

# KELTNER'S HOT CORNER



## Ken Keltner Badger State Chapter

### July 2020 In This Issue:

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- Recap *Harvey's Wallbangers* June 25 meeting with video.
- Get to Know...
- Keltner Book Korner - "The Wax Pack"
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- April 27, 1947, Eddie Waitkus on Babe Ruth Day at Wrigley
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### Upcoming Events:

**Keltner Virtual Chapter Meeting**  
High School Baseball Panel  
July 21, 2020

○  
**Keltner Book Club**  
"The Wax Pack"  
August 5, 2020, 7:00 PM

○  
**Mary Shea@ Chudnow Museum**  
Women's Baseball and the AAGPBL  
Free Virtual Event  
August 16, 2020

○  
**Ken Keltner - Emil Rothe**  
**Joint SABR Day Meeting**  
February 20, 2021  
Brat Stop - Kenosha

Direct questions or comments to:  
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262-339-9968

### Ken Keltner Virtual Chapter Meeting Tuesday, July 21, 2020, 7 PM *High School Baseball*

Join us for a discussion on high school baseball with a panel of Keltner member coaches, Tom O'Connell, Ron Kading and John Strohbusch.

This season Tom O'Connell enters his 51st year of coaching high school baseball. From 1969 – 2000 he coached at Milwaukee Pulaski High School, where his teams won more games than any sport in the school's history. After retiring from Pulaski as a teacher, he coached the next 15 years at Catholic Central High School in Burlington where his team made the Wisconsin State Tournament quarterfinals ten straight years and won five State Championships. No other Wisconsin prep coach has won as many titles. For the last four seasons, he has served as co-head coach at St. Francis High School rebuilding a program that had not been successful for over 40 years. He was enshrined in the [Wisconsin Baseball Coaches Association Hall of Fame](#) (WBCA) in 1987. O'Connell is a frequent speaker at clinics around the world presenting at coaching clinics in 11 states, 13 European nations and New Zealand.

Ron Kading was the head baseball coach at Potosi High School for 41 years, 21 times conference champions. His teams went to State five times, winning in 1993 when he also won the WBCA's Coach of the Year award. He was enshrined in their Hall of Fame in 2000. He also coached basketball at Potosi for 39 years. He is the unofficial historian for the WBCA having contributed "Wisconsin Players Giving Back to the Game - Coaching" in our March newsletter.

John Strohbusch would have been in his 32nd year coaching baseball, 22 at the high school level before the virus hit. He was the head baseball coach for Mukwonago High School for 8 years and is currently in his 6th season as an assistant for Greendale High School. The newer SABR member is an 8th grade Social Studies teacher at Parkview Middle School in Mukwonago and currently live with his wife and daughter in Greendale.

Watch for Zoom instructions in a separate email or contact [Dennis Degenhardt](#).

Do you have a suggestion for future meetings, let us know?

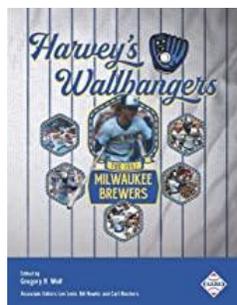
## June Ken Keltner Virtual Chapter Meeting - Harvey's Wallbangers Panel



The Keltner's second Virtual Chapter Meeting, with 29 participants, was held on June 25 with a panel of authors from the new SABR publication "[Harvey's Wallbangers: The 1982 Milwaukee Brewers.](#)" The panel included the book's editor, Gregory Wolf and authors Phil Bolda and Rick Schabowski. Gregory mentioned that the Brewers were very helpful providing all of the pictures in the book and on the cover saving SABR money. This is the third book from our chapter, no other city has had three books which says a lot about our city's love of baseball and the teams we have cheered for.

To watch a recording of the meeting, click on the picture above. There is some chatter at the beginning as participants logged in.

