. It was estimated that over 6,000 fans attended between two sessions. Our thanks to Vince Guerrieri for taking lead on this project with the support of Dave Scott and Steve Dittmore (pictured to Vince's right.) The hope is that events like this help us get the word out about SABR, as well as about our chapter and activities.



## Ten Cents For Your Thoughts

As mentioned previously, member Scott Jarrett was one of our featured speakers at our winter meeting on Saturday, February 3. He talked about the book he is writing on Ten Cent Beer Night. After the meeting we received this note from Scott: "I'd love to make one last appeal to SABR Cleveland members that if they were there or know anyone who was there (or can think of anyone else who would make for a good interview), I'd love to talk to them. They can just email me at [sjarrett@sasaustin.org](mailto:sjarrett@sasaustin.org)."



## President's Corner

Welcome to this inaugural newsletter for this Jack Graney Chapter of the Society for American Baseball Research, based in Cleveland, Ohio! We hope this will be a regular communication tool for our chapter and enable a larger number our members to become more knowledgeable and hopefully more involved in the activities of the Jack Graney Chapter going forward. While we will still use the email tool offered by SABR to communicate with members of upcoming events, we think there is room for a regular newsletter that will in many ways complement our emails. Not only will this newsletter give us a chance to briefly share recent chapter events but to engage members earlier in the planning process for future meetings. In addition, we would like this newsletter to also be a tool that members might find useful in sharing some research efforts whether in early stages or perhaps even finished products they feel chapter members might be interested in, and build a true baseball community. Simply stated we want this newsletter to be a more inclusive chapter members' tool not just a tool used to communicate with members. If we are successful we hope you will look forward to not only opening and reading the newsletter but actually contributing to it! Lastly, I want to sincerely thank one of our members, Logan Andress, who volunteered to take the individual articles and put them together into what I think you will find an appealing format for a newsletter. Thanks so much, Logan! As always, we are interested in your thoughts and suggestions for how we can continue to improve our newsletter. In addition, if you have an announcement or article you think should be included in future editions please email.

# SABR's Oral History Project

*By John McMurray*

SABR's Oral History Committee, founded in 1986, has a unique role within the organization: its primary purpose is to preserve baseball history through recorded player interviews. The result is that some of the Committee's often hour-length recordings are among the most probing and authoritative in existence.

With over 750 recordings in our collection—from Moose Skowron to Denny Galehouse to Pete Palmer and Stew Thornley—the Oral History Committee chronicles not only the lives and times of ballplayers but also important figures in the game as well as within SABR.

When it comes to conducting interviews, star players as well as those who had just a cup of coffee are welcome. Still, a good place to start may be with players who played ten years or more and who have witnessed a great deal within the game. Such was evident in a recent interview for our collection with Buddy Bell, who recounted coming up to Cleveland in the early-1970s; the team's struggles in the years to follow; receiving advice from Graig Nettles on how to play defense; and playing with the Texas Rangers and Hall of Famer Ferguson Jenkins. Bell went on to discuss being managed by Pete Rose and then three different stints as a major league manager.

It is also very worthwhile to ask players about others they observed. When interviewing Randy Jones, the former San Diego Padres All-Star, I asked Jones for his first-hand assessment of whether Lou Brock or Steve Garvey should have been the N.L. Most Valuable Player in 1974. There too can be serendipity in these interviews: a 2017 interview with current Cleveland Guardians television broadcaster Matt Underwood allowed for ample time to discuss his documentary on Addie Joss, a Hall of Fame Cleveland pitcher from the Deadball Era.

Though interviews can vary in style, some of the most illuminating ones come from letting the player (or baseball figure) talk with as few interjections as possible. Lawrence Ritter did so to great effect when interviewing players for *The Glory of Their Times*. Indeed, the answers to particular questions matter, but the image becomes more nuanced with the way the player speaks and how that player comes across as a person. Because of the length of these interviews, they offer the chance for a fuller perspective of a particular player than would a short interview.

The unexpected happens too. I was surprised to learn during the interview how much Pete O'Brien, who became Cleveland's first baseman after being acquired from Texas in the Julio Franco trade, genuinely wanted to stay in Cleveland in spite of a relative lack of team success; the issue with O'Brien's departure from Cleveland was that team management was determined to make a change. These interviews also offer a chance to understand how a player became elite at his craft, as with Buddy Bell recounting how he became a stellar defensive player.

On February 6, the Oral History Committee offered its first online virtual oral history with an audience. It featured former New York Met and Texas Rangers pitcher Jon Matlack. Matlack discussed being managed by Yogi Berra; being a teammate of Willie Mays; his three starts in the 1973 World Series; his recollections of Tom Seaver; and a great many other topics while also fielding audience questions during a roughly one-hour interview.

Opportunities abound to become involved. If you would like to learn more about our interviews or how you might contribute, please view our collection at [oralhistory.sabr.org](http://oralhistory.sabr.org) or e-mail me at [saboralhistorycommittee@gmail.com](mailto:saboralhistorycommittee@gmail.com). We would love to get you involved with our efforts in preserving an extremely consequential part of baseball history.

