

**“TAKE HIM OUT!”**



# THE INSIDE GAME

FEBRUARY 2024

*Nelson Harding*

# The INSIDE GAME

The Official Journal of SABR's Deadball Era Committee



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This drawing by Nelson Harding appeared in the April 10, 1914 edition of the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*.

## JACK BARRY'S 1913 DOUBLE SQUEEZE RECORD

by Mark S. Sternman

More than 110 years after the fact, the notion that in four months one player could execute eight double squeezes successfully – and victimize three teams multiple times! – seems unbelievable. A bunt that scores multiple players, the double squeeze has disappeared from baseball.

Jack Barry's .303 career slugging percentage is less than the lifetime batting average of his counterparts in the famed \$100,000 infield of the A's that played regularly together from 1911-1914: (Eddie Collins hit .333, and Home Run Baker and Stuffie McInnis both batted .307). But during one unusual four-month stretch in 1913, Barry used his small-ball skills to execute eight double squeezes, a feat that none of his more heralded teammates could or would have matched.

Before the 1913 season began, Barry had run up prodigious sacrifice totals, bunted for multiple runs in the key frame of the 1911 World Series clincher, and practiced the double squeeze during spring training in 1913.

In three of his four full seasons with the A's, Barry had finished in the top ten in the American League in sacrifices with 28 in 1909 (10<sup>th</sup>), 27 in 1911 (seventh), and 25 in 1912 (seventh). In the deciding game of the 1911 World Series, Barry's bunt off Red Ames of New York clinched the game for Philadelphia. With runners on first and second with the A's up 2-1 in the bottom of the fourth, Barry made "a beautiful bunt, and Ames in trying to field the ball to [Fred] Merkle hit Barry on top of the head, [Danny] Murphy and [Harry] Davis scoring, and Barry came all the way home on [Red] Murray's wild return of the ball to second base in an attempt to

catch Barry.”<sup>1</sup> The three runs scoring on the Barry bunt transformed a 2-1 nailbiter into a 5-1 lead, and Philadelphia would easily win the World Series via a 13-2 rout. Christy Mathewson called the play “the one which broke the back of the ... Giants and gave the Athletics the championship ... Ames fielded the ball in ... time to get the runner ... but hit Barry on the head with ball.... I ... recall ... some fan shouted ... ‘Nice headwork’ ... at Barry as the ball caromed off into the outfield.”<sup>2</sup>

In 1913, the brainy duo of Philadelphia Manager Connie Mack and Barry cleverly picked their spots to fool a trio of opposing squads repeatedly and meaningfully as the unusual play proved important in improving the results of both the team and the player. After winning pennants in 1910 and 1911, Philadelphia slipped to third place in 1912 with two hitters performing below league average in OPS+, namely, Barry (96) and Bris Lord (82). Before the 1913 season, Mack had Barry introduce the double squeeze into his game. According to *Sporting Life*, “The double squeeze play is Connie Mack’s latest. Playing against San Antonio, Collins was on third and [Amos] Strunk on second. Barry laid down a bunt. Collins scored easily, while Barry was being thrown out, and Strunk, having taken a tremendous flying lead, came ... home ...”<sup>3</sup>



JACK BARRY

#### THE EIGHT (SEVEN?) DOUBLE SQUEEZES IN 1913

A postseason notes article in the *Washington Post* provides a retrospective overview of Barry’s achievement with a critical bit of insight: “The Athletics worked the double squeeze eight times during the championship race, Jack Barry being the man at the plate every time ... The Mackmen generally tried the play when fledgling pitchers were working against them, but once they pulled it when there was ... Walter Johnson toiling.”<sup>4</sup>

On May 22, Philadelphia visited Detroit. Against Carl Zamloch, making his fifth appearance in the majors, Barry batted with one out and the bases loaded. Retrosheet reports that Barry sacrificed pitcher to first scoring Collins and Baker. The play doubled the lead of the A’s to 4-0. Eddie Plank pitched a three-hit shutout in a 7-0 Philadelphia win.

On June 6, Barry pulled the play a second time, again against Detroit although this time at Shibe Park, in a game the A’s would win 8-7 in ten innings. Jim Nasium describes the play in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*: “This was where the new variation of the ‘squeeze play’ was inserted, all the runners getting on the jump with the pitch and Barry bunting past the pitcher and beating the play to first, while Collins and Baker both scored.”<sup>5</sup> While

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the Barry double squeeze may have seemed new to the Philadelphia fans, the May 22 example demonstrates that the play was newish rather than new.

How could the same play happen against the same opponent just a few weeks apart? The fact that Detroit used two different catchers (Oscar Stanage in May and Henri Rondeau in June) may explain why the Tigers got fooled twice by the same stratagem. Notably, while eight-year veteran Ed Willet pitched the June game for Detroit, Rondeau's appearance represented just his tenth game in the majors behind the plate.

Barry's third double squeeze came two months later in a 4-1 A's win. In an August 2 home game against St. Louis facing the 21-year-old Earl Hamilton, Barry batted with the bases full. "The Athletics never got more out of the double squeeze. When Hamilton wound up ... Barry bunted straight to the pitcher, who oblivious of current events threw to first. Not only did McInnis as well as Collins score, but Barry also beat the throw to first."<sup>6</sup>

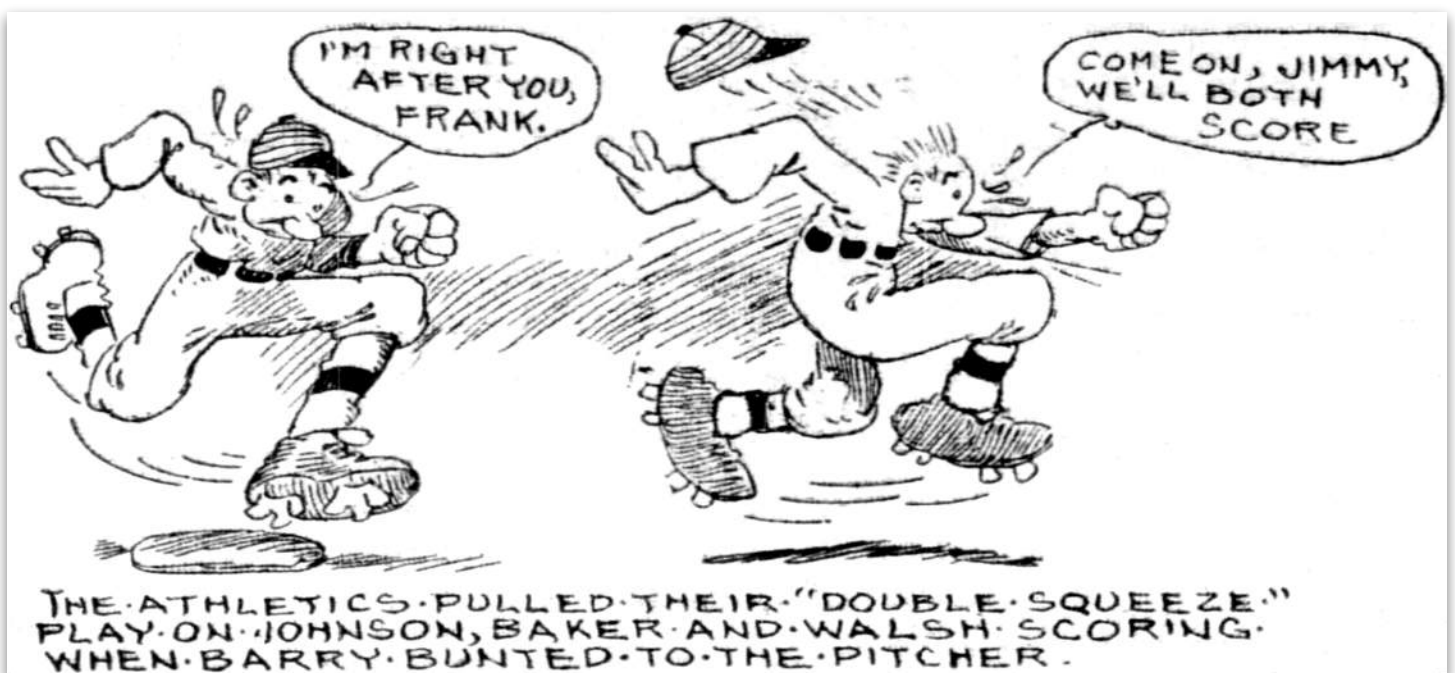
Just as he had done against Detroit, Barry struck twice in the span of a few weeks against St. Louis with his fourth double squeeze in an 8-0 Philadelphia romp. Retrosheet does not have play-by-play data for the August 26 game, but a game story details the pertinent action against fourth-year pitcher Roy Mitchell: "As Mitchell

wound up Baker and McInnis started to run. They had big leads and Stuffy was turning third when Barry bunted the ball to Mitchell. Roy fumbled an instant and then tossed to Stovall, retiring Jack, but Baker and McInnis had scored."<sup>7</sup>

*How could the same play happen against the same opponent just a few weeks apart?*

Although parts of this description seem exaggerated — McInnis possessed above-average speed but never had a reputation as a blazer — other circumstances make the account plausible. As with the Detroit duo, the fact that St. Louis had two different but both inexperienced catchers in the two games (second-year player Walt Alexander in the first game and rookie Sam Agnew in the second) may explain why the team did not recognize the possibility of the same double-squeeze scenario recurring.

Barry had four double squeezes through August; he would match that total in September alone, although the first of these instances raises questions about whether what happened really represented a double squeeze or, instead, a non-bunt play in the infield that nevertheless produced two runs.



*Philadelphia Inquirer, September 2, 1913*

Barry faced the veteran Walter Johnson in the second game of a September 1 doubleheader at Shibe Park that Philadelphia would win 6-5 in ten innings. Eddie Ainsmith, just twenty-three but in his fourth season with Washington where he served as Johnson's personal catcher, backstopped the Big Train. As recounted in the *Washington Post*, "Barry popped a little fly toward Johnson. The pitcher let the ball fall without making an effort to field it. He thought it would roll foul, but it struck on fair territory and two runs came over."<sup>8</sup>

Readers can interpret this description in two ways. Barry could have taken a swing and blooped the ball out of reach of the pitcher to drive in two runs. Or Barry could have bunted for a double squeeze. Stanley Milliken, who wrote both the postseason recap that detailed Barry's eight double squeezes as well as this game story, neither uses the verb "bunted" nor characterizes the play as a squeeze, much less a double squeeze. These were colorful details that one might have assumed a reporter would have highlighted.

A home team journalist tells a different tale: "The double squeeze, the Mackian chef d'oeuvre [sic], whatever that means, was successfully worked. Barry bunting to Johnson and both Baker and Walsh scampering over the pan before Walter realized what was coming off."<sup>9</sup>

Given the game took place before the debut of televised baseball, we will never know with certainty what happened on this play. Unsurprisingly, the visiting reporter focuses on an error in judgment by the visiting pitcher, while his home counterpart credits the skill of the home team players. Successful double squeezes tend to result from both bad plays by the fielding team and good execution by the squad at bat. This play smells like a double squeeze in terms of the outcome albeit with a whiff of uncertainty due to whether Barry bunted or hit a little infield fly that distinguishes this occurrence from the prior four and the subsequent three.

Three days later, Barry struck again with his sixth double squeeze in an 8-6 loss. In the first game of a September 4 home doubleheader against Boston, "the double squeeze play was worked, McInnis and [Jimmy] Walsh both crossing the plate when Barry bunted along the first base line and was thrown out at first."<sup>10</sup> Again,

Barry victimized a young hurler, this time the 21-year-old rookie Dutch Leonard. Veteran catcher Bill Carrigan caught Leonard.

For the only time in 1913, Barry had successful double squeezes in the same series, striking again for possible double squeeze number seven in the September 6 finale against the second-year pitcher Fred Anderson, who would lose this game 9-2 to fall to 0-4 on the year and 0-5 in his career. Notably, Pinch Thomas, also a second-year player, caught this game rather than Carrigan. "As Anderson wound up, both Collins and Baker started ... for their next stations. As Barry bunted ... Collins was within a few feet of the rubber and Baker was on ... third. Anderson ... took his own sweet time in tossing Barry out.... Baker never hesitated ... but continued his wild dash to the plate, reaching ... before [Clyde] Engle had a chance to throw the ball in."<sup>11</sup> This play exemplifies excellent execution by the A's and poor defense by the Sox.

Barry's final double squeeze came on September 22 in a 4-0 win in the first game of a doubleheader against Detroit pitcher Hooks Dauss. The play had gained such prominence that it made the headline and led the game story: "In the curtain raiser the Mackmen drew their first gore of the conflict in the second period of play, using the justly celebrated 'double squeeze' play for this purpose .... Jack bunted to Dauss as Baker and McInnis set sail for the plate."<sup>12</sup> Dauss would win 223 games for the Tigers, but 1913 represented the 23-year-old's first full season with Detroit. Rookie backstop Frank Gibson would appear in only nineteen games behind the plate for the Tigers this season.

#### WHAT THE DOUBLE SQUEEZES MEANT FOR BARRY AND THE A'S

Barry victimized inexperienced batteries thanks to a plethora of speedy baserunners who often got on in front of him. The derivation of the play and the starring role of Barry remain unclear, but tantalizing hints exist that could clarify both aspects of Barry's remarkable record.