From the Amazon writeup: "Harvey's Wallbangers: The 1982 Milwaukee Brewers" commemorates a team that captured the hearts and imagination of baseball fans not just in Wisconsin, but around the country. Named for skipper Harvey Kuenn, the home-run slugging club was filled with a memorable cast of characters, future Hall of Famers, and All-Stars: from Robin Yount, Gorman Thomas, Ted Simmons, and Rollie Fingers to Cecil Cooper, Ben Oglivie, Paul Molitor, and Don Sutton. They were a close-knit and resilient group that weathered controversies and slumps to capture the AL East crown on the last day of the season, overcome a two-games-to-none deficit to win the best-of-five League Championship Series, and move to within one game of winning the World Series.



This book is the result of the tireless work of more than 40 SABR members who researched and wrote all of the biographies, game accounts, and essays as well as fact checking and editing. Keltner member authors included, Isaac Buttke, Ken Carrano, Dennis D. Degenhardt, Greg Hoffmann, Lee Kluck, Rick Schabowski, Gregory Wolf, and Mario Ziino.

If you would like a printed copy of the book and support the Ken Keltner Chapter, we have books available for \$26 including shipping. Contact [Dennis](#) to arrange for your copy. The net proceeds will go to the chapter.

### Get to Know...

We are starting a new segment in this month's *Keltner Hot Corner*, **Get to Know...** Monthly, we will ask a SABR member to answer a series of questions so the membership can get to know other Keltner members better. If there is someone you want featured in **Get to Know...**, let Dennis know.

For our initial article where better to stat then with...

### Rick Schabowski

Most of the Ken Keltner members have known Rick Schabowski for many years as our most recent past-president. He was our chapter's third leader serving us for about 17 years. But let's get to know more about him.

Schabowski has been a SABR member for 25 years, joining in 1995. He signed up after seeing an ad in *The Sporting News* and it looked like a great organization to join. He has never regretted doing so. When Bob Buege convinced SABR to bring their annual meeting to Milwaukee in 2001, even though we didn't have a chapter, Schabowski was one of about 20 volunteers who stepped forward to help

plan and work on the convention. After the hard work was done, he was part of the group who thought forming a chapter to keep the camaraderie going was a great idea. He was right.

He was born in Milwaukee on March 9, 1952 to Albin, an engineer at Kearney-Trecker and Phyllis Schabowski, a homemaker. He had a brother, Bob, who was five years older and passed away in 2007. Schabowski attended St. Alexander Catholic grade school and Casimir Pulaski High School in Milwaukee where he played tennis. He added to his education at Milwaukee Area Technical College, UW-Milwaukee and Waukesha Community Technical College.



Like many mid-century young people who grew up in the Brew City, his earliest baseball memory is of the Milwaukee Braves. Asked who his first favorite ballplayer was and he will quickly respond Spahn. His love of baseball and those Braves have led him to belonging to several other local baseball organizations in addition to SABR. Schabowski is the treasurer of the [Milwaukee Braves Historical Association](#) and President of the [Oldtime Ballplayers of Wisconsin](#).

From 1972 to 1987, Schabowski was a machinist and group leader at Allen-Bradley. He then moved to Milwaukee Cylinder from 1987-2000 with his machinist skills and adding Quality Control. Rick then wrapped up his career as an engine tester, machinist, and instructor at Harley-Davidson retiring after 12 years, in 2012. Since retiring, he has started a second career training and educating people for careers in manufacturing. He currently does this for Waukesha Community Technical College and the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership as an instructor in the Wisconsin state apprenticeship program teaching technical mathematics.

Rick has been married to Debbie for 36 years and they have a daughter, Amanda who is 34-years old.

He is a strong researcher writing 12 [SABR Bio Projects](#) and 12 Games Projects, many parts of the three SABR books on Milwaukee, [Thar's Joy in Braveland! The 1957 Milwaukee Braves](#), [From the Braves to the Brewers: Great Games and Exciting History at Milwaukee's County Stadium](#), and [Harvey's Wallbangers: The 1982 Milwaukee Brewers](#).

