

# The INSIDE GAME



The Official Newsletter of SABR's Deadball Era Committee

VOL. XI, NO. 4: "LET'S GET THIS LUMPY, LICORICE-STAINED BALL ROLLING!" OCTOBER 2011

## YOU CAN'T BEAT THE HOURS: UMPIRES IN THE DEADBALL ERA

BY DAVID W. ANDERSON

### Introduction

If you ever want to be busier than a one-armed paperhanger, try umpiring a baseball game alone. It isn't too bad at lower levels, Tee Ball for example. In Little League games, most of the times you can get away with one man. But, as the kids get older and the fields get larger, you'll need at least two umpires.

When I was a Babe Ruth and Indiana High School umpire, I regularly was the only arbiter on the field. Unlike umpires in the Deadball Era, I umpired from behind the plate. I told the coaches that I would call balls and strikes and would do the best I could when players were on base. However, I did not need any grief regarding calls made on the bases. These games were, or should have been, instructional in nature.

That wasn't always the case. No matter what happens, baseball can be a troubling affair and no matter what your attitude may be, you will have problems when you put on the blue. Coaches sometimes questioned the strike zone; other times they might question a call on the

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## 20 GREATEST BLUNDERS IN THE HISTORY OF BASEBALL

BY STEVE STEINBERG  
AND DENNIS PAJOT

*Dictionary.com* defines "blunder" as "a gross, stupid, or careless mistake." *Merriam-Webster.com* defines "blunder" as "a gross error or mistake resulting usually from stupidity, ignorance, or carelessness" and probably should not use the benefit of hindsight. A list of blunders is always debatable; that is part of the fun. As *The Inside Game* editor Mark Ruckhaus noted, "Depends on who writes the history."

*Rob Neyer's Big Book of Baseball Blunders* has probably triggered a lot of discussion and debates. Rob defines a blunder this way:

- "Premeditated" --not a mistake or error, but a move someone thought was a good idea. Rob does not consider Bill Buckner's famous error as a blunder, nor would he consider Jack Chesbro's famous wild pitch as one (on the list below).
- "Contemporary questionability" --at the time (not simply with hindsight), the move was questioned.
- "Bad results"

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## THE CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

by **John McMurray**

The 1911 baseball season has been long remembered for its outsized offensive achievements. Ty Cobb, for instance, recorded his highest single-season batting average (.420) in 1911, while Joe Jackson's .408 average as a rookie remains a stunning achievement. In the National League, Frank "Wildfire" Schulte's 21 home runs in 1911 were just as striking, as the Cubs outfielder more than doubled the home run total of any player in baseball from the year before.

What is sometimes forgotten is how the 1911 season offered the first major departure from the style of baseball played during the first half of the Deadball Era. Because of the introduction of a cork center to the baseball, the game became offense-driven for the first time in 1911. The impact of the new ball was immediate: Major League teams collectively batted .266 in 1911, up from .249 in 1910 and .244 in 1909. Teams also hit a total of 153 more home runs from 1910 to 1911, a staggering increase.

The surge in offense in 1911 is most often symbolized by Frank Baker's display of power in the 1911 World Series. Baker's home run in game two against the New York Giants followed by another in game three led to him receiving the nickname "Home Run" (though, in fairness, Fred Clarke could reasonably have gotten the same distinction on the basis of his two home runs during the 1909 World Series). Baker's home runs were a sign of things to come, even though pitchers would ultimately compensate for the introduction of a livelier ball, leading to a decline in offensive output.

Still, statistics from the 1911 season contrast so sharply with prior seasons in the Deadball Era that they have been compared to modern-day performance levels. In a recent *New York Times* article for which I had the privilege to comment (available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/25/sports/baseball/scoring-in-baseball-returns-to-dead-ball-levels.html>), author Phil Coffin notes that several measures of offense were actually *higher* in 1911 than they were during the 2011 season.