While Barry, at least in the Deadball Era, popularized the play, the Negro Leagues also employed a bunt to advance a runner two bases. As Robert Peterson wrote



in his magisterial *Only the Ball Was White*, “A player literally had to be able to bunt the ball into a hat to play for Rube Foster. He developed to a high art the hit-and-run bunt in which the runner on first raced for second on the pitch and went to third as the play was made at first on the bunter.”<sup>13</sup> Foster’s long managerial career began in 1905; other amateur and professional teams employed the play prior to Barry’s 1908 debut with Philadelphia. For example, in a June 4, 1907, home game against Alabama, Dartmouth’s “Skillin, McLane and Glaze worked the double-squeeze play”<sup>14</sup> in the fourth inning when the Big Green scored three runs in a 5-0 win. While Barry mastered the double squeeze in 1913, he did not invent it.

Barry had a 111 OPS+ in 1913, with a career best slash line. He had his highest ever finish at ninth in the voting for MVP (the Chalmers Award). Barry’s 28 sacrifices ranked him fourth in the American League. Impressive on its own as an oddity that for a brief period became normalized,<sup>15</sup> Barry’s double squeeze record serves as a microcosm of his transformation from a weak offensive cog in the Philadelphia machine to a main mover in the

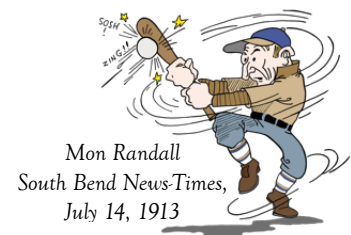
A’s attack. Philadelphia went 7-1 in Barry’s double-squeeze games, and the A’s bounced back from a disappointing 1912 season to win the World Series in 1913 for the third time in four years.

## ENDNOTES

1. “Game Described Play by Play,” *Washington Post*, October 27, 1911: 2.
2. Christy Mathewson, “Silence Might Be Best Is Way Mat-ty Sizes Outcome,” *Washington Post*, October 27, 1911: 8.
3. “American League News In Nut-Shells,” *Sporting Life*, March 22, 1913: 11.
4. Stanley T. Milliken, “Gandil Gets an Offer to Do Vaudeville Turn,” *Washington Post*, October 31, 1913: 8.
5. Jim Nasium, “Elephants Tramp upon Ed. Willett,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 6, 1913:10. Born Edgar Forrest Wolfe, Nasium used this delightful pen name throughout his career.
6. “Brown Hands Browns Handy Beating,” *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, August 3, 1913: 37.
7. “Poor Old Browns Made to Order for Mackies,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 27, 1913:10.
8. Stanley T. Milliken, “Athletics Take Both from Nationals,” *Washington Post*, September 2, 1913: 6.
9. Jim Nasium, “Mack’s 10th-Inning Rally Was Thriller,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 2, 1913:11.
10. “Red Sox Drop the Athletics Twice,” *Boston Globe*, September 5, 1913: 6.
11. “Red Sox Never Had a Chance,” *Boston Globe*, September 7, 1913: 15.
12. Jim Nasium, “Double Squeeze Play Helps Out in First Game,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 23, 1913:12.
13. Robert Peterson, *Only the Ball Was White* (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1984), 111.
14. “Alabama Is the Loser, 5 to 0,” *Boston Globe*, June 5, 1907: 5. Thanks to Bob Harris for sharing his research of double squeezes from 1906-1907.
15. Barry’s 1913 double squeeze record reminds the author of the opening lines of a Suzanne Vega song she released in 1985 entitled *Cracking*: “It’s a one-time thing / It just happens / A lot.”



Calumet (Michigan) News, June 17, 1914



# WALTER EAST: DEADBALL MINOR LEAGUER AND PRO FOOTBALL'S FIRST SCANDAL

by Bill Lamb

Walter East is hardly the sole Deadball Era career minor leaguer to have led an interesting and eventful life. But more than a century later, he may well be the only one to have his own *Wikipedia* page. Regrettably for East, the reference work narrative focuses almost exclusively on his involvement in a harebrained scheme to fix the outcome of two 1906 pro football games. Left unmentioned is anything about East's personal life; accomplishments as a three-sport athlete on the collegiate and professional levels; success as a minor league field leader; and post-athletics life as a practicing attorney and political operative in his adopted hometown of Akron, Ohio. The paragraphs below endeavor to fill that void.

Walter Rufus East was born on March 29, 1883, in Coulterville, Illinois, a downstate hamlet situated near the Missouri border. He was the fourth of five sons born to Rufus East (1846-1907), a Union Army veteran turned restaurant proprietor, and his wife Lucinda Jane (nee Robinson, 1846-1936), devout Presbyterians of working-class stock.<sup>1</sup> Nothing is known of Walter's youth or his introduction to the sports in which he would later achieve fleeting acclaim except for a report that he began playing team baseball at age 16.<sup>2</sup>

## BEGINNINGS IN BASEBALL

Walter East is first discovered in the public record as a 20-year-old, playing first base for the Pittsburg (Kansas) Coal Diggers of the Class D Missouri Valley League. Amply sized — officially listed as 5'11"/180 pounds but probably a bit larger<sup>3</sup> — East was recruited by his older brother Claude, a Pittsburg club co-owner.<sup>4</sup> At the time, Walter was an undergraduate at Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, and a three-sport (football, basketball, baseball) stalwart for the Reformed Presbyterian Church-affiliated school's athletic teams.

A right-handed batter and thrower,<sup>5</sup> East posted only a .233 batting average for the weak-hitting Coal Diggers<sup>6</sup> but impressed with his defense, a Pittsburg newspaper describing "his work at first base [as] unusually good."<sup>7</sup>

## THE YOUNGEST BASE BALL MANAGER IN O. & P. LEAGUE.



**WALTER EAST.**

GENEVA COLLEGE, C. 1904

At season's end, Walter returned to the classroom and playing fields of Geneva College. The following spring, he joined a semipro baseball club representing nearby Sharon, Pennsylvania. Released in late June, East soon found a berth as a second baseman with a nine sponsored by the Akron Athletic Club,<sup>8</sup> beginning an association with "the Rubber Capital of the World" that would last the remainder of his life. Upon arrival, he unveiled a yarn that became a staple of his biography. "When I started my career in a little town," East related, "the other players in the outfield were named North and West" and were aligned in the club batting order to place "North at bat, East on deck and West in the hole."<sup>9</sup> *Big Walter*, as he was often called, quickly became a local favorite, deriving especial satisfaction from hitting a game-winning homer against his former Sharon clubmates in late August.<sup>10</sup> He also began to attract major league interest, with Cleveland Naps founder-owner Charles Somers personally scouting East. The prospect, however, had already committed to re-

maining in Akron for the ensuing season and was thus unavailable to the Naps.<sup>11</sup>

Now bent on the study of law, Walter transferred to Western University of Pennsylvania that fall.<sup>12</sup> But for the time being, football was his primary concern. Playing right end for an undefeated WUP eleven, he was a standout, “being invincible on defense and a sure gainer with the ball.”<sup>13</sup> But the priggish East expressed reservations about teammates who were “hard to handle and refuse to cut out smoking and other indulgences that do not mix with football.”<sup>14</sup> Over the winter, he played basketball for the Ohio National Guard team. For the 1905 baseball season, East signed with the Akron Buckeyes of the newly formed Class C Ohio-Pennsylvania League but did not report until his spring semester college course work was completed.<sup>15</sup> Shortly thereafter, Akron club management deposed skipper Frank Motz and placed the 22-year-old East in charge. Under his direction, the Buckeyes played well, posting a commendable

(66-42, .611) final record. And East himself performed creditably, being selected as the second baseman on the All-Ohio minor league all-star team selected by *Cleveland Plain Dealer* sportswriter Henry Edwards.<sup>16</sup>

... the youngest manager in the league ... [imposed] fines for stupid plays ...

Despite allegations of professionalism — it was reported that East had recently signed with a pro football team in Canton, Ohio, and that he had earlier been remunerated for transferring from Geneva College<sup>17</sup> — East returned to WUP and his fitful legal studies that fall.<sup>18</sup> And again, he played right end for a talented university football team. Belying its excellent 11-2 record, the WUP team was strife-torn, with various players turning against Coach Arthur Mosse. Among those who threatened to leave school if Mosse was not discharged was Walter East.<sup>19</sup> His hostile attitude toward a respected local football coach, however, did not sour Pittsburgh baseball fans on East, and by late December there was public clamor for a major league ball club to audition him the following spring.<sup>20</sup> But that did not happen. In the meantime, East spent the winter playing basketball for the WUP varsity.<sup>21</sup>

Bypassed in the minor league player draft, East returned to Akron for the 1906 season.<sup>22</sup> And despite protestations that he did not want the job, East resumed duties at the club helm.<sup>23</sup> Along with predicting a pennant, “the youngest manager in the league” announced new disciplinary mandates, including nightly curfews and the imposition of fines for “stupid plays. I believe the best way to get a player’s thinking apparatus to working rightly is to assess fines for dumb plays,” East declared.<sup>24</sup> He then set about discovering and signing prospects for the club roster.

The Akron ball club, now nicknamed the Rubbernecks, got off to a slow start as manager East had to fend off interference from the club directors.<sup>25</sup> But thereafter, Akron surged in league standings with its youthful field boss leading by example. Big Walter batted a team-leading .291, while his defensive stats reflected the wide fielding range that produced the high total chances



AKRON RUBBERNECKS, 1906



(706), putouts (332), assists (321), and errors committed (53) marks that would annually characterize his work as a second baseman. In the end, only untimely late-season defeats stood between Akron (83-55, .601) and the O-P League champion Youngstown Tire Works (84-53, .613). Thereafter, East was named the second baseman on the league all-star nine selected by Youngstown sportswriter Ed F. Bang,<sup>26</sup> and promptly reengaged as Akron manager for the 1907 season.<sup>28</sup> In the interim, East returned to the gridiron and his rendezvous with scandal.

## THE FOOTBALL SCANDAL

Long before the NFL came into existence, Ohio was a hotbed of professional football with various localities fielding a gridiron squad. Two of the most formidable were based in Canton and Massillon. With home fields separated by a mere 15 miles, the Canton Bulldogs and Massillon Tigers were considered among the nation's top pro clubs and fierce rivals. In the November 1905 championship game of the top-notch Ohio League, Massillon defeated Canton, 14-4. With a rematch the following fall likely in the offing, the sides stepped up their recruitment of playing talent, with rugged end Walter East approached by both teams.<sup>28</sup> In time, he opted for Massillon.

In the run-up to a 1906 season-ending away-and-home game showdown with Canton, Massillon extended an undefeated streak that stretched back three seasons. On November 6, the Tigers administered a 32-0 shellacking to Pittsburg Lyceum in which right end Walter East "showed his many old college friends ... that he is even better now than during the days that he was playing a star game with the Western University of Pennsylvania eleven."<sup>29</sup> But shortly thereafter and with the initial clash with Canton only days away, East was released by Massillon, reportedly because of "a bad case of 'charley horse.'"<sup>30</sup>

On November 16, 1906, Canton upset betting favorite Massillon, 10-5.<sup>31</sup> Eight days later, the Tigers evened the score with a 13-6 triumph and thereby retained the Ohio League championship.<sup>32</sup> A full accounting of the brouhaha that subsequently erupted, often considered the first fixed-game scandal in professional football history, is beyond the scope of this essay.<sup>33</sup> But in brief,

days after the second Canton-Massillon game, Massillon club owner Ed Stewart alleged that with financial backing from gamblers, ex-Tiger Walter East and Canton coach Blondy Wallace had attempted to engineer a fix via bribery of players. Under their scheme, Canton would win the first game and Massillon the second, setting up a high-stakes rubber match to be played in Cleveland.<sup>34</sup> Wallace furiously denied the accusation, promptly instituting a \$25,000 defamation lawsuit against Stewart and the *Massillon Morning Gleaner*, the newspaper that first published the Stewart charges.<sup>35</sup> The response from East, however, only complicated matters. Exonerating Wallace, East asserted that there had, indeed, been an attempt to corrupt the Canton-Massillon games but named its instigator as Massillon coach Shelburn Wightman.