One of the highlights of the annual SABR convention is the trivia contest. Schabowski was a finalist in Milwaukee along with Bill James (yes, that Bill James), Maxwell Kates, and Scott Flatow (who won). In addition to finishing strong in trivia contests, he has made research presentations at four SABR Conventions. One of the leading baseball book publishers, McFarland and Company is working on a book on County Stadium and Schabowski has helped on that venture as well. In addition to SABR he is also a member of the Pro Football Researchers Association and has added to four books, including one about the 1966 Green Bay Packers.

Schabowski has a fine book under his belt, too, published in 2019, ["From Coin Toss to Championship: 1971 The Year of the Milwaukee Bucks."](#) An avid college basketball fan who has attended many NCAA Final Fours, he is also planning a book about the 1977 Marquette NCAA championship season.

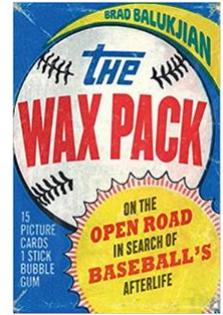
When asked what words of wisdom he would you add, he replied, "Don't be afraid to ask questions. SABR members love the game and will help in any way they can. He added, "I can't say enough about the power of working with SABR members not only in our local Chapter, but also the friends that are out there at the national level. We ALL want to promote and preserve the history of baseball accurately!"

Schabowski continues to be very active in Ken Keltner Chapter serving as President Emeritus, a well-deserved position. He is still active at the national level as well.

## Keltner Book Korner



The latest book for the Ken Keltner Book Club is “[The Wax Pack](#)”. It’s an interesting tale of a 34 year-old professor spending his summer trying to visit 13 of the remaining 14 players in a 1986 Topps Wax Pack. How many of us would have liked to have met the players we unwrapped when buying baseball cards? His adventure and interactions with the players make for an enjoyable read that that you don’t want to put down. The [Boston Globe](#) has an excellent review of the book.



The Ken Keltner Book Club will meet on **August 5, 2020 at 7 PM** to discuss the book. All are welcomed to join the Zoom meeting. Watch for the invite coming soon.

Do you have a recommendation for the next book for the Keltner Book Club? We are always looking for suggestions. Or, have you read a good book lately, or a stinker? Share your thoughts with the chapter. Send your comments to [Dennis](#) to be include in the *Keltner Hot Corner*. Or, if you have recommendations, send those, too.

## Mary Shea to Speak at Chudnow Museum August 16th

Mary Shea will be a featured speaker at the Chudnow Museum’s Founder’s Day celebration on August 16. She will talk about women’s baseball and the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League especially the Milwaukee Chicks. Also speaking is our friend Patrick Steele discussing why the Braves left Milwaukee. This will be a free virtual event, see the following for details.

# FOUNDER'S DAY

8<sup>th</sup> Annual  
CELEBRATION

SUNDAY, AUGUST 16, 2020 1PM - 4PM

Speakers on the history of Milwaukee baseball!  
Real and Online exhibit with vintage baseball items.  
Vintage film of Borchert Field and County Stadium.  
Online quizzes on Milwaukee baseball trivia.  
Online benefit auction for the Chudnow Museum.

Details @ [chudnowmuseum.org/founders-day-2020.html](http://chudnowmuseum.org/founders-day-2020.html)

**Free Virtual Event, Donations Welcome,  
Sponsorship Opportunities**

Membership and Donation options available online or by phone  
839 N. 11<sup>th</sup> Street, Milwaukee, WI 53233 (414) 273-1680 [chudnowmuseum.org](http://chudnowmuseum.org)





Mary Shea will be talking about women's baseball and the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League, particularly the Milwaukee Chicks of 1944. The Chicks played just a single year in Milwaukee but won the league championship.

Patrick Steele's first book investigates all the issues behind the Milwaukee Braves' owners making the shocking announcement on October 1964 that they were moving to Atlanta. He explores on reasons why the Milwaukee Miracle went south.