Even though the 1911 season falls in the middle of the so-called Deadball Era, the odd reality is that, in many ways, it is not emblematic of what one would consider to be a classic Deadball-type season. In contrast to the perception that teams

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### **Committee Chair**

John McMurray: [deadball@sabr.org](mailto:deadball@sabr.org)

### **Committee Vice Chair**

Trey Strecker: [tstrecker@bsu.edu](mailto:tstrecker@bsu.edu)

### **Newsletter Editor**

Mark Ruckhaus: [markruck@aol.com](mailto:markruck@aol.com)

### **Assistant Editor**

Mark Dugo: [claydad96@aol.com](mailto:claydad96@aol.com)

### **Book Review Editor**

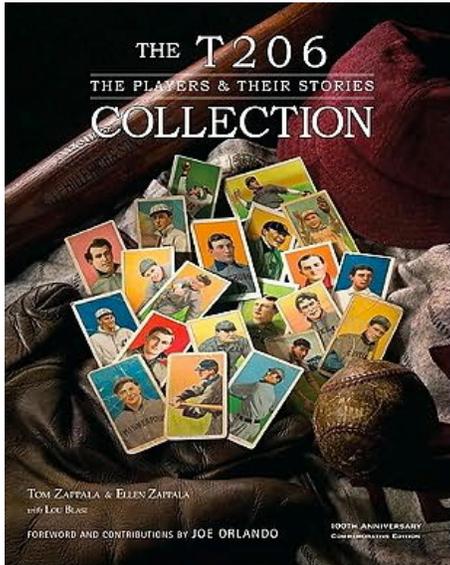
Gail Rowe: [growes36@comcast.net](mailto:growes36@comcast.net)

## **NEW DEADBALL COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

The Deadball Committee is happy to welcome newcomers to SABR who have expressed interest in the Deadball Era.

**Rebecca Edwards**  
**Sue Fitzpatrick**  
**Matthew Krisch**  
**Michael McAvoy**  
**Gregory Wolf**

They, as well as all who contributed to this issue, can be contacted through the SABR directory and, of course, all participation and contributions are most welcome.



**THE T206  
COLLECTION:  
THE PLAYERS AND  
THEIR STORIES**

**BY  
TOM & ELLEN ZAPPALA  
WITH LOU BLASI  
FOREWORD AND  
CONTRIBUTION BY  
JOE ORLANDO**

*2010. Portsmouth, NH:  
Peter E. Randall  
[ISBN13-978-1-931807-94-4.  
220 pp., \$38.00 USD,  
Hardcover]*

Reviewed by  
**Mark S. Sternman**

Attractively formatted and presented, *The T206 Collection: The Players and Their Stories* does a far better job picturing the players than telling their stories. The husband and wife co-author team seem to target an audience that has never heard of these players, a reasonable approach given that many of

the players' careers concluded a century ago. However, they do so in slapdash fashion with the assistance of neither an able copy editor nor even an amateur baseball historian.

Like a bad Deadball infield, the Zappalas make cringe-worthy errors. New Englanders like themselves should not write, let alone publish, a sentence like "Herbie Moran did manage to start on the 1914 World Series Reds." Lee Tannehill is not the answer to a trivia question about "the only shortstop to convert two unassisted triple plays in the same game," given that no one has ever done that, and Tannehill failed to convert one such play, much less two.

The Zappalas deserve credit for trying, however misguidedly, to bring life to players long forgotten by many. Surprisingly, they fail to enliven Hall of Fame players, even some of the most famous ones. Calling both Sam Crawford and Tris Speaker "pure" hitters (whatever that means), and Nap Lajoie "a truly great player" adds nothing to the impressions of these players held by either ardent baseball fans or novices.