*... there is little, if any, hard evidence  
to substantiate whether either game  
was rigged.*

According to East, Wightman offered to arrange for Massillon to lose the opening game in exchange for \$4,000, allowing plot insiders to clean up betting on underdog Canton. East then took the proposition to John T. Windsor, a financial supporter/director of the Akron Rubbernecks baseball club and a well-to-do sporting man who agreed to back it. To modern eyes, however, the mechanics of the fix plot border on deranged, particularly its terms being memorialized in a written pseudo-contract signed by Wightman, East, and Windsor.<sup>36</sup> When the scandal erupted, Windsor publicly corroborated the East account of events.<sup>37</sup> But the clincher was East's production of the incriminating document itself, signed in triplicate by the fix principals. Forced into a corner by this irrefutable evidence, Wightman acknowledged participation in game rigging negotiations but insisted that he had done so acting on orders of Massillon club boss Stewart, so as to entrap East and Windsor, the true fix masterminds.<sup>38</sup> But Wightman promptly undermined the credibility of this dubious claim by further alleging that East had also boasted of obstructing Akron's efforts to capture the Ohio-Pennsylvania League pennant earlier that fall.<sup>39</sup>

This baseball-related charge was greeted by widespread skepticism, with Cleveland sportswriter Harry Neily declaring that East and his Akron charges went all-out to win the OPL pennant, “plugging hard for every game.”<sup>40</sup> And when Wightman declined to appear and repeat his allegations at a quickly-scheduled Ohio-Pennsylvania League meeting, his charges were discounted and no disciplinary measures were imposed on East by circuit overseers.<sup>41</sup> Looking back on the scandal today, it is unclear whether fixing the Canton-Massillon clashes ever got beyond the talking stage. And there is little, if any, hard evidence to substantiate whether either game was rigged. Nevertheless, the corruption allegations dramatically affected the fortunes of professional football in Ohio, with both the Canton and Massillon elevens thereafter suspending operations for a time.<sup>42</sup>

### REFOCUS ON BASEBALL

Although he went unpunished, the fixing scandal effectively ended Walter East’s time on the gridiron. From there on, he concentrated his sporting attentions on baseball. With the support of dominant board director Windsor, Big Walter returned as player-manager of the Akron Rubbernecks. But other club directors held his connection to the football scandal against East, creating season-long tension among club executives that eventually culminated in Windsor physically assaulting another team director.<sup>43</sup> Meanwhile, manager East attempted to boost Akron prospects by signing former Cleveland Naps second baseman Nick Kahl, a longtime acquaintance from hometown Coulterville.<sup>44</sup> But an irreparable arm injury soon forced Kahl’s release.<sup>45</sup> East suffered another disappointment when the National Commission disapproved contracts signed by hard-hitting first baseman Bill Schwartz and himself which did not include a reserve clause.<sup>46</sup> On another futile front, Big Walter tried to improve his players’ lot by patenting “an inflated rubber protector to cover the leg, body, and arm” of Akron batsmen, but the device proved impractical.<sup>47</sup>

Notwithstanding the above setbacks and the season-long hostility of minority club directors, East had the Rubbernecks in the OPL lead as the season entered the home stretch.<sup>48</sup> But like the year before, Akron was



Memphis Commercial Appeal, March 1, 1909

LITTLE ROCK TRAVELERS, 1908

nipped at the wire, finishing a close (83-53, 610) third to Youngstown (86-52, .623) and the Newark (Ohio) Newks (86-53, .619). East’s playing performance was also a near-repeat of the prior season. He posted a solid .285 BA with a team-best .379 slugging average and upped his fielding stats to 343 putouts-378 assists-30 errors = .960 FA. Those numbers made him the second baseman on the OPL all-star team chosen by *Cleveland Plain Dealer* sportswriter Neily<sup>49</sup> and a selection by the Little Rock Travelers of the Class A Southern League in the post-season minor league player draft.<sup>50</sup> Unhappy that he was not deemed a free agent, East protested his draft selection, but to no avail. The National Association, overseer of minor league baseball, ordered him to report

to Little Rock.<sup>51</sup> On another sports front, East was also unsuccessful in efforts to secure a franchise in the newly organized Central Basketball League of Ohio.<sup>52</sup>

However disgruntled he may have been about the National Association directive, the Little Rock draft launched Walter East toward the modest summit of his baseball career. Initially, though, things did not work out well for him, particularly when appearing before quickly-turned-hostile home game fans.<sup>53</sup> By early June, it was widely reported that a disgruntled East was hoping to leave Little Rock to assume managing the Erie (Pennsylvania) Sailors of the O-P League.<sup>54</sup> But that did not happen. Instead, East was sold to the Nashville Volunteers,<sup>55</sup> for whom he proceeded to play the best baseball of his pro career and contribute significantly to the club's come-from-behind Southern League championship.<sup>56</sup>

"Since Walter has joined the Volunteers, he seems to hit the ball very hard, and very often," observed a New Orleans newspaper in late July. "He also seems to field nicer than ever before. In short, he is playing star ball."<sup>57</sup> Posting respectable batting (.260) and fielding (.949) averages<sup>58</sup> and providing heady on-field leadership, East was deemed "instrumental in landing Nashville the pennant" by the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*.<sup>59</sup> That view was echoed back in Akron where the *Beacon Journal* stated that "East can claim credit for being one of the big factors for his team getting the Southern League flag."<sup>60</sup> Thereafter, he compounded the satisfaction of being a member of a pennant-winning ball club with another professional achievement. In December, East passed the bar examination and was admitted to the practice of law in Ohio.<sup>61</sup> The newly minted attorney then spent the winter in Akron, working as an associate at a city law firm and coaching the Buchtel College basketball team.<sup>62</sup>

Although his employment options were now greatly expanded, East was not yet ready to abandon baseball. But he was unenthusiastic about returning to Nashville. Instead, he applied to fill a managerial vacancy with the Zanesville (Ohio) Infants of the Class B Central League, but was turned down.<sup>63</sup> After a brief contract holdout, East reported to Nashville's spring camp ready to re-

sume his place as the club's second baseman and team captain.<sup>64</sup> By mid-June, however, shaky performance turned hometown fans against him, the grandstand abuse reaching the point where East asked Volunteers manager Bill Bernhard to release him.<sup>65</sup> But Bernhard refused, declaring "I consider East one of the most valuable ball players in the league, and one of the brainiest, besides [being] one who has given his best efforts to the club."<sup>66</sup>

... *East was deemed "instrumental in landing Nashville the pennant" ...*

East rewarded his manager's confidence by soon returning to form. By season end, his numbers (.266 BA/.947 FA) nearly duplicated those of the previous year, but Nashville's improved (82-55, .599) log was good only for second place in the Southern League pennant chase. Once his ballplaying duties concluded, East effected a change in his domestic status, marrying 29-year-old Alice Durhoff in late October.<sup>67</sup>

Over the ensuing winter it briefly appeared that the now 26-year-old might receive a major league shot when his contract was sold to the Cleveland Naps.<sup>68</sup> But days later, the sale was revealed as no more than a device for transferring East to the Buffalo Bisons of the Class A Eastern League.<sup>69</sup> East got off to a good start with his new club, but his hitting then fell off sharply. In late June, he was traded to an EL rival, the Montreal Royals.<sup>70</sup> The change of livery did not spur improvement, and by season's end the East batting average had sunk to .231 in 73 games played, combined.

Jettisoned by Montreal, East returned to the Southern League, reuniting with Bill Bernhard, now manager of the Memphis Turtles.<sup>71</sup> Bernhard, a former major league pitcher, had relied on East to orchestrate the infield defense while the two were in Nashville, and intended to repeat that protocol in Memphis, appointing East his team captain.<sup>72</sup> But success eluded them this time as Memphis finished a distant sixth in final Southern League standings.

As before, East returned to Akron for the winter which he spent angling for a managerial post close to home in the newly-formed Class D Ohio State League.<sup>73</sup> Re-

buffed once again, he returned to the Southern League for the 1911 season, his contract having been sold to the defending circuit champion Atlanta Crackers.<sup>74</sup> By June, however, a .240 batting average in 40 games earned East his release. After a brief sojourn with the Kansas City Blues of the new top-echelon Class AA American Association,<sup>75</sup> East assumed the post of player-manager of the Ohio State League's Mansfield Brownies.<sup>76</sup> Taking over a club with a pennant-contending 47-36 (.567) record, East contributed on the field, registering a career-best .293 BA in 33 games. But he flopped as Brownies leader, his charges not responding to his command and saddling their new skipper with the only losing (25-31, .467) mark of his managerial career.

The stint in Mansfield ended the professional baseball career of Walter East. Although never good enough for

the majors, he had been a competent high minor league ballplayer with a decent bat, wide defensive range, and plenty of on-field smarts. Big Walter had also been an excellent lower-tier minor league manager, accumulating a 287-181 (.587) record in four sessions at the helm. But now approaching age 30 and with the business, legal, and political worlds beckoning, he left the game for other pursuits.

### LIFE AFTER ATHLETICS

Late during his minor league days, East opened a commercial laundry in Ashland, Ohio, hometown of wife Alice.<sup>77</sup> The business proved successful, providing the budding entrepreneur with a healthy off-season income. An ensuing venture, however, proved an embarrassing fiasco. In February 1913, East and a business partner bought a dilapidated hotel in Marion, Ohio, intending to transform it into European-style resort.<sup>78</sup> Security pledged to finance renovations included East's Ashland laundry. When the hotel venture collapsed and its financiers attempted to foreclose on the security, it was discovered that East was not the laundry owner. His wife was. Angered backers then charged East with fraud and had a warrant issued for his arrest.<sup>79</sup> Sometime thereafter, the matter was quietly settled out of court.<sup>80</sup>

After that disagreeable experience, East gravitated toward the law and local politics, interrupted only by brief state-side military service during World War I. In August 1920, East was an unsuccessful candidate for the Republican Party nomination for prosecuting attorney for the City of Akron.<sup>81</sup> Thereafter, he did criminal defense work and accepted court-appointed trustee assignments. Given his background, it was logical for a local syndicate looking to hold on to the Akron Buckeyes as an International League member to retain East as legal counsel in early 1921.<sup>82</sup> When the league awarded the failing franchise to Newark (NJ), East oversaw the financial end of the transaction.<sup>83</sup>

East remained involved in local Republican Party politics throughout the 1920s, serving on various committees and speaking at meetings. Meanwhile, his marriage ended in divorce. Relocation to the Akron suburb of Barberton did not improve East's prospects for political office. A run for a municipal court judgeship was un-



Memphis Commercial Appeal, April 22, 1912

MEMPHIS TURTLES, 1911

successful, as was one for city solicitor.<sup>84</sup> Thereafter, East undertook the high-profile defense of a county commissioner charged with embezzlement and official misconduct. A February 1930 trial finally yielded an East triumph of sorts, as the jury was unable to reach a verdict.<sup>85</sup> Preparation for the retrial brought East to Philadelphia where he suddenly fell ill. He died of uremic poisoning at Mercy Hospital on the evening of August 28, 1930.<sup>86</sup> Walter Rufus East was 46. Following funeral services conducted in Akron, his remains were returned to his birthplace and interred in Coulterville Cemetery. Childless, the deceased was survived by his elderly mother, four brothers, and ex-wife Alice.

Almost a century after his passing, Walter East is remembered, if at all, only for having played a shrouded role in pro football's earliest fixed-game scandal. But a closer look reveals that event as forming no more than a passing chapter in a life presumably like that of other long-forgotten Deadball Era minor leaguers — one full of incident and interest.

#### ENDNOTES

1. Walter's brothers were Lovejoy (born 1869), Charles (1871), Claude (1873), and Stiles (1885).
2. According to "Diamond Dust," *Mansfield (Ohio) News*, September 20, 1906: 7.
3. Per player vital statistics published in the *New Orleans Item*, March 24, 1908: 14, and East's TSN player contract card. Another contemporaneous source put East's weight at 190 pounds (*Canton (Ohio) Repository*, September 19, 1905: 6), while the adjective *big* was often affixed to his name in sports portage.
4. As reported in "Base Ball Gossip," *Pittsburg (Kansas) Headlight*, April 20, 1903: 2.
5. Per the Walter East TSN player contract card and confirmed in vintage newspaper photos.
6. Six of the 12 Pittsburg players batted under .200.
7. "Base Ball Talk," *Pittsburg (Kansas) Kansan*, July 30, 1903: 4.
8. See "New Second Baseman Has Been Signed," *Akron (Ohio) Beacon Journal*, July 7, 1904: 5.
9. "East Is Also a Football Player," *Akron Beacon Journal*, July 8, 1904: 5.
10. See "Big Walter Got Another Four Bagger," *Akron Beacon Journal*, August 25, 1904: 5.
11. As reported in "The Cleveland Club Watching East," *Akron Beacon Journal*, September 13, 1904: 5.
12. As reported in the *Akron Beacon Journal*, September 30, 1904: 9. WUP was renamed the University of Pittsburgh in 1908.
13. *Akron Beacon Journal*, November 1, 1904: 5, reprinting praise published in the *Pittsburg Dispatch*.
14. Per "Items of Interest to the Gridiron Warrior," *Akron Beacon Journal*, October 27, 1904: 5. Despite such player failings, WUP went 9-0 in 1904.
15. Per "No Trouble about Holding Walter East," *Akron Beacon Journal*, February 4, 1905: 5.
16. As reported in "All Star Team Picked from Ranks of Independent Clubs," *Akron Beacon Journal*, July 31, 1905: 5. Baseball-Reference provides no 1905 season stats for East and data for OPL players were not found elsewhere.
17. See "Walter East with Canton," *Pittsburg Press*, September 14, 1905: 14; "East Will Play Foot Ball at Canton," *Akron Beacon Journal*, August 18, 1905: 5.
18. As reported in "Walter East to Join Western University Team," *Pittsburgh Gazette*, September 21, 1905: 11; "Goals from the Field," *Pittsburg Press*, September 21, 1905: 14. The fact that East had played professional baseball did not affect his ability to play other college sports.
19. See "East Rebels," *Akron Beacon Journal*, December 4, 1905: 5. For a fuller take on player unrest, see "Players Mutiny Over Coach," *South Bend (Indiana) Tribune*, December 4, 1905: 3; "W.U.P. Factionalism Angers Team Fans," *Pittsburg Post*, December 3, 1905: 5. The situation was later resolved internally with Coach Mosse returning for the 1906 WUP football season.
20. Per "O.& P. Players in Great Demand," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, December 31, 1905: 15.
21. As subsequently noted in "Manager East Here to Take Charge of Team," *Akron Beacon Journal*, April 7, 1906: 5.
22. See "Must Come Back," *Akron Beacon Journal*, January 24, 1906: 5, noting the interest that Pittsburgh Pirates club boss Barney Dreyfuss had shown in East.
23. As reported in "Base Ball," *Elyria (Ohio) Reporter*, February 7, 1906: 6; "Walter East Selected as Akron's Manager," *Akron Beacon Journal*, February 5, 1906: 5. The previous fall, East had announced that he would not manage the Akron club again.
24. See "Will Fine 'Em," *Mansfield News*, April 17, 1906: 7.



