



SPOTLIGHT ON THE MINORS

MINOR LEAGUE COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER Spring 1999 Vol 5.3

Committee Chairman:

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I. Committee News:

MARYLAND LEAGUE FALLS

The one year experiment with a fall baseball league in Maryland is over. Though the league was termed valuable from a player-development standpoint, it was not financially profitable. The league operated with four teams-Bowie, Delmarva, Frederick and Wilmington, DE-playing a 42 game schedule. Plans are not finalized yet, but the league hopes to move to California, with teams at Lake Elsinore, Lancaster, Rancho Cucamonga and San Bernadino.

MUSCLE SHOALS DIES

The following obituary appeared in Glade Spring, Virginia's newspaper on February 24th, 1999.

Leo 'Muscle' Shoals, a legendary home run hitter in the minor leagues, has died at the age of 82. Shoals, whose real name was Lloyd Cleveland Sholes, died Tuesday of a heart attack. He played in the minor leagues from 1937 to 1955 and was a member of the Upper East Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame. He posted a career batting average of .337 with 362 home runs to place him 10th on the all-time minor league home run list. Early in his career, a sportswriter nicknamed him 'Muscle' and then spelled his last name Shoals to play off the Alabama town of Muscle Shoals. Shoals biggest year came in 1949 with Reidsville, NC of the Carolina League when he hit 55 home runs, still a league record. Shoals had a chance to go play for the St. Louis Browns, but he declined because his wife, Helen, was pregnant. He also boasted that he would have taken a pay cut to play for the

Browns because every time a player hit a home run, a hat was passed through the crowd, and the player would end up with a decent bonus at the end of the game. His game ever was in 1949 at Greensboro when he hit three home runs and barely missed on a fourth as it hit the top of the wall and fell for a single.

"'Muscle' was the most powerful hitter I have ever seen. No question," Crash Davis, a former Carolina League opponent and teammate, told the Bristol (Va.) Herald Courier. "He was simply a great hitter." Shoals started his career at Monessen of the Pennsylvania League and finished with the Kingsport, TN Cherokees as a player-manager. He also played semi-pro baseball with the Saltville, Val, Alkalies of the Burley Belt League." Sent in by Jerry Gregory.

FORMER DODGER MINOR LEAGUER OBITUARAY

Dave Riggs forwarded a clipping from Newport News about a former minor leaguer. It reads, in part:

Willis E. "Gene" Johnson, died Saturday, Feb. 6, 1999. He was born July 15, 1930, in Yakima, and had been a Hampton resident since 1961...In 1949, the Brooklyn Dodgers signed him to a professional baseball contract tht eventually brought him to the Newport News Dodgers during the 1954 and 1955 seasons. He also played at Trois Rivieres, Quebec, Billins, MT, and Poza Rica in the AAA Mexican League.

CHANGE OF MINOR LEAGUE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

On June 30, 1999, long time committee member and minor league researcher will become the new chair of the Minor League Committee. Serving as chair for the last two years has been a privilege, and I am happy to have met so many who realize that the minors can be a major preoccupation. I plan to be active on the committee and look forward to continued interaction with members.

II. New Committee Members:

<u>NAME</u>	<u>INTERESTS</u>
John B. Odell 505 S. Veitch St. Arlington, VA 22204	Stadiums, ballparks; relationships of teams to communities

Welcome!

III. Research Requests:

1. A request for information came in about 4 members of a baseball playing family named Lyston, from a descendent. Their names, and what is known about them, follows:

Jimmy Lyston, b. Baltimore, signed with Jack Dunn's International Orioles in 1921 and played professionally until 1931; infielder.

John Lyston, b. Baltimore, in the late 1860s, played for Winston-Salem in the late 1880's or 1890s, pitcher, d. 1909.

Marty Lyston, catcher, played with John, above.

William Lyston, b. Baltimore in 1863, played for Columbus in 1891 and Cleveland in 1894.

Anyone who has information on the Lyston players please contact Jimmy Keenan, 3012 Oak Green Ct., Apt 3, Ellicott City, Md, 21043-3517.