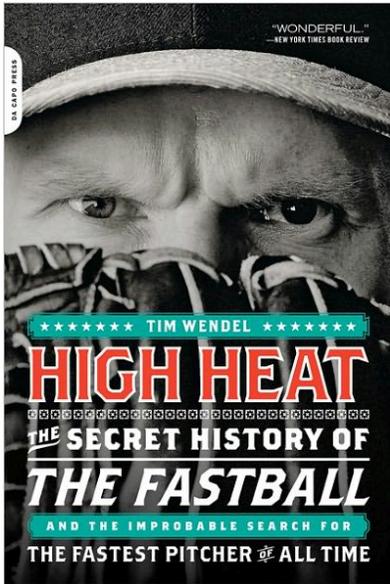
Plain-vanilla descriptions recur with surprising frequency. The Zappalas use the words "unfortunately" and "outstanding" to characterize the careers of pitchers Carl Lundgren and Nick Maddox--descriptions that likely apply to most players who

contributed to World Series winners yet had shortened careers. On consecutive pages, the Zappalas characterize Billy Gilbert and Wilbur Good as "pretty good," while Red Murray and Jimmy Sheppard, who had quite different careers and styles, receive similar appellations. "Murray was a player's player," and Sheppard a "players' player." Same description, different punctuation, but no elucidation in either case. Similarly, Donie Bush "epitomizes what every player should aspire to," whatever that means.

Some sentences simply defy rational explanation. A typical puzzler concerns the most infamous incident of the Deadball Era, the Merkle Boner. Contemporaries and historians have developed many different interpretations of the events of that fateful day, but the Zappalas take a unique approach when looking at the card of Jack Pfeister, who, they tell us, "was also on the mound the day that the Giants' Fred Merkle failed to touch second base, and thus avoided a loss in the World Series."

*T206* includes a foreword, author's note, acknowledgments, and an introduction, yet lists no source references whatsoever. As someone who has researched the career of Fred Tenney, this reviewer turned to his profile with special interest.

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**HIGH HEAT:  
THE SECRET HISTORY  
OF THE FASTBALL AND  
THE IMPROBABLE  
SEARCH FOR THE  
FASTEST PITCHER  
OF ALL TIME.**

**BY TIM WENDEL**

*2010. Cambridge, MA  
Da Capo Press  
[ISBN: 978-0-306-81848-6.  
[268 pp. \$25.00 USD.  
Hardcover]*

Reviewed by  
**Chris Welsh**

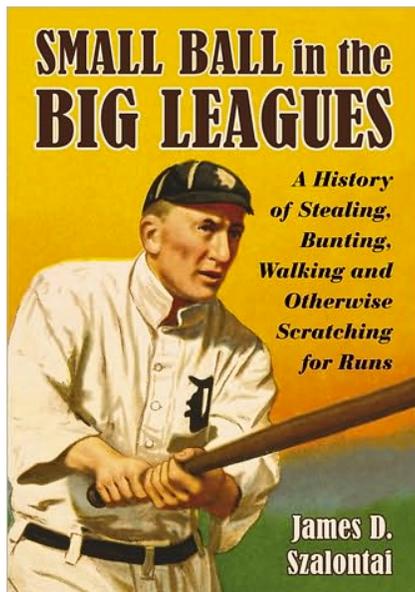
Tim Wendel tackles the daunting task of defining the fastest pitcher with the vigor of a rookie in a Big League camp for the first time. He has clearly done his research as his story is punctuated with statistics, facts, folklore, and countless interviews with players, scouts, coaches and those who touched the lives of baseball's all-time best fireballers.

Finding history's fastest pitcher is an impossible quest considering there has been no speed measuring technology for the majority of the years baseball has been played. How can we possibly compare the fastballs of Walter Johnson, who broke into the big leagues in 1907, with the high heat of Nolan Ryan? It cannot be done. Tim Wendel proves that it is the journey of discovery that makes the quest meaningful. With stories and anecdotes about dozens of pitchers who make the list, Wendel does a marvelous job of exposing the human side of each of them. He cleverly weaves interviews with scouts, players, coaches and even mothers into his book that makes it fun to read, almost like a compendium of ultra-short biographical studies of the game's strongest armed pitchers. He also sees fastballs from a hitter's view, recounting the fatal beaming of Ray Chapman in 1920 and the fastball that got away from Jack Hamilton and cut short the promising career of the great Tony Conigliaro.