25. As noted in "Dark Clouds in O.P. League," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 24, 1906: 28.
26. According to "All Star Team for O.& P. League," *Akron Beacon Journal*, October 15, 1906: 3. Sportswriter Bang later became a longtime sports page editor in Cleveland.
27. As reported in "East Will Manage Akron Again," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, September 18, 1906: 8; "East Will Remain," *Columbus Evening Dispatch*, September 17, 1906: 11; and elsewhere. East's new contract included a pay raise and the promise of a \$500 bonus if Akron won the pennant.
28. Per "East Is Sought by Both Teams," *Canton Repository*, September 1, 1906: 6.
29. "It Was Easy," *Akron Beacon Journal*, November 7, 1906: 5.
30. Per "East Released," *Akron Beacon Journal*, November 12, 1906: 5. Other reports were opaque, citing unspecified conditioning problems as the cause of East's discharge. See e.g., "Canton Will Be the Mecca of Football World Next Friday," *Zanesville (Ohio) Times Recorder*, November 13, 1906: 8.
31. See "Cantons Down Massillon Tigers," *Springfield (Ohio) Daily News*, November 17, 1906: 7, which placed the pre-game betting line at four-to-three in Massillon's favor.
32. As reported in "Tigers Retain Championship," *Akron Beacon Journal*, November 26, 1906: 5
33. An in-depth account of the scandal is provided by Gregg Ficery in *Gridiron Legacy: Pro Football's Missing Origin Story* (Los Angeles: The Ringer, LLC, 2023).
34. As recounted in "An Ugly Charge," *Mansfield News*, November 27, 1906: 7; "Charged That Gamblers Backed Walter East," *Akron Beacon Journal*, November 26, 1906: 5; "\$4,000 Bribe Offered," *Piqua (Ohio) Daily Call*, November 26, 1906: 1; and elsewhere.
35. See "Suit Brought by Coach Wallace," *Springfield Daily News*, November 30, 1906: 7; "Suit Brought by Wallace," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, November 26, 1906: 8.
36. As reported in "Charges Wightman as Leading Conspirator," *Wooster (Ohio) Daily News*, December 7, 1906: 3; "Walter East Tells Story," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, December 6, 1906: 6; "Manager Walter East Confesses to Canton-Massillon Football Deal," *Akron Beacon Journal*, December 6, 1906: 1. Readers should understand that contracts which require the commission of an unlawful act are unenforceable as a matter of law. Collection of gambling debts and murder-for-hire scheme obligations fall into this category.
37. See e.g., "Windsor Tells His Side of the Foot Ball Deal," *Akron Beacon Journal*, December 7, 1906: 1.
38. See "Wightman's Statement," *Akron Beacon Journal*, December 7, 1906: 1.
39. Per "Wightman, Sr., Talks," *Akron Beacon Journal*, December 8, 1906: 5.
40. As reported in "The Fans' Corner," *Akron Beacon Journal*, December 11, 1906: 5. See also, "The Fans' Corner," *Akron Beacon Journal*, January 12, 1907: 5: "Few [Akron fans] believed that East had made the statements attributed to him by Wightman."
41. See "East Will Stick," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 3, 1907: 8; "East to Remain," *Columbus Evening Dispatch*, January 3, 1907: 15; "Wightman Refuses to Back Up Charges," *Akron Beacon Journal*, January 2, 1907: 5.
42. The Massillon Tigers hung on for the 1907 season, but the Canton Bulldogs did not. Thereafter, the two teams did not resume playing until 1911.
43. See "Is Fined for Assault," *Canton Repository*, September 6, 1907: 5; "Fight May Depose East," *Marion (Ohio) Daily Mirror*, August 6, 1907: 6. See also, "O.& P. League Meeting Soon," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 13, 1907: 20.
44. Per "Nick Kahl Deal Is Closed," *Akron Beacon Journal*, April 24, 1907: 5; "Akron Gets Our Nick Kahl," *Columbus Evening Dispatch*, April 15, 1907: 11.
45. See "Akron Releases Nick Kahl," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 22, 1907: 9; "Manager East Release Kahl," *Akron Beacon Journal*, May 21, 1907: 5.
46. Per "Schwartz and East to Be Reserved," *Akron Beacon Journal*, April 16, 1907: 5. See also, "Sporting Gossip," *Zanesville Times Recorder*, April 19, 1907: 11. Had the non-reserve clause contract been accepted, Schwartz and East would have become free agents at season's end.
47. As reported in "East's Invention May Handicap Pitcher," *Akron Beacon Journal*, July 20, 1907: 5. The only one handicapped by the bulky apparatus was the batter and it appears never to have been used in a game.
48. See "Akron Ahead in O. & P. League," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, September 8, 1907: 19.
49. "All-Star Team Well Divided," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, November 24, 1907: 17.
50. As reported in "Little Rock Signs Four New Players," *Montgomery (Alabama) Advertiser*, October 26, 1907: 6;

"Finn Gets Walter East," *Atlanta Journal*, October 25, 1907: 18; and elsewhere.

51. Per "East Turned Down," *Akron Beacon Journal*, October 31, 1907: 5; "Minor Leagues Start Row Among Themselves," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 31, 1907: 6.
52. See "Still a Chance for Basket Ball," *Akron Beacon Journal*, October 18, 1907: 5; "Basket Ball League to Include Six Clubs Soon to Be Launched," (East Liverpool, Ohio) *Evening Review*, October 24, 1907: 1.
53. See "Knockers Drove East from Little Rock," *Akron Beacon Journal*, June 29, 1908: 5.
54. See e.g., "Walter East May Manage O.-P. Team," *Canton Repository*, June 7, 1908: 14; "Walter East May Be in Charge of Erie Team," *Erie (Pennsylvania) Daily Times*, June 6, 1908: 9. Baseball-Reference erroneously lists East as 1908 manager of the Erie Sailors.
55. As reported in "Viewed from the Press Box," (Little Rock) *Arkansas Gazette*, June 25, 1908: 8; "Walter East Released," *Montgomery Advertiser*, June 24, 1908: 6; and elsewhere.
56. Nashville (75-56, .573) shaded the New Orleans Pelicans (76-57, .571) in final Southern League standings.
57. "East's Three Doubles Beat Birds," *New Orleans Item*, July 28, 1908: 5.
58. Per Southern League stats published in the 1909 *Reach Official Base Ball Guide*, 220-221.
59. "Nashville Team Ready," *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, March 7, 1909: 21.
60. See "East Ought to Be Happy," *Akron Beacon Journal*, October 23, 1909: 5.
61. See "Walter East Is Full Fledged Attorney," *Akron Beacon Journal*, December 24, 1908: 5. Earlier that year, East had finally completed his academic course work and been awarded a degree in law by WUP.
62. Per "Will Play Two Champion Fives in Four Days," *Akron Beacon Journal*, December 22, 1908: 5. East, "for-

#### **CATCHER'S SKULL IS FRACTURED**

TOLEDO—Dennis Murphy, catcher for the Toledo American Association baseball club, is in the hospital with a fractured skull, having been taken there yesterday, following an accident which occurred in one of the Toledo-St. Paul games on Sunday when Murphy was hit by a ball pitched by Dan Griner.

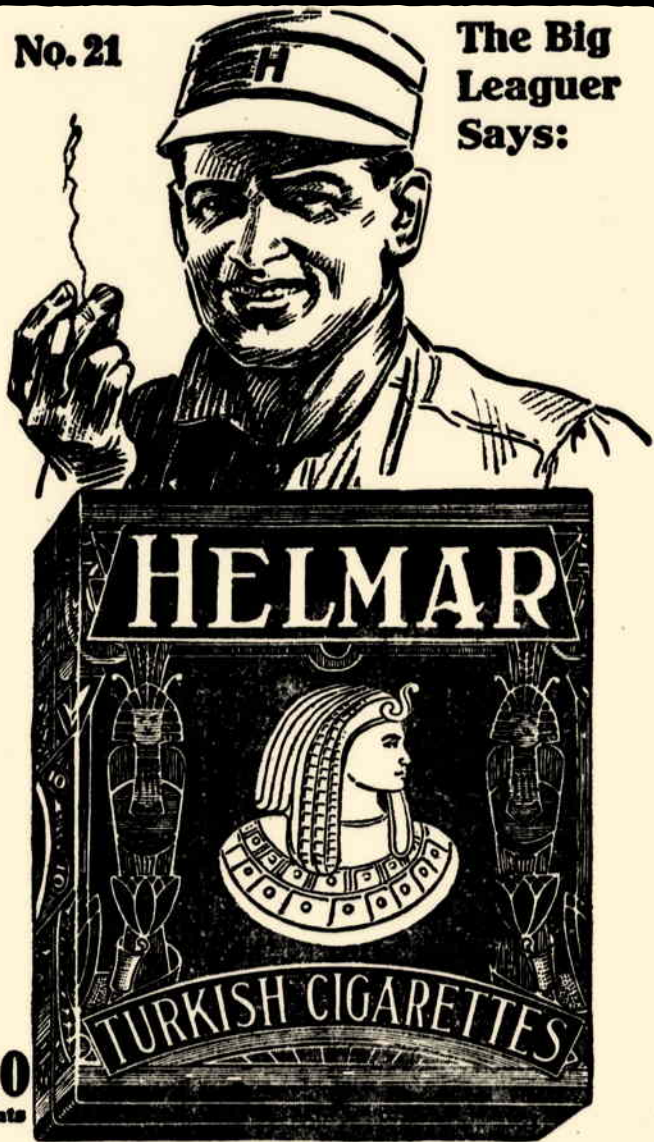
(Pittsburgh) *Gazette Times*, September 10, 1919

merly a star player," had been a basketball teammate of various pros then members of the Central Ohio Basket Ball League.

63. See "East Wants to Manage Zanesville," *Akron Beacon Journal*, January 8, 1909: 5.
64. Per "First Player to Arrive in Town," *Nashville Banner*, March 1, 1909: 4; "Champions' Baseman Is Holding Out," *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, March 1, 1909: 12.
65. See "Fans Hiss Walter East," *Akron Beacon Journal*, June 16, 1909: 5; "About Teams and Players," *Canton Repository*, June 16, 1909: 3.
66. See again, "Fans Hiss Walter East," above.
67. Marriage records maintained by the State of Illinois indicate that the couple was married in Chicago on October 21, 1909. The identity of the "Mrs. East" previously mentioned in sports page reportage (See e.g., *Nashville Banner*, March 1, 1909: 4; (Little Rock) *Arkansas Democrat*, March 14, 1908: 8) is unknown.
68. As reported in "Naps Bought Walter East," *Akron Beacon Journal*, January 25, 1910: 8; "Walter East Is Sold to Cleveland Team," *Nashville Banner*, January 23, 1910: 10.
69. See "But One Position on Local Team Unfilled," *Buffalo Courier*, January 29, 1910: 8; "About Filled Up," *Buffalo Express*, January 28, 1910: 11; "Star Second Sacker for Bison Herd," *Buffalo Evening News*, January 27, 1910: 28.
70. As reported in "Walter East Is No Longer a Bison," *Buffalo Times*, June 23, 1910: 12; "East Traded for Deal," *Buffalo Evening News*, June 22, 1910: 1; and elsewhere.
71. Per "Walter East Is Signed by Bernhard for Memphis," *Nashville Tennessean*, February 13, 1911: 7; "Turtle Team Is Complete," *Nashville Banner*, January 17, 1911: 16.
72. See "Memphis Is Formidable," *Chattanooga (Tennessee) Daily Times*, April 5, 1911: 7. Bernhard posted a fine 116-61 (.589) record during a nine-season big league career that ended in 1907.
73. As reported in "Walter East May Manage," *Nashville Banner*, January 23, 1912: 14; "East Wants Canton Berth," *Akron Beacon Journal*, January 17, 1912: 5; and elsewhere.
74. See "Walter East Is a Cracker," *Chattanooga Daily Times*, April 22, 1912: 3; "1911 Turtle Captain Sold to Atlanta," *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, April 22, 1912: 9.
75. See "Walter East at Kansas City," *Nashville Banner*, June 24, 1912: 13. The AA minor league classification was created in 1912 and restricted to the American Association, International League, and Pacific Coast League.

76. The East hiring was reported in "Mansfield Club Gets Shakeup; East Becomes Manager," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 1912: 8; "Big Shakeup in Mansfield Baseball Club," *Mansfield News*, July 18, 1912: 10; and elsewhere.
77. See "Walter East Runs an Ashland Laundry," *Akron Beacon Journal*, February 21, 1911: 7.
78. See "Walter East to Open Hotel," *Columbus Sunday Dispatch*, February 16, 1913: 3. See also, "Walter R. East Is to Receive Release," *Marion (Ohio) Daily Star*, February 17, 1913: 3, which related that the Mansfield Brownies had released East from the club's reserved list so that he could pursue the hotel renovation project.
79. As reported in "Was in Wife's Name," *Akron Beacon Journal*, October 30, 1913: 10; "Walter East Held for Embezzlement," *Columbus Evening Dispatch*, October 26, 1913: 15; "Walter R. East Is Held to Answer," *Mansfield News*, October 25, 1913: 10.
80. No follow-up newspaper coverage was discovered, but circumstances suggest that Alice East, a woman of some means, likely satisfied her husband's creditors.
81. A political ad for "Walter R. East, Candidate for Prosecuting Attorney," was published in the *Akron Evening Times*, August 9, 1920: 4. Days later, East placed fifth in a five-man nomination contest.
82. Per Jack Gibbons, "Syndicate Asks for Option on Baseball Franchise in Akron," *Akron Beacon Journal*, February 22, 1921: 13.
83. See Jack Gibbons, "Akron to Sell International League Baseball Franchise to Either Montreal or Newark," *Akron Beacon Journal*, February 28, 1921: 11. See also, "Akron Franchise Going to Newark," *Sandusky (Ohio) Star-Journal*, February 25, 1921: 2. The price paid by Newark for the Akron franchise was reportedly \$41,000.
84. See "S.A. Decker Elected Mayor Despite Republican Power," *Akron Beacon Journal*, November 6, 1929: 31. East finished a distant third in the voting. East's election setbacks were also noted in his obituaries.
85. See "Briggs Case Jury Discharged After 26 Hours' Debate," *Akron Beacon Journal*, February 22, 1930: 15.
86. As reported in "Barberton Leader Dies at Hospital," *Akron Beacon Journal*, August 30, 1930: 8; "Summit County Attorney Dies," (Massillon, Ohio) *Evening Independent*, August 30, 1930: 12; and elsewhere.