2. A researcher is updating statistics, rosters, and confirming identities of players in the Pacific NW League of 1890-92. If anyone has common interests or would like to contribute, contact C. Rock Bauer, 36751. S. Hibbard Road, Milalla, OR 97038, (503) 829-7236, native@molalla.net

3. Jim Holl is researching the post-season "Five States" series between the Blue Ridge and Eastern Shore Leagues played between 1921 and 1927. He is missing Hagerstown games in 1925 and 1926. The Hagerstown library does not have the staff to do microfilm searches. Jim would like game accounts and box scores for games between Hagerstown and Cambridge (7 games played between September 10 and September 17, 1935) and Crisfield (6 games played between September 13 and September 18, 1926). If anyone is going through Hagerstown (you can catch a Suns game at Municipal Stadium at the same time) and can help Jim he would be happy to reimburse travel expenses and reproduction costs.

4. Robert Murray is trying to locate a man who may have pitched for one of the farm teams of the Chicago Cubs within the past 25 years named Bill (William) Tufts. Has anyone run across this name in minor league research? Contact the inquirer at RMurray@agenetics.com

5. Bob Himmelien is looking for books, archives or material which may have stats, records, pictures or anything similar on a former minor league pitcher. The name is Cecil Simpson, DOB: 5-6-32. He is thought to have pitched for Joplin and perhaps Fondelac in the Wisconsin League. If anyone can help, contact Bob at (440) 834-1703, or write to 15705 Tavern Road, Burton, OH 44021.

IV. Research Resources:

1. Pat Doyle announces Version 3.0 of the Professional Baseball Player Database has been released. Coverage is now extended to minor and major league players 1935-1974 and is available on diskette. For ordering information, you can contact him at (913) 345-9894 or visit his website at baseball1.com/oldtimedata

2. A new compilation of career records of nearly 750 players has been edited by Bob Davids, Boc McConnell, Bob Hoie, Carlos Bauer, Ray Nemec, John Benesch Jr, and Bill Weiss. The Historical Register is available from Baseball Press Books, P.O. Box 22493, San Diego, CA 92192-2493. 450 pages, comb-bound format, \$27.95.

3. Tom Kayser, President of the Texas League, offers Minor League Committee members a good deal on league publications. The Texal League News Letter (21 issues) can be ordered for \$30.00. subscribers will also receive a copy of the 1999 Texas League Media Guide and Record Book. For the media guide alone, price is 410.00 plus \$2.00 for postage and handling. Order from the League at 2442 Facet Oak, San Antonio, TX (210) 545-5297, or fax (210) 545-5298.

V. Minor League Articles Available for Order:

Short articles which are of general interest to committee members should be mailed to the chairman for inclusion in this section. Copies will be reproduced and disseminated at cost, which is indicated after the article. Please make checks payable to Ernest J. Green, and not to SABR. If you have written an article (published or unpublished, except those already in SABR volumes) on the minors, or have compiled data and are willing to have it circulated, please send it in.

1. Sheffield, Dick, "A Field of West Texas Dreams," Boston Sunday Globe, March 21, 1999. A well-written and lovingly described account of Kokernot Field in Texas. The ballpark was once (1959-61) home to a Boston Red Sox Class D farm club, but was better known for semi-pro teams in the 1940s and 1950s. Article donated by Bob Bluthardt. (\$.50)

2. Author unknown, "The Texon Oilers," unpublished manuscript, including a printed 1935 program for the semi-pro oilers. Contains an informal history of the semi-pro Texon Oilers of the 1920s and 1930s. Several names appear in the account who show up in baseball encyclopedias, testifying to the high caliber of semi-pro ball in rural Texas during the period. Contributed by Bob Bluthardt, who wisely sent along a map with the location of the team. 14 pages, \$2.00.

3. Perry, Thomas K., "Ron Necciai: The Man Who Struck Out Everybody," Blue Ridge Country, Mar/Apr 1999. A well written account of the human side of an enormous pitching feat. In 1952, Necciai struck out 27 hitters in a class D game in the Appalachian League. He had ulcers and would soon be out of baseball with a torn rotator cuff. 4 pages, (\$.50) Contributed by Cappy Gagnon.

VI. Publications:

1. Adelson, Bruce. Brushing Back Jim Crow: The Integration of Minor-League Baseball in the American South. Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1999. A social and historical account of the racial integration of minor league baseball in the 1950s. Hardcover, in bookstores, price not available.

2. McCann, Kevin D., Jackson Diamonds: Professional Baseball in Jackson, Tennessee. Dickson, TN: Three Star Press, 1999. "Jackson Diamonds gives season-by-season accounts of all nineteen professional baseball teams that played in Jackson, from the 1093 Red Railroaders to the 1998 Diamond Jaxx." (Furnished by author) Paperback, \$16.95. Order from Three Star Press, 283 Murrell Rd, Dickson, TN 37055, Threestarpress@juno.com

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