# The Community Cup Classic

The Community Cup Classic Foundation was created to encourage and increase positive engagement between young people and adults. The Negro League Soul presentations paint a vibrant picture of historical events that provide a catalyst for conversations not only about sports but also about race in America.

This monthly series of virtual multi-generational programs showcases the challenging, historic and triumphant legacy of baseball's Negro Leagues and the African American and Latino experience in the sport highlighting how these experiences reflect American society and culture in general.

Our goal is to increase awareness of the impact that Negro League baseball players had on the American race journey and societal experience. The hope is that through the open dialogue individuals reflect on these meaningful experiences to build more sustainable familial and community connections.

The history of baseball is powerful as the game of baseball supports and reflects many aspects of American life, from culture to economics and technological advances. It inspires movements, instills pride, and even heals cities" states the National Baseball Hall of Fame on their website.

As such the Negro League Soul series is designed to inform and spark dialogue between all who attend on "how far we have come," as well as "how far we still have to go." as it relates to race and equity in America. They bring awareness to how the past is always with us to teach us, and to provide inspiration and encouragement to those facing similar challenges today.

We strongly believe that sharing the stories of the Negro League baseball experience is bringing awareness to not only their courage and resiliency but also an overall appreciation for baseball's impact on the American social experience. Additionally, attendees can find inspiration not only in the Negro Leaguers playing of a sport but in how these experience impacted the history of the sport, American culture and how they can carry those with them through life.

For these reasons, the Negro League Soul series formalizes our commitment to encourage and increase positive engagement between young people and adults and will take us to the next level in the fulfillment of our mission.

We are thankful to the Cuyahoga County Arts and Culture Council for funds to support these efforts. As a result, all programs are free. We are also grateful to our presenters, SABR members Mr. Ike Brooks, Mr. Dominick Denaro and, new in 2024, Mr. Ted Knorr.

To register for the 2024 Negro League Soul presentations, visit [www.communitycupclassic.org](http://www.communitycupclassic.org) or [www.negroleaguesoul.com](http://www.negroleaguesoul.com)

Contact Person: Michael Matthews, Co-Leader

Email contact: [communitycupclassic@gmail.com](mailto:communitycupclassic@gmail.com)

## Research Sharing

If you have some ongoing research or indeed a finished product and you would like to share with chapter members to get feedback' comments, or suggestions or perhaps even collaboration please reach out to me at [rjshaw2@cox.net](mailto:rjshaw2@cox.net). We hope to collect enough topics and researchers to put together a meeting dedicated to Chapter research efforts.

## Help Run A Table At A Guardians Game

Last August 23, our chapter had a booth at a Saturday night Guardians' game for the first time in many, many years. It was a great experience and we are looking to do it a few times this season. If you are interested, please email us to express interest.



# Planning The Year and Beyond

Your chapter leadership team is actively planning what we hope will be an enjoyable set of meetings (both face to face and Zoom) for this year. We wanted to briefly share with you the current status and solicit your input.

Our next meeting will be on Thursday, March 28 at 7:30 pm. It will be a Zoom affair with the other chapters in the AL Central (Chicago, Detroit, Kansas City, and Minnesota). We will follow the same format as last year's two sessions (one at the start of the season and one after the season was completed). Specifically, each chapter will have a designee spend 5 minutes giving a top-level perspective of the team's prospects for the season. After each chapter has had its turn, then we will move to a moderated "Talkin' Baseball" for the remainder of the time. If you would like to be our chapter's spokesperson to briefly discuss the Guardians' 2024 outlook please let me know at [rjshaw2@cox.net](mailto:rjshaw2@cox.net).

Our future meetings are still in the planning stage. Our desire is to have a balanced set of Zoom and Face to Face meetings which we believe gives maximum opportunity for all members to participate in some if not all of the chapter meetings.

Specifically, we are looking at the following topics for meetings this year:

- ◆ Celebration of 1954 Indians American League Championship season
- ◆ A topic (or topics) related to Negro League Baseball
- ◆ A Chapter researchers' interchange meeting
- ◆ A baseball book authors' night
- ◆ A series of ongoing "Talkin' Baseball" sessions with no formal meeting agenda

As far as locations for Face to Face sessions we are exploring several options:

- ◆ Cleveland Public Library Sports Research Center
- ◆ League Park/Baseball Heritage Museum
- ◆ Western Reserve Historical Society
- ◆ Cuyahoga County Public Library locations
- ◆ Westlake Library
- ◆ Lake Erie Crushers game day meeting
- ◆ Lake County Captains game day meeting
- ◆ Akron Rubber Ducks game day meeting
- ◆ Joint meeting with Columbus chapter at Clippers' game

If you have any thoughts or suggestions for either topics or locations, please reach out and let us know.

## **Your SABR Cleveland Leadership Team:**

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## The Closing Number...

# 1

As Harry Doyle famously said in the movie *Major League*, "A lot of people say you can tell how the season's gonna go by the first hitter of the year." In the last ten openers for the Cleveland baseball franchise, only one player has started the season off with a hit, Myles Straw, in Kansas City, on April 7, 2022. The last time the franchise opened the season by scoring a run in their first inning was in 2007.