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(New York) Evening World, June 12, 1916



## ON THE FIELD AND IN THE GAME: DEADBALL ERA FANS AT THE BALLPARK

by John G. Zinn

Although gone forever, Deadball Era fans are still with us, preserved in black and white photos dating back over a century – a cloud of witnesses to early twentieth-century baseball. As captured in these pictures, they were mostly white, male and neatly dressed – seemingly ready for something more formal than a baseball game. The photos, however – regardless of the quality – don't tell us much about what it was like to be a fan at a Deadball Era game. Fortunately, however, the *Chicago Daily News* reporters who put together the "My Biggest Baseball Day" series, didn't leave out the fans. The fan memories, complemented by some players' comments, reveal a ballpark experience very different from today, especially the opportunity to be on the field, to take part in the game itself.

First of all, fans had to be able to attend a game, something we take for granted, although it wasn't so easy early in the twentieth century. Today, only a small percentage of games conflict with the average fan's work schedule. But during the Deadball Era, most games were played during regular working hours. The dilemma was even worse in the eastern United States, where there was

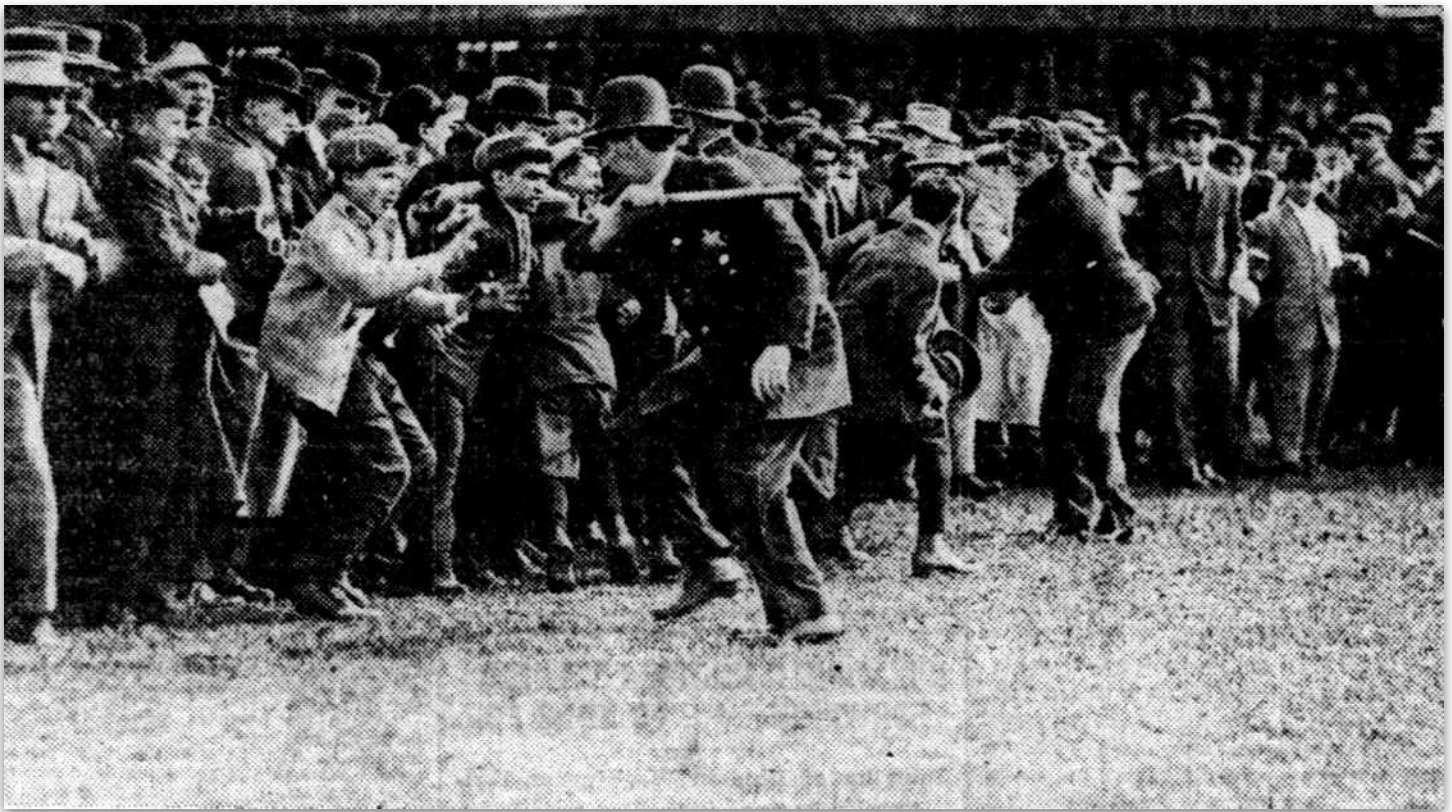
often no baseball played on the sabbath observing East, the only day most people had off from work. Thus, only those with some control of their work schedule could even consider attending, which effectively ruled out most working-class people.

Baseball fans, however, have never lacked for creativity. Witness the many grandmothers who conveniently "died" right before big games. When the 1909 Giants-Dodgers season opener was rained out, the *Standard Union* of Brooklyn observed that "there must have been a great many grandmothers' funerals postponed yesterday on account of wet grounds."<sup>1</sup>

*... many grandmothers ... conveniently "died" right before big games.*

Thomas Courtney, a 14-year-old student at St. Rita's High School in Chicago, faced just such a challenge before the first game of the 1911 Cub-White Sox postseason city series. Courtney, a future State Attorney for Cook County in Illinois, knew two stockyard workers who got off work in time to attend the game, but couldn't purchase tickets in advance. Pooling forces, the two men offered to pay Courtney's way in if he bought the tickets. The offer was too good to refuse, but Courtney was supposed to be in school. Sparing his grandmother, at least metaphorically, the young man opted to





Chicago Tribune, October 14, 1912

tell the truth to Father Egan, the head of the school, encouraged by knowing the priest was also a big baseball fan. In this case, honesty was rewarded as Father Egan “smiled and told me he didn’t see how he could deprive me of that opportunity.”<sup>2</sup>

The fortunate Courtney didn’t mention what he and his friends did before the game, but for some fans, supporting their team began even before they arrived at the ballpark. Charles Dougherty, another future Illinois State Attorney, remembered that it was customary for Cub fans to “escort” the hated Giants to the grounds. Since visiting teams typically dressed at their hotel, they were easily identified in their bus or automobiles. According to Dougherty, the fans hooted “at them [the Giants] from the sidewalks” while “yelling insults at Muggsy McGraw.”<sup>3</sup> Dougherty was only present because he had the good fortune to be a mail clerk at the American Express Company, one of the few Chicago businesses to give their employees Saturday afternoon off.<sup>4</sup>

As satisfying as it was to harass the opposition, hardened veterans like McGraw’s Giants were immune to verbal abuse, so the “hooting” and “insults” had no impact on the game itself. Once inside the grounds, however,

Deadball Era fans directly participated in the game in ways unthinkable today. Especially unique and historic was the part played by Pittsburgh Pirate rooters during the second game of the 1909 World Series. Hall of Fame umpire Billy Evans chose this, his first World Series game, as his most memorable day in baseball in the *Chicago Daily News* series.

*... it was customary for Cub fans to “escort” the hated Giants to the grounds.*

In the bottom of the first inning, Pittsburgh’s John “Dots” Miller hit a ball down the right field line. The ball was clearly fair, but Evans, umpiring at home plate, didn’t see whether it bounced into the stands in fair or foul territory. At the time, it mattered — a bounce into the stands in foul territory was a double, but if it landed in the fair stands it was a home run. Unfortunately, at the time, only two umpires worked World Series games, and Evan’s partner, Bill Klem, couldn’t help him. Not sure what to do, the two umpires, along with Detroit Manager Hughie Jennings and Pirates skipper Fred Clarke, walked towards the bleachers.<sup>5</sup> Prompted by a



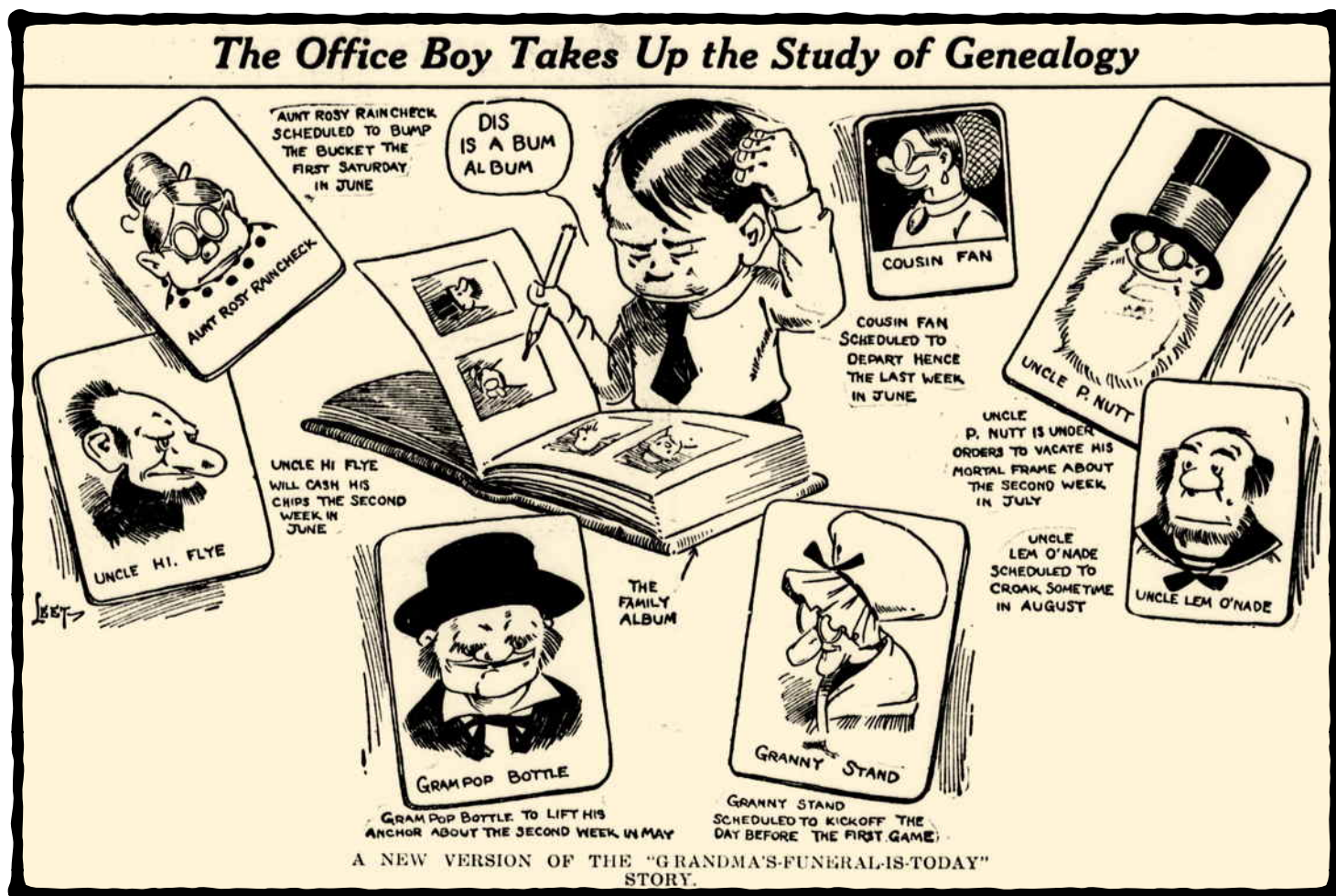
comment from Klem, Evans decided to ask the fans where the ball landed. The Pirate fans, including the man who caught it, said it landed in the foul bleachers and was only a double. Faced with eyewitness testimony from Pirate fans against his own team, Clarke was hard-pressed to argue, and Jennings wasn't about to complain. Not willing to press their luck with fan integrity, the National Commission immediately decided to use four umpires in future World Series games.<sup>6</sup>

This was admittedly a very unusual situation. Far more common were incidents of fans literally interfering with play, thanks to the owners' desire to maximize their profits by allowing fans to stand in the outfield behind ropes, which theoretically kept them from interfering with the game. Ticket sales were by far the club owners' most significant source of revenue at a time when seating capacity was limited, especially in the first decade of the twentieth century. (Westside Park in Chicago, for example, the home of the Chicago Cubs, could seat

only about 16,000.<sup>7</sup>) The idea was that the benefit of the additional ticket sales for standing room on the field outweighed the risk of fan interference. That could be managed with ground rules and a police presence.

However, what sounded good in theory didn't always work so well in practice, especially for the players. Describing an important 1907 game at Philadelphia's Shibe Park, Ty Cobb remembered that "There were fans, several rows deep, around the outfield, restrained by ropes and mounted police, and they weren't the least bit friendly."<sup>8</sup> Davy Jones, Cobb's teammate, could attest to the unfriendliness. In the bottom of the eleventh, "dozens of paper balls thrown by the fans," caused Jones to lose the real ball and allowed the Athletics to tie the game.<sup>9</sup> The number of missiles "fired" simultaneously, suggests this was not spontaneous, but a coordinated effort.