## Milwaukee Baseball History




**New Museum Exhibit**

BEGINNING CONTINUES UNTIL

**June 12 Mid-October**

Chudnow Museum of Yesteryear  
839 North 11th Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53233  
(414)273-1680  
[info@chudnowmuseum.org](mailto:info@chudnowmuseum.org)

**PRESENTED BY:**



**American Brewers Association**

**Vintage Brew**

**Featuring Artifacts From:**

- American Association Milwaukee Brewers
- MLB Milwaukee Braves
- MLB Milwaukee Brewers

**Museum Hours:**

Wednesday-Saturday 10-4

Sunday 12-4

**Admission**

Adults: \$7.00

Students/Seniors: \$6.00

Family Sunday: \$14.00

## SABR Re-Launches SABR.Org

We're excited to announce the re-launch of [SABR.org](https://www.sabr.org) today!

Our new design enhances the user experience and provides greater visual appeal, while a new search engine will better connect SABR's rich content archive from our first 50 years.

Thousands of stories from SABR's [Research Collection](#) are now available online — including articles from the new [Spring 2020 Baseball Research Journal](#) — showcasing the breadth and depth of our members' groundbreaking work on all aspects of baseball, from the sport's early origins to the Negro Leagues to sabermetric analysis of the modern game.

Over time, even more articles from the [Baseball Research Journal](#), [The National Pastime](#), [Biography Project](#), [Games Project](#), [Oral History Collection](#), [Digital Library](#), and conference panels and presentations will be searchable and connected at [SABR.org](https://www.sabr.org), highlighting SABR's immense value to our members and the broader baseball community.

The new website will also serve as home to an upcoming series of [SABR 50 at 50](#) web features that shine a light on baseball's evolution over the past half-century.

With a growing audience of nearly 2.5 million annual visitors, SABR.org highlights the organization's [passionate community](#) of baseball fans, which includes everyone from academics to professional sportswriters to amateur historians and statisticians to students and casual fans who enjoy reading about baseball history and gathering with other members at [local chapter events](#) and [national conferences](#) to learn more about the game we all love.

We hope you'll take a spin around SABR.org and check out the many great articles, resources, and benefits available to SABR members and all baseball fans online.

SABR members can log in to our [members-only area](#) at [profile.sabr.org](https://profile.sabr.org) using your e-mail address (username) and password. *(If you have forgotten your password or just want to reset it, [click here](#) and follow the instructions.)*



Baseball fans, join us throughout the month of July 2020 for [SABR Virtual](#), a series of online presentations, chats, and panel discussions featuring authors, scholars, and figures from around the game.

Registration is now open for each SABR Virtual session. Click on a date below to reserve your spot! SABR Virtual sessions are scheduled each weekend from Thursday, July 9 to Sunday, July 26, highlighted by:

- Nearly 40 research presentations on all aspects of baseball, past and present, from the major leagues, minor leagues, and Negro Leagues
- Half a Century in Half an Hour: SABR's 50 at 50 Project, with Leslie Heaphy, John Thorn, and Jason Schwartz
- Evaluating Baseball Art: Storytelling in a Digital Age, with Graig Kreindler, Anika Orrock, Dick Perez, and Anthony Salazar
- Civil Rights and Baseball: Perception and Reality, with Dr. Louis Moore and Emily Hawks
- Baseball Then and Now: Arnold Hano's 94 Years in the Bleachers, with Arnold Hano, Jon Leonoudakis, and Jean Ardell
- MLB Diversity Initiatives and Social Justice Resources, with Tyrone Brooks and Corey Smith

- Annual Business Meeting on Saturday, July 11, with Bob Davids Award announcement to follow (SABR's Board of Directors welcomes any questions from members; please [fill out our online form](#) to submit a question in advance)
- [Online raffle](#) in which all SABR members will have the opportunity to win baseball memorabilia. [Click here](#) to learn more and enter to win!