Based on the opinions of the "experts" he interviewed, Wendel identifies the top dozen fastballers as Nolan Ryan, Steve Dalkowski, Bob Feller, Walter Johnson, Sandy Koufax, Billy Wagner, Satchel Page, Joel Zumaya, Amos Rusie, Goose Gossage, Bob Gibson, and J.R. Richard."

It would have been nice if Wendel had been able to include baseball's current king of the fastball, Cincinnati's, Aroldis Chapman. Despite a publication date of 2010, there is only a throwaway mention of Chapman at the very end of the book. Perhaps we should give Wendel the benefit of the doubt here, but Aroldis Chapman was making international headlines in 2009 for his unprecedented speed. In 2010, Chapman pitched in relief in San Diego and threw a dozen pitches at 103 miles per hour or better and topped out at 105! I was there to witness it; it really happened. Any list of fast pitchers compiled in 2010 should include the "Cuban Missile."

Whatever one thinks of Wendel's choices for his top dozen hard throwers, he enlightens and entertains, and that is about all I want in a baseball book. What could be a dry read if presented in textbook form, *High Heat* reads like a short, fun novel about some of the real characters of the game. We all wanted to throw hard, but the fact is we didn't. So, I suggest you leave it to Tim Wendel to fill in the blanks about the hardest throwers in baseball history and to put you in the batter's box for an insider's introduction to high heat.



**SMALL BALL IN THE  
BIG LEAGUES:  
A HISTORY OF  
STEALING, BUNTING,  
WALKING  
AND OTHERWISE  
SCRATCHING FOR RUNS**

**BY  
JAMES D. SZALONTAI**

2010. Jefferson, NC:  
McFarland and Company  
[ISBN: 978-0-7864-5833-2.  
311 pp. \$39.95 USD.  
Paperback]

Reviewed by  
**Irv Goldfarb**

Question: What would you say about a book that opens a paragraph with: “The 1939 Chicago White Sox led the American League in both stolen bases (113) and sacrifices (154). . . . In the senior league, first-place Cincinnati led the circuit with 193 sacrifices; while fourth-place Chicago paced the circuit with only 61 steals . . . the AL stole more bases than

the NL, 589 to 368. . . . Lonny Frey of Cincinnati and Pinky May of Philadelphia shared the NL sacrifice hit title with 25, while Mike Kreevich of the Chicago White Sox led the AL with 22 . . .” Quite the mouthful, huh? Now consider this: *Every* season of Major League Baseball through 2009, is covered the same way!

*Small Ball in the Big Leagues*, by James D. Szalontai, has a rhythm—and its rhythm challenges that of Homer’s *Odyssey* in its repetition. Published in hypnotically-small print and containing no page breaks (there are only four chapters, each over almost 300 pages of text!), the book introduces each season with a rundown of team stolen base and sacrifice hit totals followed by the individual category leaders. It then runs through a few of that year’s ‘standout’ games, highlighting triple steals, thefts of home, and key sacrifice bunts. Each year is capped by a brief rundown of the World Series, again highlighting ‘important’ bunts, steals, and sacrifice flies. (Apologies—sometimes the synopsis *starts* with the World Series and works its way backwards. You can’t say there’s no variety here!) I understand the impressive research that went into a project like this, and I appreciate it. But golly, if chicks dig the long ball, Szalontai will *never* find a date!

Despite its heavy emphasis on statistics, *Small Ball in the Big Leagues* does have its moments, such as accounts of drunken accusations concerning on-field decision-making by John McGraw toward his coach, Wilbert Robinson, following the Giants’ third consecutive Series loss in 1913, tales of tantalizingly suspicious blunders made by the Yankees during the 1922 Fall Classic that contributed to their being swept, and a detailed description of the infamous 26-inning, 1-1 epic between the Braves and Robins in 1920. Szalontai uses some very creative slang to describe everyday baseball terms, including some that this reviewer has never heard: ‘Outer Garden’ (the outfield); fly chaser (outfielder); and ‘Gateway Station’ (I think this means first base—still, I’m not sure.) In addition, however, he uses the dreaded “on the bump”, a modern-day mound description fabricated by ESPN anchors who think they’re being cute.