In telling the story of his "Biggest Baseball Day," Charles Dougherty gave a detailed description of the ways fans



by Frank Leet

Spokane Press, March 16, 1910

in the roped off sections interfered with a game. Perhaps not surprisingly, it came in the middle of a Cubs – Giants game, a rivalry where passions always ran high, on August 17, 1912, at Chicago’s Westside Park. New York was in first place, but Chicago had closed to within six games as the season wore on, so the contest was important to both teams. While crowd estimates are notoriously inaccurate, Dougherty quoted reports by some observers that 8,000 fans were on the field behind the ropes.<sup>10</sup>

Unwilling to stand there and passively hoping their team would win, Dougherty and the other fans “would press back against the outfield walls” to give the Chicago outfielders more room when the Giants were at bat.<sup>11</sup> However, when the Cubs came to the plate, the crowd edged “halfway to second base,” or that’s how Dougherty remembered it many years later. Even if they didn’t get that close, the fans tried to help the Cubs by tripping the Giant outfielders or throwing their caps in the air to confuse them on fly balls.<sup>12</sup>

*“Somehow ... the Red Sea didn’t open up for him ...”*

John McGraw’s Giants wouldn’t tolerate interference from the Cubs fans. Dougherty claimed Giant center fielder “Beals” Becker spit tobacco juice at them and threatened that “The next ball that comes back in there I’m going to cut you to pieces with my spikes.”<sup>13</sup> Not the least intimidated, the fans dared him to try. However, in the seventh, when Becker came in “feet kicking high,” the fans in his path wisely chose discretion and backed away, enabling the Giant outfielder to make the catch.<sup>14</sup> Two innings later, in the bottom of the ninth, the fans not only got their revenge, but helped the Cubs tie the

game by preventing Becker from reaching a fly ball. Over 30 years later, Dougherty claimed he could “hear yet the ragging we gave Becker and how he snarled and spit at us.”<sup>15</sup>

As the game went to the 11th, the Chicago fans were ready to help their team win. First, they “made a path for [center fielder Tommy] Leach” so he could catch Buck Herzog’s fly and keep the Giants off the score-

### **FOUL METHOD WAS EMPLOYED**

#### **CHICAGO CUB ROOTER THREW REFLECTOR IN PIRATE PLAYERS’ EYES WHILE AT BAT**

#### **KONETCHY DISCOVERED TRICK IN FOURTH INNING AND A POLICEMAN WENT AFTER DISTURBER**

CHICAGO—What certain persons connected with the Pittsburg club believe was a deliberate attempt to win a game by foul means was discovered in the fourth inning of a recent game between the Cubs and Pirates here. No charges are made and officials of the Chicago club insist that they had no cognizance of what was going on.

Several of the Pirates had complained that when they were at bat they could not see the ball—that the sun dazzled their eyes. Manager Clarke, believing that this was mere imagination, that Lavender’s speed and curves were responsible, pooh-poohed the idea of too much sun and insisted on his players sticking in and trying to hit. While Konetchy was at bat in the fourth inning he caught a flash of something bright from the top of a towerlike arrangement erected just outside the right field fence. This tower was put up by some thrifty citizen who charged 10 cents a head to persons desiring a cheap peep at the game.

Konetchy at once called Umpire Klem’s attention to the bright object and Bill halted the game. Officials of the Chicago club were ordered to investigate and a polled officer was sent to the top of the tower. There he found a man with a large mirror, which, according to the statement of others in the stand, had been put into use every time a Pittsburg batter came up.

### **PLAYING UNDER ASSUMED NAMES, BROOKLYN AND EASTON TEST SUNDAY LAW**

Brooklyn—Disguised as the Ridgewood A.C. and the Easton A.C., merely to test the Sunday law, Brooklyn of the Atlantic League was defeated by Easton yesterday at Meyerrose Park by the score of 9 to 6. ...

*Reading (Pennsylvania) Eagle, July 22, 1907*

*Youngstown Vindicator, May 4, 1914*



board.<sup>16</sup> With a chance to win the game, in the bottom of the inning, Johnny Evers hit one into the crowd in right field. "Somehow," Dougherty noted factiously, "the Red Sea didn't open up for him [the Giants' Red Murray], and he lost the ball."<sup>17</sup> The next batter drove in the winning run, sending Dougherty and the rest of the crowd into a frenzy. The fans had plenty of reasons to celebrate. Not only did their team win a dramatic victory, but they had also helped them do it. It's no wonder Dougherty recalled, "It was pretty late that evening before I remembered that there was such a thing as supper."<sup>18</sup> Perhaps on this occasion, even the strictest parents understood.

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2. Thomas J. Courtney as told to Hal Totten, "My Biggest Baseball Day," *Chicago Daily News*, February 26, 1943, 27.
3. Charles S. Dougherty as told to Lloyd Lewis, "My Biggest Baseball Day," *Chicago Daily News*, March 20, 1943, 19.
4. Dougherty, *Chicago Daily News*, March 20, 1943, 19.
5. Billy Evans as told to Lyall Smith, "My Greatest Baseball Day," *Chicago Daily News*, January 23, 1950, 21.
6. Evans, *Chicago Daily News*, January 26, 1950, 21.
7. Ronald M. Selter, *Ballparks of the Deadball Era: A Comprehensive Study of Their Dimensions, Configurations and Effects on Batting, 1901-1919*, (Jefferson, North Carolina, McFarland & Co, 2008), 48.
8. Ty Cobb as told to Francis J. Powers, *My Greatest Day in Baseball*, (New York, New York, A. S. Barnes & Co, 1945), 17.
9. Davy Jones as told to Ed Roeser, "My Greatest Baseball Day," *Chicago Daily News*, January 26, 1950, 37.
10. Dougherty, *Chicago Daily News*, March 20, 1943, 19.
11. Dougherty, *Chicago Daily News*, March 20, 1943, 19.
12. Dougherty, *Chicago Daily News*, March 20, 1943, 19.
13. Dougherty, *Chicago Daily News*, March 20, 1943, 19.
14. Dougherty, *Chicago Daily News*, March 20, 1943, 19.
15. Dougherty, *Chicago Daily News*, March 20, 1943, 19.
16. Dougherty, *Chicago Daily News*, March 20, 1943, 19.
17. Dougherty, *Chicago Daily News*, March 20, 1943, 19.
18. Dougherty, *Chicago Daily News*, March 20, 1943, 19.

#### BAUGH WANTS RULES OBEYED

##### IN LETTER TO UMPIRES LEAGUE HEAD TAKES DEFINITE STAND REGARDING COACHING

President Robert H. Baugh [of the Southern League] took a definite stand on the Kircher matter yesterday when he issued a letter to the managers, club presidents and umpires of the league to adhere strictly to the rules of the game in regards to coaching from the baselines. This means that Comedian George Kircher of Nashville is to be permanently squelched.

According to President Baugh recent games have assumed a vaudeville appearance and such affairs must be eliminated at once. The president is determined that no buffoonery or anything resembling burlesque be permitted to interfere with the progress of the game, and his letter is very definite regarding that point.

*Birmingham Age-Herald June 1, 1915*

#### BREAK ALL RECORDS FOR SLOW BASEBALL

##### LOS ANGELES AND OAKLAND STRUGGLE FOR 2 HOURS AND 35 MINUTES

OAKLAND—Los Angeles and Oakland made a record on the Freeman park diamond this afternoon and evening by engaging in the longest baseball battle of the season — 2 hours and 35 minutes. It was 4 o'clock and daylight when Umpire Perrine ordered all hands to play ball. It was 25 minutes to 7 and dusk when Heine Heitmuller was trapped off second on the windup end of a double play, Carlisle to Bernard. Even Brick Devereaux chafed at the long drawn out contest, as it prevented him getting home in time to milk the old brindle cow and lock up his chickens from the neighbor's cats.

[...]

*San Francisco Call, May 15, 1907*

Robert Edgren  
(New York) *Evening World*,  
April 5, 1911



## TIMOTHY CARROLL HURST: AN UMPIRE'S UMPIRE

by David Nemec

Tim Hurst defended his profession as an umpire by saying, "The pay is good, and you can't beat the hours—three to five." The pay was decent but nothing extraordinary, around \$1,500, and Hurst would rather have been a player or a manager. Yet, for a hot-tempered Irishman from a coal mining family who stood only 5'5" and weighed less than 150 pounds but was quick-witted and fast with his fists, it was the ideal venue in the 1890s. Indeed, he was perhaps the only arbiter that did not bewail the failure of the 1898 Brush Resolution to improve an umpire's lot. That year John T. Brush, Cincinnati's owner, persuaded his colleagues to endorse a 21-point program or "purification plan" to do away with the maltreatment of National League umpires by players. Expulsion for "villainously foul language" and umpire bullying were at the heart of the resolution. The plan was soon abandoned when players refused to testify against fellow players accused of conduct breaches and no cases ever reached the appointed discipline board. But the resolution was a necessary first step in raising the public consciousness about the plight of umpires and paved the way for tougher reforms in the years ahead that ironically would make Hurst their first significant victim.

Hurst was born in Ashland, Pennsylvania, on June 30, 1865. To escape the Pennsylvania coal mines of his locale, he eked out a living as a "long distance pedestrian" (race walker) in the 1880s and tried pitching in the minors. He turned to umpiring after his arm failed and worked in several minor leagues, including the Pennsylvania State League in 1888 and both the Southern League and Western Association in 1889, before landing a job as manager of the Minneapolis WA club in 1890. That year Hurst nearly drove his team to the Western Association pennant but alarmed players when he punched out the Millers' illiterate star pitcher, Martin Duke, in the clubhouse for insubordination and was replaced as the team's skipper by Sam Morton.

National League president Nick Young viewed the fracas from a different perspective, however, and appointed



TIM HURST

the rough-and-tumble 25-year-old bantamweight to his regular umpiring staff for 1891. Hurst lasted until August 1892 before he was fired for clashing once too often with Cincinnati player-manager Charlie Comiskey, a notorious complainer who always had Young's ear. He was then rehired the following spring when Young ran short of qualified replacements. By 1894 Hurst was viewed as the toughest umpire in the league, if not necessarily the most competent. Although never the aggressor in a confrontation with a player or a manager, Hurst was a ferocious retaliator. Famed for using his fists, he was just as lethal verbally. After clashing with a player, Hurst would rag on him unmercifully the next time he came to bat, addressing all of his derogatory remarks to the opposing catcher as if the offending player were not even there. It became his defining practice not to issue fines on the assumption that management would pay them for the miscreant. He relied instead on his own perverse brand of psychology to keep order: finding a kicking player's mortal weakness and then digging at him until he fell into line.

After umpiring all four games of the first Temple Cup series in 1894, Hurst was fired a second time when he would not give up moonlighting as a prizefight referee, ostensibly to supplement his income but more because

he loved any sports related job that made him the lone arbiter. On the eve of the 1895 season, he was slated to be rehired after veteran umpire Jack McQuaid died but started the campaign in the minor Eastern League instead after complaining that there was too much politicking in the majors. But he agreed to return to the NL at the end of August in time to officiate again in the Temple Cup series.

On July 6, 1896, Hurst was embroiled in the first of his three most infamous signature incidents as a major league official. Late that afternoon he flattened both Pittsburgh pitcher Pink Hawley and a teammate, outfielder Jake Stenzel, with single punches to the jaw when the two Pirates invited him to meet them under the stands in Boundary Field after a 6-2 Pittsburgh loss to Washington that was contaminated by a string of frenzied disputes.

The following year, in the second game of an August 4 doubleheader at Cincinnati's League Park II, Hurst fired a beer schooner that had been thrown at him back into the stands and injured a spectator. When the angry Queen City crowd surged onto the field to retaliate, he needed police protection to get safely out of the park and then was promptly arrested for assault and battery. Upon returning to Cincinnati several days later for trial, Hurst told his side of the story, which appeared in the September 4, 1897, *The Sporting News*. He contended that in truth several schooners had been thrown at him and the one he flung back struck the spectator who had initiated the confrontation. He then declared the schooner throwing had been a plot to get him out of the game so that Red Bittman, Cincinnati's designated substitute umpire and a notorious "homer," could officiate, Hurst noted that no sooner had Pittsburgh scored six

runs in the top of the seventh inning to go ahead 10-4 than Bittman called the game on account of darkness so that the score would revert to a 4-4 tie. Despite considerable documented support for his version of events, Hurst was fined \$100 and costs. Unruffled, he boldly returned to the Cincinnati park that same afternoon as per his scheduled appearance by the league and umpired a game between the Reds and Browns without further incident.

Nevertheless, Hurst expected Nick Young to fire him after the 1897 season but was unperturbed since he was frugal and had independent means. That December, he outfoxed Young when he agreed to manage the St. Louis Browns, the owners of an abysmal .221 winning percentage the previous season. Under Hurst's fiery hand the Browns improved, but only marginally, and he was let go when it grew apparent that syndicate ownership would take over the club and install Cleveland's Pat Tebeau at the St. Louis helm.

Hurst sat out the 1899 season after *The Sporting News* reported on April 1, 1899, that "his bank roll is sufficient to enable a year or two of rest" but was rehired by Young for 1900 after Reds owner Brush and Giants owner Andrew Freedman prevailed on the NL president to ignore the league mandate that umpires work an equal number of games involving all eight teams and instead draw up a schedule that precluded Hurst from ever appearing that season in either Cincinnati or New York. Hurst was unaware at first of his conditional reinstatement. Disgusted when there was no response from the NL brass to the fictitious J. Pollywog Smith's scathing sally in the May 5, 1900 issue of *The Sporting News*: "The truth is mighty and will prevail, and with sadness and purely unprejudiced I assert that the N. L. must get a successor to Mr. Young — and get him quick." Hurst quit umpiring again to referee fights and stage six-day bicycle races and other sports in conjunction with two of the most fabled promoters of their time, Pat Powers and Jim Kennedy, the latter of whom he had first met in the 1880s as a participant in a six-day "go-as-you-please" race Kennedy had orchestrated.