SABR members will have first priority to reserve their spot for each daily two-hour session, which are limited to the first 100 participants. Sessions will be opened to all baseball fans based on availability. Recordings will be available for all baseball fans to view afterward on SABR's [YouTube channel](#).

### **Cory Ritterbusch Games Project**

Keltner member [Cory Ritterbusch](#) of Shullsburg, Wisconsin enjoys researching and writing SABR Game Project articles. He has written three and is working on a fourth. Ritterbusch's first game was about his hero Pee Wee Reese that we included last month. His second, took place on April 27, 1947 the day his dad was born. He was interested in writing about Eddie Waitkus and when he found the connection with Babe Ruth Day and Ruth Ann Steinagan, "it sealed the deal." He has a new theme going with famous games that happened at Wrigley Field that have nothing to do with the Cubs. Do you have a game or date you're interested in knowing more, write a Games Project? Cory would be happy to help you learn how to write and research your game.

**April 27, 1947:**

#### **A 'good look' at Eddie Waitkus on Babe Ruth Day at Wrigley**

This article was written by [Cory Ritterbusch](#)

In [the interrogation room at Cook County Jail](#), Ruth Ann Steinhagen said, "I had my first good look at him on April 27, 1947. All the time I was watching I was building in my mind the idea of killing him."<sup>1</sup>

One of the largest crowds of the season came out for that cold game at Wrigley Field in 1947. Temperatures were in the lower 40s but 36,839 came early.<sup>2</sup> It was Babe Ruth Day throughout the country and a pregame ceremony would take place at 12:50, ahead of the 1:30 game. In attendance was 17-year-old Steinhagen and her best friend, Helen Farazis.<sup>3</sup>

Commissioner [Happy Chandler](#) planned Babe Ruth Day and all Organized Baseball was requested to pay tribute.<sup>4</sup> The commissioner declared that the last Sunday in April would celebrate the great baseball legend Babe Ruth, who was in failing health. Baseball would recognize him in person with a grand event at Yankee Stadium that day and, in a display of modern technology, the ceremony including Ruth's speech, would be aired live on public-address systems in all major- and minor-league ballparks across the nation and Japan. The Mutual Broadcasting System would also air it on radio stations across the country. It was Ruth's most emotional moment behind a microphone. At Yankee Stadium he received the "greatest ovation in the history of the national pastime" in front of 58,000.<sup>5</sup> The raspy voiced, 52-year-old Ruth directed his speech to the youth of America, the effects of his throat cancer painfully obvious.<sup>6</sup> Several of the game's dignitaries and clergy spoke and Ruth was showered with gifts. It was one of the most touching moments in baseball history. Sixteen months later Ruth died.

While Ruth's speech was coming across the PA speakers at Wrigley Field. Ruth Ann Steinhagen was



experiencing overwhelming thoughts. During pregame warm ups alongside a group of Baseball Annies a young woman yelled, “Hey Funny Face!” and the Cubs’ first baseman looked back at the girls.<sup>7</sup> This was the first time femme fatale Steinhagen laid eyes on [Eddie Waitkus](#). Her friend Farazis developed a crush on starting pitcher [Johnny Schmitz](#).<sup>8</sup> Baseball Annies were young women who were obsessed with players, a phenomenon in the late 1940s.

Waitkus earned the starting first-base job in April of 1946 as a slick-fielding first baseman and contact hitter. He possessed attributes uncharacteristic of baseball players. Sporty and debonair, he was intelligent. He was fluent in four languages, quoted poetry and was awarded four Bronze Star medals in World War II. For the Baseball Annies, he was a sharp dresser, a ballroom dancer who loved going to the opera.<sup>9</sup> A two-time All-Star (1948 and 1949), he was dubbed “a natural” early in his career because of his silky-smooth movements on the diamond.<sup>10</sup> He retired with a career .285 batting average and an impressive lifetime fielding percentage of .993. Known as the Fred Astaire of first basemen, he had such a smooth swing that he was chosen for action scenes in the 1942 film *The Pride of the Yankees*.<sup>11</sup>

There was certainly a lot to like about Eddie Waitkus. On this chilly April day, however, he did not see game action. He was injured at the start of the season and had 13 only at bats to date. Cubs mainstay [Phil Cavarretta](#) started at first base. Steinhagen would not get a chance to see her new obsession play.