Unfortunately, this book’s flashes of creativity are buried by its repetitiveness. Besides the drone of endless year-by-year statistics, there are *numerous* reminders of how sacrifice flies were counted as sacrifice hits in some eras, but not in others, thereby creating inconsistent sacrifice totals over the years. And there’s the unfortunate opinion thrown in.

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## **YOU CAN'T BEAT THE HOURS** *continued from page 1*

bases. Just when you thought everything was moving along smoothly, the gods of baseball would strike. The call had to be right or you would be in trouble.

In one game, the old ball game went great. It was a 4-2 game and it was the bottom of the last inning. The first two hitters were retired quickly and it looked like we could be going home soon. But then the wheels fell off the pitcher as the next hitter walked and the following one hit a screamer to the third baseman. It looked like it was over, but the runner reached first and there was no play at second. He walked the next man and now the bases were loaded. The coach went to the mound. He kept the pitcher in the game. The next hitter went ball-strike-ball-strike and the fifth pitch was outside. It was 3 and 2, two outs. The next pitch was down the middle for a strike. But the catcher didn't catch the ball. It rolled to my feet. As everyone was moving, the catcher recovered, got the ball and just before he threw, he touched home plate for the third out. The problem was the catcher did not know this and threw the ball in the general direction of first base. It went into the outfield. The home coaches were ecstatic because the ball was in the corner and the winning run could score.

I had signaled the runner on third as being out. Game over, but everyone knows you need to sell the call. As I made the call, I pointed to home and said the runner on third was out. The home coach was not happy. I told him the catcher had touched home just before he threw the ball into right field. He said the catcher didn't mean to touch the plate, and then realized the third out was on the books before the ball went into the outfield.

When the gods of baseball talk you have to listen or suffer the consequences. Sell the call!

I have been working on this for a long time. George Rugg, a librarian at the University of Notre Dame, told me that we need to look at the early umpires because they added so much to

how we enjoy today's game. I took his idea and began running with it. But there were problems.

First, I moved from my home in Granger, Indiana to settle in Olathe, Kansas. My new job with a prominent telecommunications company in Overland Park lasted almost seven years. I learned a great deal but I also acquired the wisdom that being in a corporation isn't what it is all cracked up to be, and when I could have 'used' them they let me dangle in the wind.

I had a stroke in December of 2004. I had to learn a great deal again. This book is the belief that I have done that. I have to say the reason I am doing this is because of my wife Judy who did as much to heal me as the medical professionals did. My other angels were the people at Mid-America rehabilitation facility who encouraged me to get my voice and authority back.

When I was writing *More Than Merkle*, I looked at many aspects of the season, including umpires and umpiring. 1908 was the last year where more games were umpired by one person than by two. In 1909, both the American and National League hired enough umpires to cover most games with two-man crews.

The men who umpired games during the Deadball Era were an interesting cross section of individuals. This is what my upcoming book is about.

I settled on the title early on. *You Can't Beat the Hours* is a phrase any Deadball umpire could live with. It comes from an interaction between two great umpires of the era, Frank 'Silk' O'Loughlin and Tim Hurst.

It must have been a hard day. O'Loughlin began feeling sorry for himself: "An umpire's life is worse than a murderer's. He is an Ishmaelite, an outcast, a thing despised, loathed and hated. He must hide from his fellow men; he dares not talk to anyone; he has no friends; he cannot speak to the players; he must hide in obscure hotels; conceal his identity; endure abuse, insult, and even assault. Who is there that is his friend—that will stand by him when thousands are shouting 'Thief!' and 'Robber!' and thirsting for his blood?"

Who, I say? Why the worst criminal in the world gets more consideration and kindness; the umpire, hated, abused, insulted, and often hunted, stands alone with twenty thousand shouting every insult, taunt, and vilification known to him. From three o'clock in the afternoon until five he must..."