After Young was finally ousted from office, Hurst returned to umpiring in the National League, working the

#### **FEDERAL UMPIRE FINED**

CHICAGO—James A. Gilmore, president of the Federal league, who returned yesterday from Buffalo, announced that he had fined Mr. Anderson, umpire, \$50 for violating a rule which provides that old balls must be kept in play as long as possible. Anderson, it was charged by Kansas City players, in a recent game kept throwing new balls on the field.

*(New London, Connecticut) Day, July 1, 1914*



last two months of the 1903 season and a single contest in 1904 before joining the regular American League staff in August 1905. But the atmosphere surrounding the game had changed dramatically. After Hurst flattened New York manager Clark Griffith in 1906, AL president Ban Johnson suspended him for five days. Three years later Hurst was summarily fired when he spat in the eye of Philadelphia second baseman Eddie Collins and then deliberately spiked him in the course of an argument during a doubleheader between the A's and White Sox on August 3, 1909. Hurst had of course previously wreaked far greater havoc on numerous other players and managers, but in the Ivy Leaguer Collins he picked the wrong man. The A's second sacker's sanctified lily white image had been so sullied in Johnson's estimation that Hurst was history as a major league umpire by that evening.

Hurst resumed working as a sports promoter and referee while living at the Hotel Bartholdi in Manhattan. When a wrecking crew started to demolish the hotel, Hurst was the last to leave the building, refusing to give up his room until several days after the wreckers began work. Afterward he moved to Far Rockaway and became active in real estate now that interest in his sort of sports promotions was fading. He died at age 49 in Minersville, Pennsylvania (where he had traveled to attend a relative's funeral) at the home of his cousin, ex-sheriff John Toole. The cause of death was a case of ptomaine poisoning that was not regarded as serious until Hurst suffered a violent seizure just minutes before expiring.

Little is known of Hurst's personal life. His lengthy *New York Times* obituary of June 4, 1915, revealingly stated: "Off the field he had the appearance when alone of being morose and dejected. But in a crowd Hurst was the life of the party. He had an unending supply of droll stories — true experiences with his own witty coloring — and few could tell a story better than Tim Hurst." *The Times* made it a special point in recounting his time as an umpire and sports promoter that his honesty was never questioned "although he had functioned as judge of many contests of various kinds in which large sums of money changed hands. His word was his bond in business matters... In base ball circles, in fact, in all sporting

circles Hurst was extremely popular. His peculiarities were overshadowed by his sterling qualities as a man."

Few umpires, if any, have received so glowing a tribute in their obituaries. Included are Hall of Famers such as Tommy Connolly, a Hurst discovery while the future American League umpire in chief was an amateur official in the new England area.

#### PLAYERS MAY QUIT WITHOUT PENALTY

CINCINNATI—Sure a ball player may quit the business without being placed on the National Commission blacklist. Some weeks ago when the National commission adopted a rule by which a five years' suspension was saddled on the chap who jumped his contract, with a three-year banishment for him who violated his reserve clause, it looked as if the Supreme Court of Baseball was becoming almighty autocratic and was handing out quinces to men who might want to quit the business.

With this idea in his mind, President Murphy of the Chicago Cubs decided to give Johnny Kling, his recalcitrant catcher, indefinite leave of absence rather than run a chance of having him marooned for a term of five years. Then Murphy told Chairman Herrmann of the National Commission what he had done.

"That was entirely unnecessary," said Chairman Herrmann, "as this rule doesn't apply to Kling, so long as he remains away from outlaw leagues. The rule was passed to prevent players from aiding the clubs that are fighting organized baseball. It is directed against such men as Stricklett of Brooklyn, and a few others who have jumped from the National agreement to outlaw clubs.

"The baseball public would not stand for the blacklisting of players who might decide to retire from the game and did nothing that was hurtful to organized baseball. Do you suppose that baseball would gain in popularity if a man like Fielder Jones, the retiring manager of the White Sox, were blacklisted because he felt like giving up baseball in order to go into some other business. Not much. And Kling and Bob Spade are in the same boat. There's no severe penalty attached to an act such as Kling and Spade are following."

*Pittsburg Press, May 1, 1909*

## ALFRED STEVEN MANNASSAU: THE FORGOTTEN ENFORCER

by David Nemec

A promising minor league outfielder in the late 1880s and early 1890s, Mannassau was born in Detroit on December 18, 1867, and remained a lifelong Detroit resident but worked winters as a pressman in Hastings, Michigan, while engaged in baseball-related summer jobs. He was 5' 10" and weighed 170 pounds and was so fast that he often scored from second base via passed balls.

Mannassau debuted in 1887 at age 19 with Greenville of the loosely formed North Michigan League and hit .393, but that stat was vastly inflated because the league counted walks as hits as per the rule in 1887, and the figure was never recalculated with walks discounted. In the remaining eight seasons of his playing career, he never hit above .271. After playing with four Western League teams in 1894 and failing to impress any of them with anything but his baserunning, he ended the season as a WL umpire. In 1895, Mannassau returned to the Pacific Northwest League, where he had played in 1892, intending to join Tacoma, but then reported to Petersburg of the Virginia League instead. Soon thereafter he became a regular Western League umpire and was the only official in the loop that did not use an indicator, preferring to rely solely on his memory.

Handicapped initially in his officiating progress by a short fuse, Mannassau gained everlasting distinction from rules authorities for a decision in a Western League game at Indianapolis on June 11, 1899. In the bottom of the ninth inning, St. Paul pitcher Chauncey Fisher, after squandering an 11-5 lead, found himself trailing the Hoosiers, 12-11. Facing pitcher Doc Newton, Fisher singled to bring home teammate Frank Shugart with the tying run and move his catcher, Harry Spies, to third. Eddie Burke then lined a single to center to plate Spies with the apparent game-winning run. Before running to second, however, Fisher paused to congratulate Burke for his hit, and Indianapolis centerfielder George Hogriever immediately sprinted to second and appealed to Mannassau. Mannassau ruled that by tagging the second-base bag Hogriever had forced out Fisher and prevented the winning run, but by then the crowd had



(Philadelphia) Evening Public Ledger, April 2, 1915

flooded the field and players from both teams had left the diamond, believing St Paul had won the game. When Mannassau could not restore play, the final score was ruled to be 12-12.

Mannassau's eye-opening decision was subsequently protested by St. Paul manager Charlie Comiskey, but one Briggs, *The Sporting News's* St. Paul correspondent who witnessed the game, said Fisher's maneuver "was a chump play and I think there is no doubt but what the umpire's decision will be upheld." Given the fact that *The Sporting News* in that era was read from cover to cover by players, managers, umpires and fans at every level of the game, one can only marvel more than a century later how nine more years could have elapsed before a similar play and ruling occurred in a major league contest (the legendary 1908 Merkle game between the Cubs and the Giants) and only then did a mandatory touch of the next base by every baserunner become a fixed rule before a winning run could be endorsed.

Just weeks afterward, Mannassau was commemorated again when National League president Nick Young bought him from the WL for \$350 plus umpire Jack

Brennan, making him part of the first umpire trade in history between a major and minor league. He finished the 1899 season in the NL but was not invited to return when the league shrank from twelve to eight teams in 1900. Mannassau began the 1901 campaign as a regular American League umpire — and in his hometown to boot — when he joined Jack Sheridan in officiating the initial major league contest in Detroit's Bennett Park, named after former catcher Charlie Bennett, by then a double-leg amputee after a train mishap. His quick temper made him prey, however, for Baltimore player-manager John McGraw. In a series at Chicago near the end of May, according to the June 1, 1901, *The Sporting News*, Mannassau fined Orioles outfielder Mike Donlin \$25 for calling him a "lobster" and faced accusations from McGraw ever afterward of being a "homer" that gave all close decisions to the home team to avoid the ire of fans.

In mid-August 1901, Mannassau grew disillusioned and quit after AL president Ban Johnson handed Milwaukee player-manager Hugh Duffy just a brief suspension for slugging him on August 6 after he called a fly ball that nicked the foul line fair. Having worked under Johnson in 1899 when he was backed for his St. Paul decision, he felt he deserved better. Some 13 years later he returned to the majors for one last time as a regular umpire in the Federal League's initial season as a major loop and achieved a final MLB distinction when he and Garnet Bush worked the inaugural FL game at Baltimore's Terapin Park on April 13, 1914. That tumultuous season was his last known brush with Organized Baseball. He was still living in Detroit when he died on October 13, 1933.

**WITH APOLOGIES  
(BY ANY UMPIRE)**

The melancholy days have come — the saddest of the year;  
When bottles hurtle past the bean and curses soak the ear;  
When even politicians as they ply their bally muss  
Are pointed out as honest in comparison to us.

(Philadelphia) *Evening Public Ledger*, April 2, 1915

**HOFMAN AWARDED SALARY  
AS MEMBER OF CUBS IN 1912**

**CHICAGO NATIONAL LEAGUE CLUB  
MUST PAY THE FORMER OUTFIELDER  
\$2,944 ON CONTRACT**

By direction of a jury Artie Hofman, former outfielder for the Chicago Cubs, was awarded \$2,944.47, which he asked as back salary from the owners of the Cubs on his 1912 contract. [...]

Hofman testified that he held a contract of \$5,000 for the season of April 1 to Oct. 15, 1912. The contract, signed by Charles W. Murphy, then president of the club, was introduced into evidence. A letter signed by Murphy announcing that he had been released to Pittsburgh June 30, 1912, also was introduced by the plaintiff.

"I had a contract with the Chicago club calling for \$5,000," Hoffman testified. "On June 1 I was struck in the head with a ball and injured. The injury interfered with my playing and on June 30, I received a letter from Mr. Murphy informing me that I had been disposed of to Pittsburgh.

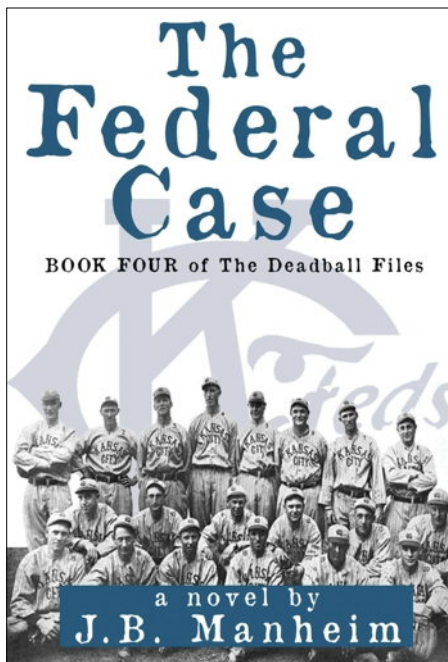
"After only a few weeks with Pittsburgh I was let out and all I obtained from Pittsburgh was \$694.47. When I demanded payment of the remainder of the amount called for in my contract with the Chicago club Mr. Murphy told me I would have to look to Pittsburgh for my salary."

*Chicago Tribune*, June 10, 1914

**MAKES TRIPLE PLAY  
WITHOUT ANY HELP**

HOUSTON, TEX.—Roy Aiken, third baseman of the Waco club of the Texas league, retired the Houston team in the first inning of [yesterday's] game with a triple play unassisted. With runners on second and third bases the Houston batsman bunted for a "squeeze play." He bunted the ball high. The runner from third raced toward home and the man at second base came to third, but Aiken caught the bunt, tagged the man from second and touched third base before the man who attempted to score could get back.

*Salt Lake Tribune*, May 10, 1912



## THE FEDERAL CASE

by J. B. Manheim

2023, Sunbury Press

[ISBN: 979-8888191262. 219 pp.]

\$19.95 USD. Softcover]

reviewed by **Jacob Sayward**

✉ [jacobsayward@gmail.com](mailto:jacobsayward@gmail.com)

*The Federal Case* is the fourth title in the Deadball Files, a series of baseball-themed novels by J.B. Manheim. The first book in this series was reviewed several years ago by Stew Thornley in this newsletter. The novels feature a lot of historical figures mixed with invented characters in a plot that jumps between the early twentieth century and a more present day setting.

The lead character from *The Federal Case* is Andy Dennum, a new attorney from North Jersey who uncovers clues in a tangled mystery involving legal actions between the upstart Federal League and the American League/National League duopoly from a hundred years earlier. In the first third of the novel, passages strictly alternate between sections set in the Federal League era and sections from Andy's life a hundred years later. The earlier narrative allows the reader to witness AL President Ban Johnson and other figures as they pursue strategies to undermine the Federal League—in the process producing incriminating documents that Andy

will uncover a century later. These documents serve as the initial clues for the mystery Andy will attempt to solve, and the story of their origin provides background and context for the reader who needs some refreshers or specifics about baseball during the initial decades of the twentieth century.

These passages alternate with Andy's sections, where he navigates major life changes while trying to piece together the story behind these documents. Along the way, he meets new colleagues and a love interest. Within the story, these characters aid Andy in his quest, and with their limited knowledge of baseball history, also serve as a pretext for Andy to explain relevant details of the sport's past. It is not an original literary device to provide the necessary context, but it is an effective one.

As the book progresses, the historical passages eventually yield completely to the modern timeline. After Andy uncovers enough of the mystery behind the old documents and Johnson's actions to determine a wrong has occurred and must be righted, Andy files a lawsuit against the modern baseball establishment. Ban Johnson's role in the story fades only to be replaced by a fictional modern MLB commissioner, who serves as Andy's biggest antagonist in this fight. This commissioner, a somewhat comical villain character, could be described as hapless or inept depending on how harsh one wants to judge him.