Farazis, Steinhagen’s best friend since grade school, watched her crush put on a great pitching performance. [Johnny Schmitz](#) pitched a four-hit complete game against the reigning World Series champions for their fourth win in a row.<sup>12</sup> Schmitz, a German-American from Wisconsin, walked the game’s first batter, [Red Schoendienst](#), then settled down to walk only two more. [Enos Slaughter](#) earned two hits on infield dribblers in the third and ninth innings, for two of the Cardinals’ four hits. After scoring a run in the fourth, the Cubs added two more in the eighth. They mustered just five hits themselves, including one by Waitkus’s replacement, Cavarretta.<sup>13</sup> Cavarretta, who would later become the last living person to play against Babe Ruth, was likely moved by the pregame ceremony.<sup>14</sup> The Cubs won their fifth in a row.

The next day the Cubs left for Brooklyn and Steinhagen’s crush on Waitkus became unhealthy, as infatuation turned into obsession. Steinhagen would attend more than 50 games over the next two years and her bedroom became a Waitkus shrine. She slept with his picture under her pillow and set a plate for him at the dinner table. She learned Lithuanian and ate Boston baked beans as an homage to his nationality and hometown. When it was announced that he was traded to the Phillies, she cried for two days and told her family she was moving. In May 1949 she bought a .22 rifle and booked a room at Chicago’s Edgewater Hotel, where opposing teams stayed. Steinhagen saw Waitkus play for the last time on June 14, 1949, leaving her friend Farazis at her seat shortly after he hit a single in the top of the third.

Steinhagen lured Waitkus to her room with a phony note at the front desk. Few words were spoken [before she shot Waitkus just before midnight](#) in room 1297-A.

The timing could not have been worse as Waitkus was playing the best ball of his life and was the leading vote-getter for first basemen for the 1949 All-Star Game. Waitkus was popular among fans, players, and coaches and was emerging as the best first basemen in the game. He was one of the first opposing players to befriend [Jackie Robinson](#). Doctors said that surviving the shooting was “nothing short of a miracle.” Steinhagen was diagnosed with schizophrenia and admitted to the state mental hospital. Waitkus never pressed charges. The prime of his life, first robbed by World War II, was

taken again by an obsessive fan. Waitkus slowly recouped in Florida and planned to return for the 1950 season. The Baseball Hall of Fame wanted the bullet and Baseball Annie were treated as possible criminal stalkers.<sup>15</sup>

Waitkus won the Associated Press's Comeback Player of the Year award with Philadelphia's Whiz Kids in 1950. But he was never the same. He was often tired, slumping, and plagued by back problems from the bullet or the surgery. His career dragged on until 1955, but his drinking and smoking — a staple of nightlife on the road — turned problematic. Anxiety, depression, and what we now know as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) dominated his life. When empty cups were stepped on in empty stadiums, Waitkus jerked. By the end of the '50s he was divorced, away from his children, frequently unemployed and — most frustrating — out of baseball. Waitkus died in 1972. The funeral for one of baseball's once most liked payers was sparse. Hall of Famer and fellow Phillie Phanatic, [Richie Ashburn](#) said, "He wasn't the regular normal ballplayer. ... Looking back at his other talents and interests, I used to think it was a shame that he had to play baseball."<sup>16</sup>

In 1985 the film *The Natural* opened in theaters, with Robert Redford playing a glorified Waitkus character and Barbara Hershey as Steinbrenner. The film has become one of the most beloved baseball movies of all time. Redford and Hershey replayed the shooting from that Chicago hotel room and created the legend familiar to baseball fans today. The real-life saga began on a cold April day in Chicago as the closing chapter of another baseball story ended. Both Waitkus and Ruth died at 53 years old and neither took the field on April 27, 1947.