At that point Tim Hurst interrupted saying, "You can't beat the hours."<sup>1</sup>

This book is a study of umpires back in the age when many traditions were built. Any shortcomings are mine and mine alone. One thing is certain: I will not be misquoted, as Terrell Owens, complained when he was misquoted in his autobiography.



**Tim Hurst**  
**"You can't beat the hours."**

1-William Patton and J. Walter McSpadden, *The Book of Baseball: The National Game from the Earliest Days to the Present Season* (New York: P.F. Collins & Son, 1911), 115.

***And, now, an excerpt  
from the upcoming book...***

**Francis 'Silk' O'Loughlin**

**August 18, 1875...Rochester, New York  
December 20, 1918...Boston, Massachusetts**

***"The umpire, if he is a good man and  
knows his business, is always right."  
Frank 'Silk' O'Loughlin <sup>1</sup>***

Many of the umpires of the Deadball Era made their mark with style and personality. Frank 'Silk' O'Loughlin was among the most stylish, quotable, flamboyant, fearless, and competent and who did it with a good sense of humor. O'Loughlin was born in 1875 in Rochester, New York and spent a good part of his youth playing amateur baseball in the Rochester area.<sup>2</sup>

Little has been written about his playing abilities. That may indicate O'Loughlin lacked the physical talent to make playing the game a career, but he brought other assets to the diamond. Writings about his early life indicate O'Loughlin enjoyed a reputation for possessing good judgment and being fair and impartial, qualities that would serve him well during his umpiring career.<sup>3</sup>

O'Loughlin began officiating in an exhibition game between Rochester and a semi-pro team from Palmyra in 1895. The rivalry between the teams was heated and finding a competent umpire was very important. O'Loughlin was nominated by an admirer and he accepted the position. Following the series of games, both teams praised O'Loughlin's efforts. It was then 'Silk' decided to pursue a baseball career as an arbiter, not a player. During the rest of 1895 and 1896 O'Loughlin umpired amateur and semi-pro baseball to, as he said, "get the necessary experience," to make it a full time job. <sup>4</sup>

His curious nickname 'Silk' was a moniker hung on him at an early age and referred to his head of hair and not his stentorian speaking voice. O'Loughlin told a newspaper reporter from the Rochester *Evening Telegram* how he got the

name: "...when I was a little duffer about five years of age my folks thought I was getting too old to wear the long silken curls that then hung artistically over my shoulders, so a relative snipped them off. Somebody called me 'Silk' and the name stuck. Now it is seldom any one calls me Frank." Other accounts say the curls were shorn by an aunt who did not like long hair on young boys, and the hair cut angered some in the family, except his brother who teased, "Ta ta to the silken locks."<sup>5</sup>

As an umpire, O'Loughlin was known for a loud and clear voice and believed it was an important part of what he brought to the game. Accounts of games officiated by 'Silk' often included references to his "Strike Tuh" call, a call that let everyone know the hitter had two strikes on him. O'Loughlin often told those who asked that he wanted everyone to hear him and "...the patrons of the game like to hear an umpire. I think, too, that it enlivens the game to have the decisions given in a sharp, brisk way."

Some observers credit him with developing arm signals as a means of communicating calls, but whether O'Loughlin actually can be credited is as best uncertain.<sup>6</sup>

What is certain is O'Loughlin was also known as a sharp dresser, introducing creased trousers to his uniform. The crease was so sharp some players jokingly feared that getting too close would get them cut. 'Silk' also was fond of a diamond ring that he wore on his right hand. He would sometimes refer to calling a base runner out by saying that he flashed the runner some cracked ice. Many players bitterly claimed O'Loughlin would call them out just so he could flash the ring.<sup>7</sup>

While O'Loughlin may have cut a fine figure on the field, he was also superstitious, wearing blue flannel shirt that dated back to his minor league days. He said he was wearing what would become 'lucky' shirt back in 1898. During a game at Cortland, in the New York State League, O'Loughlin so incurred the wrath of fans that, after the game, some of them grabbed the ump and tossed him into a nearby river. The crowd wanted a confession, but O'Loughlin held his

ground saying the runner was out and the mob held their ground by holding Silk's head under water. Wearing nothing but the shirt, O'Loughlin escaped with the help of a sympathetic farmer.<sup>8</sup>