Some twists in Andy's journey may provoke an eyeroll or two from more skeptical readers. Connections with the Spanish Flu or the Negro Leagues may seem gratuitously shoehorned into the story. A late-arriving personal connection between Andy and the Federal League's demise could be the most egregious of these

### VIRTUAL BOOK TALK

Please join us for our next Deadball Era Book Talk virtual meeting at 8:00 p.m. EDT on Monday, March 11, 2024. Our guest is Dennis Snelling, author of *Johnny Evers: A Baseball Life*; *Lefty O'Doul: Baseball's Forgotten Ambassador*; and *The Greatest Minor League: A History of the Pacific Coast League, 1903–1957*. *Johnny Evers* was a finalist for the Seymour Medal, and *Lefty O'Doul* was a Casey Award finalist.

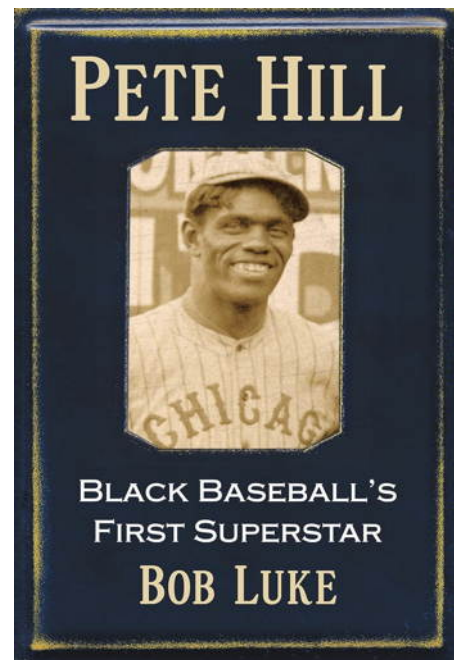


stretches if one also considers Charles Dickens' use of similar coincidences egregious. This revelation at least serves the story by putting Andy even more firmly in position to extract his own preferred remedy for baseball's century-old sins. Andy's goal for the lawsuit is a sympathetic one, even if the eventual result is a far-fetched one in our more cynical real world.

Less farfetched are the lengths Ban Johnson and others would go to defeat their baseball rivals... in this case, the Federal League. Although the nature of this type of historical fiction is that the author will invent many details, including the specific episode leading to the uncovered documents that drive this story, Manheim's invention of one such effort of sabotage on Johnson's part rings true because so many real schemes of Johnson's are documented and well-known (at least to the audience of a newsletter on the Deadball Era).

Coincidences, idealism, and tidy plotting do not undermine the satisfying conclusion of the story, but one other minor element near the end comes close. With few pages remaining, Manheim introduces a former close colleague of the commissioner, seemingly intending this confidante to play an impactful role on the commissioner's actions and the story's subsequent resolution. The weight of this relationship is unexplored, and it is obvious that the reader would need to have read one or more earlier books in this series to fully grasp it. This is the only point in the story where I missed something for not having read the rest of the series. Otherwise, this book was quite enjoyable as a monograph in isolation. I caught no obvious mistakes in Manheim's history of baseball (beyond the invented details), and the baseball elements are satisfying due to their familiarity (not because they are revelatory). A fifth book in this Deadball Files series was released in December 2023, and *The Federal Case* proved enjoyable enough that I am likely to read this follow-up soon.

*Jacob Sayward is a librarian at the University of Minnesota Law School. He has been a member of SABR's Halsey Hall chapter since 2023, when he moved to the Twin Cities.*



## **PETE HILL: BLACK BASEBALL'S FIRST SUPERSTAR**

by **Bob Luke**

2023, McFarland

[ISBN 978-1476688770. 226 pp.]

\$35.00 USD. Softcover]

reviewed by **Rich Arpi**

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Bob Luke has done a masterful job in introducing baseball fans to the life and baseball career of John Preston "Pete" Hill. One of the long-forgotten stars of early Black baseball, Hill was one of seventeen Negro League stars inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2006. As famous as Hill was at the time by Black baseball historians, his name often provoked the response, of "Who was he?" by the average fan. I admit I knew very little about Pete Hill before reading this book. More generally, the book documents and explores the challenges faced by early Black baseball pioneers and African Americans in general.

While Luke's book is a thin volume of 226 pages, it is well researched, an easy read, and covers Hill's baseball career and life comprehensively. It contains photographs throughout the text, a table of contents, acknowledgements, chapter notes, a bibliography, and an index. As a result, the main body of the book that includes the

## PUBLISHER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As always, copies of the books reviewed in this issue were generously supplied by their publishers. Sunbury Press publishes *The Federal Case* and it can be ordered at [sunburypress.com/products/the-federal-case](http://sunburypress.com/products/the-federal-case). *Pete Hill: Black Baseball's First Superstar*, can be obtained from McFarland, a longstanding and generous benefactor of this magazine, at [mcfarlandbooks.com/product/pete-hill](http://mcfarlandbooks.com/product/pete-hill). Your patronage is appreciated.

preface, introduction, fourteen chapters, and the epilogue contains only 177 pages.

Despite its length, this is an important contribution to the history of early Black baseball. Luke does a herculean job of tracking down Hill's birthplace, family history, real name, and grave site. His original Hall of Fame plaque had him as "Joseph Preston Hill," which has since been corrected to "John Preston Hill." Pete Hill lived from 1882 to 1951, and his playing career spanned 1899 through 1925. That Hill played the bulk of his career before the formation of the formalized Negro Leagues accounts for some of his obscurity.

Luke does an excellent job in piecing together Hill's early years and his playing career, spent largely in Chicago, Detroit, Baltimore, Buffalo, California, and Cuba. A left-handed batter who sprayed the ball to all fields, covered centerfield like a tarp, and ran the bases with abandon, Hill must have been a marvelous player to watch. He was captain of the Chicago American Giants during the 1910s and later player-manager for the Detroit Stars and Baltimore Black Sox. Before reading this book, I had never heard of Mack Park in Detroit and Schorling Park in Chicago, two of the principal ballparks where Hill played.

Four of the chapters do not deal exclusively with baseball: Riots and the Noble Experiment, Racial Conflict on and off the Field, The Spanish Flu, and President Wilson and the Suffragists. However, they put Hill's life and times in perspective and should not be ignored by the reader.

The book suffers a bit from a lack of quotes or interviews with Hill that reveal his thoughts and personality.

To be fair, Luke may have found all existing documentation. Recreating a person's life, particularly an African American from early in the twentieth century, where the evidentiary trail can be extremely limited, is challenging. Among other things, I would like to know some the details and demeanor of the conversations between Rube Foster and Pete Hill. We may never know. We should all appreciate Bob Luke's efforts in bringing Pete Hill's biography to the baseball public.

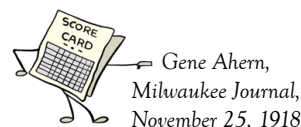
*Rich Arpi is a reference librarian and archival cataloger for the Ramsey County Historical Society in St. Paul, Minnesota. He has been a SABR member since 1982 and is an active member in Minnesota's Halsey Hall Chapter giving numerous presentations on Minnesota baseball history over the years.*

### NAPS SEEK LARRY THEIR DOG MASCOT THROUGH COURTS

CLEVELAND, O.—It all depends on Municipal Justice Marrow whether or not the Cleveland American league baseball club will finish well up in the pennant race. On a decision which Justice Marrow renders today hangs the hopes of some 20,000 Cleveland baseball fans and the entire membership of Lajoie's band. At least that's the way the Naps look at it. Here's the yarn, mates.

"Larry," a precocious bull terrier, up to a few days ago was a member of the Cleveland team. All the games won by Cleveland this year have been attributed solely and wholly to "Larry." All the defeats of the Naps have been attributed to "Larry's" absence from the Naps' ranks when "Larry" was "arrested." "Larry" has been the Naps' mascot. Prince Hunley, a colored porter extraordinary at a local hotel exclaimed that "Larry" was his, and he had "Larry" arrested as a recalcitrant child. The dog spent a day in jail when first attacked and the Naps lost to Chicago that day 13 to 3. Jack Graney, Cleveland outfielder, says the dog belongs to him and Graney's claim looked good at the start of today's hearing when "Larry" nearly broke away from a court attendant every time Graney snapped his fingers at him.

*Detroit Times, May 14, 1913*



## GAMES/BioPROJECT

The SABR Games Project has been active since *The Inside Game* last appeared. Recently published game accounts have included: Rocky Mount pitcher Jim Thorpe defeats Wilmington in the Eastern Carolina League (July 14, 1909); the official scorer reverses decision, giving Giants rookie Jeff Tesreau a no-hitter, (September 6, 1912); Cicotte, White Sox turn back Boston as Black Sox Scandal brews (September 19, 1919); Red Sox, Athletics tie for second day in a row (April 22, 1914); and Luis Bustamante and the Cuban Stars visit northern Ohio (June 14-17). 1907.

Meanwhile, BioPROJECT has added articles on the following individuals: Jack Ferry; Roy "Hardrock" Johnson; Carl East; Otis Johnson; William Parson; George Disch; Clarence Eldridge; Pat Griffin; Joe "Germany" Schultz Sr; and Cark Thompson.

Please give these a look if you have not yet done so. The editors of *The Inside Game* are always interested in encouraging new authors and note that many first try their hand writing for these valuable projects.

## NEW DEADBALL ERA COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*The Inside Game* is pleased to welcome to the committee the following SABR members who have expressed interest in the Deadball Era:

Chris Beneke  
Samantha Boelter  
Albert DiMicco  
Ray Fonio  
Jason Hendricks  
Steve Hild

William J. Hizny  
David Huthmaker  
Julian Keifetz  
Rocco A. Misite  
Mark Neuman  
Tyson M. Stolte

We look forward to their active participation in committee endeavors. These new committee members, as well as our newsletter contributors, can be contacted via the SABR directory.

Emil Richter, a young twirler of the Chicago Cubs, has been sold to Louisville of the American Association. Richter was let go under an agreement whereby he may be reclaimed by the Cubs in August if wanted.

(New York) Evening World, April 4, 1912

## OUTLAW LEAGUE WILL RETALIATE

### AROUSED OVER SWIPING OF ALTIZER BY WASHINGTON AMERICANS, TRI-STATE PLANS CAMPAIGN AGAINST MAJOR LEAGUE CLUBS

### MONEY RAISED FOR "GET-EVEN" FUND

LANCASTER. PA.—The jumping of Shortstop Dave Altizer, of the local Tri-State Club, to the Washington American League team has proven the entering wedge of what from this time forward will be an active war against the big leagues by the "outlaw" magnates, who are willing to spend any amount of money in the retaliation process.

Jake Stahl, manager of the Washington team, came here for the purpose of getting other of the local players to jump their contract's and go to Washington. The first man approached was Cy Barger. The twirler who has won 10 successive games. The bait offered, it is understood, was \$400 a month. For the present, however, the elongated slab artist has turned Stahl's offer down, the local club promptly meeting Barger's terms.

Others wanted by Stahl, it is stated, are First Baseman Jack Deal and Outfielder Pat Dougherty, who jumped the New York Americans to come here.

When the directors of the local club learned of Stahl's presence in the city they called on him and indulged in some pretty strong talk. Altizer, it is said, left here owing the club considerable money, and Stahl was notified that this would have to be returned. If this is refused an injunction will be taken out preventing Altizer from playing in Pennsylvania. Stahl stated that Altizer's release from the Springfield (Mass.) club cost \$1,500.

The Tri-State managers will retaliate, and Billy Hamilton, of Harrisburg, has been put on the trail with instructions to spend any amount of money to bring good men home, no matter where he gets them, and he is not to return until he can improve his team with what he brings. Lancaster put up her share of the "get-even" fund.

Pittsburg Press, June 4, 1906

## THE QUESTION OF THE HOUR

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I met a politician who was tearing out his hair  
And scaring little children with a weird and awful stare.  
“Cheer up!” I cried. “A man like you ought not go plumb daft  
About this vilifying match between T. R. and Taft.  
Perhaps they both are right; who knows?” He swallowed down a  
sob,  
And said, “I’d slugged that fan myself if I was Ole Ty Cobb.”

I met a U. S. senator who wore a troubled air.  
Whose every gesture as he walked betokened dumb despair.  
“Great sir,” I said, “what bows year head? Deep thoughts upon the  
tariff,  
Or have you haply on your trail some unrelenting sheriff?”  
He gulped, he choked, he wheeled about, his bloodshot eyes  
dilated,  
And then he answered with a shriek: “Cobb MUST be reinstated!”

I met a major general beneath whose uniform  
(The part that housed his manly head) there heaved a fearful storm.  
“Be comforted, Old Man,” I said, “this war with Mexico  
May not come off, and if it does, you may not have to go.”  
He turned on me a countenance as black as Stygian night  
(And that’s some black), and howled aloud: “I think Ty Cobb was  
right!”

I met a U. S. supreme judge upon whose rotund face  
Appeared deep lines I thought were worn by some perplexing case.  
“Don’t worry, judge,” I said to him, “don’t fuss and fume and fret.  
That recall sure would get you, but it’s not enacted yet.”  
Before he turned his back on me he tarried to exclaim:  
“If Johnson don’t put Ty Cobb back he’s going to kill the game.”

James J. Montague, May, 1912

*James J. Montague (1871-1941) was, among other things, a satirist who produced a long-running daily poetry column. The above poem appeared in the May 21, 1912, Syracuse Herald, the May 24, 1912, El Paso Herald and Shawnee (Oklahoma) Daily News-Herald, and many other newspapers.*