### Sources

Edelman, Rob. "[Eddie Waitkus and 'The Natural': What is Assumption? What is Fact?](#)," *The National Pastime*, SABR, 2013.

[baseball-reference.com/boxes/CHN/CHN194704270.shtml](http://baseball-reference.com/boxes/CHN/CHN194704270.shtml)

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> John Theodore, *Baseball's Natural: The Story of Eddie Waitkus* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002), 7.

<sup>2</sup> Weather, *Chicago Tribune*, Monday April 28: 1947: 1.

<sup>3</sup> Theodore, 7.

<sup>4</sup> "Babe Ruth Day' April 27 Proclaimed by Chandler," *Boston Globe*, March 9, 1947: page 33.

<sup>5</sup> "Ruth at Home Plate Again, Bats Out Cheers — and Tears," *Chicago Tribune*, April 28, 1947: page 29.

<sup>6</sup> *Chicago Tribune*.

<sup>7</sup> Theodore, 7.

<sup>8</sup> "Babe Ruth Day — 1947 Newsreel." Found online at [youtube.com/watch?v=2ogldlJicC4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ogldlJicC4). Accessed December 22, 2019.

<sup>9</sup> Theodore, 134.

<sup>10</sup> Theodore, 25.

<sup>11</sup> Theodore, 27.

<sup>12</sup> "36,839 Watch Schmitz Yield Only Four Hits," *Chicago Tribune*, April 28, 1947: page 29.

<sup>13</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phil\\_Cavarretta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phil_Cavarretta).

<sup>14</sup> Rob Edelman, "[Eddie Waitkus and 'The Natural': What is Assumption? What is Fact?](#)," *The National Pastime*, SABR, 2013.

<sup>15</sup> Theodore, 13.

<sup>16</sup> Theodore, 134.

## Wisconsin Players Push the Louisville Colonels through a Three-peat: 1960 to 1962

by Rex Hamann of the *American Association Almanac*  
(This is the second of a three-part article.)

**Connie Grob.** Born Conrad George Grob (rhymes with robe) on November 9, 1932 at Cross Plains (just northwest of Madison), he attended Cross Plains/Middleton High School. The left-hand-batting, right-hand-throwing pitcher first entered professional baseball as a member of **Joe Hauser's** Sheboygan Indians of the Wisconsin State League in 1952 at the age of 19, posting a phenomenal record of 24-5 in 36 games with a 2.65 ERA. Standing six feet and weighing in at 180 lbs, Grob became a major leaguer with the Washington Senators in 1956, appearing in 37 games under **Chuck Dressen** while assembling a record of 4-5 in 79.1 innings of work. After a few years in the Pacific Coast League, Grob's travels brought him to Montreal to pitch briefly for the Royals. In 1961 the 28-year-old arrived in Louisville where he posted an 8-5 record with five starts in 48 games. During the playoffs, the Milwaukee Braves' farmhand appeared in three games, all in relief, and was charged with one loss which came during Game 4 of the six-game final round against the Houston Buffs Sept. 19. During the JWS Grob made one appearance against Buffalo, allowing three earned runs in four innings of work.



In 1962 Grob's improvement was notable. His regular season record of 14-10 reflected a greater workload, having pitched 230 innings compared with 119 the previous year. His ERA fell to 2.86 from 3.78, and he tossed 18 complete games with five shutouts, both team highs. His 18 complete games ranked second only to Omaha's **Nick Willhite's** 19, while his five shutouts tied teammate **Chi-Chi Olivo** for the league's best mark. And his 2.86 ERA ranked within the league's top ten (among qualifiers). In the playoffs, Grob started each of the three games he appeared in, winning two and losing none. In 26 innings of work, he allowed 10 runs, seven of which were earned. On Sept. 19, Grob's performance was perhaps the highlight of the playoffs. With the final round tied at two games apiece, Louisville hosted Denver at Fairgrounds Stadium in a Game 5. Grob got the start and was in command the entire way, holding the Bears to two late single-run innings, including one in the tenth to give them the lead. The Colonels came up with a pair of runs with one out in their half to salvage Grob's exceptional outing that night by the score of 3-2, and preserving his 10-inning complete game effort. Louisville took Game Six to capture the league championship.

Grob's JWS performance against the Atlanta Crackers that year underscored his role as the team's leading pitcher with three starts, two complete games and 25 innings of work, each a team best. He also supplied some offense by hitting .500 with four hits. While posting a 1-2 record, he went down with the ship as the Crackers outlasted the Colonels, four games to three. The fact that each of the final three tilts was decided by a score of 2-1 indicated the pitching strength of both teams, a quality Grob contributed to as a top performer.

After his baseball career, Grob opened a tavern called Connie's Home Plate in the town of Ashton, Wisconsin, a few miles north of Middleton, just outside Madison. Despite Grob's passing in 1997 at the age of 64, the tavern is still being operated under its original name. It has a Facebook page as well: <https://www.facebook.com/ConniesHomePlate/>

**Bob Hartman.** Born at Kenosha on August 28, 1937, southpaw Bob Hartman graduated from Kenosha High School, which was later Kenosha Central and now Walter Reuther Central. He attended the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse after starting his professional baseball career with double-A Beaumont (TX), another Milwaukee Braves farm. Hartman was an exceptional performer with Ben Geraghty's 1959 Louisville Colonels when he won 10, lost 3 in 24 games with 21 starts, helping them to their first pennant since 1946. Dropping four straight games to the Fort Worth Cats in the first round of the 1959 playoffs ended their season. Hartman started one game, going four innings while allowing seven hits. In 1960, the Kenosha native again posted 10 victories, but suffered 11 losses while posting a career-high 12



complete games, second on the team to **Don Nottebart's** 13 and tied with **Bob Hendley**. His 27 starts that year was also tied with Hendley's. For pitchers with at least 75 innings, Hartman's 3.01 ERA topped the team. The second-place Colonels finished in second place but went on to capture the league championship by defeating Denver in the final round of the playoffs in six games. Hartman turned in two unimpressive performances during the team's 12 post-season tilts. Once again with Louisville during their repeat as league champion in

1961, Hartman had only ten regular season appearances with no decisions and did not appear in the playoffs. Returning to Louisville in 1962, he made 11 starts, posting four complete games and a record of 6-5 during the regular season, but did not appear in the postseason. Please see Steven Schmitt's SABR Bio at <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/1e2a8203>

**Howie Koplitz.** Born Howard Dean Koplitz at Oshkosh on May 4, 1938, "Howie" had a less-than-successful freshman year in pro ball with Jamestown (D) in 1956, winning just one game in 10 appearances. Koplitz returned to the grind in 1957 with Idaho Falls (C) to post a 14-4 record, and he was off to the races. The 22-year-old pitched 22 games for the 1960 Louisville Colonels before going to the Houston Buffs for a combined 97 innings and a 5-2 record with 14 starts. Koplitz made two starts for Houston in the playoffs against Denver, losing both tilts.

*The American Association Almanac is a bi-annual print publication available by subscription. The Fall issue will focus on the final ten years of the American Association playoffs. For more information, please contact Rex Hamann by email: [pureout@msn.com](mailto:pureout@msn.com) and visit his [American Association Facebook](#) page..*

### Watch Former Brewer Don August Prison Story



Former Milwaukee TV Sports director, Tom Pipines, interviews former Brewer pitcher, Don August on a prison story that occurred while playing in Taiwan; adding to his baseball adventures following his major league career. Like Mexican exploits last month and the Taiwan Mob in May, August has another interesting tale. If you like baseball stories, he is very entertaining.

Pipines interviews athletes and sports reporters on Wisconsin Sports Stream which also covers local sports, high school, Packers, Bucks, Brewers, Marquette, and more.

<https://www.wisconsinsportsstream.com/>