His professional umpiring career began in 1897 when Ed Barrow, then President of the Atlantic League, tapped him. O'Loughlin worked in that league for most of the year and, late in the season, jumped to the New York State League in order to stay close to home. 'Silk's' talents were used by the Eastern League from 1898 through 1901. Late that year, American League President Ban Johnson came calling and 'Silk' O'Loughlin joined the new league serving as one of its finest umpires for 17 seasons from 1902 through the war shortened 1918 season.

Among one of Johnson's early hires, O'Loughlin repaid the American League chief for backing umpires with his loyalty and support. Johnson had simple orders to his umpires:

1. Make the game on the field clean.
2. Rule benevolently when possible.
3. Rule with an iron hand if required.
4. Back his umpires in disputes.

That did not mean that O'Loughlin had no trouble with Johnson. During the 1908 season, Johnson was critical of a call 'Silk' made in a Detroit-Chicago game on an attempted squeeze play. Johnson chided O'Loughlin for failing to differentiate between a pitch and a throw and calling a Chicago runner out.

'Silk' was also a strong supporter of a two-umpire system in the majors. It must be noted the call in that Detroit-Chicago game was made by O'Loughlin as a solo umpire, a partner might have been able to determine if the pitcher's foot was on the rubber when the play was made.

This play is detailed in *More than Merkle*. O'Loughlin had ruled that Ed Siever and Freddie Payne had obeyed the rules, but Johnson overturned the play.<sup>9</sup>

Silk was also known for his concern over the time of games and often suggested means to speed up play. He was known as a no nonsense man on the

field and was one of Johnson's umpires who could be called the tough cop on the beat. O'Loughlin said Ban Johnson helped make baseball a respectable profession by "...eliminating rowdyism by giving his staff of umpires his unqualified support."

George Moriarty, who saw O'Loughlin umpire and became an umpire himself, said this: "Silk was fierce and fiery on the ball field when the occasion demanded. Physically, Silk couldn't open a can of peas, but his moral courage made him a giant in a tight spot during a ball game."<sup>10</sup>



**'Silk' O'Loughlin**

***"The holy prophets for religion and O'Loughlin for baseball, both infallible."***

There was one manager that 'Silk' had trouble with. It was none other than Connie Mack. The trouble came in late in the 1906 season when O'Loughlin called a forfeiture against the A's. It led to O'Loughlin not being assigned to any games with the A's in 1907.<sup>11</sup>

O'Loughlin was incensed and claimed, "I have been accused of being crooked by Mack and I will allow no man to get away with that no matter if I ever umpire another game of ball as long as I live."<sup>12</sup>

American League President Ban Johnson looked into the matter during the annual meeting in

December 1907 and suggested that managers be more careful in the future.<sup>13</sup>

After 1907, when O'Loughlin umpired games with the Athletics and there was an argument, the A's would never let him forget the incident. The cold war between Mack and O'Loughlin lasted until O'Loughlin died late in 1918. 'Silk' had always felt remorse about the situation, but never found the time to sit down and make amends.

O'Loughlin had many claims to fame as an umpire. He was behind the plate for seven no-hitters, a record unlikely to be equaled. He was also the first ump to eject Ty Cobb from a game. That occurred on May 2, 1908 in a game with the White Sox when Cobb tried to stretch a triple into an inside the park homer.

As an umpire, his self-confidence and arrogance would often rankle others who were critical of his attitude. O'Loughlin claimed there was no such thing as a close call saying, "A man is always out or safe, or it is a ball or a strike. The umpire, if he is a good man and knows his business is always right. I am always right."

'Silk' was also known for saying, "The holy prophets for religion and O'Loughlin for baseball, both infallible."

Unfortunately, O'Loughlin did not enjoy a full career. He would die at the age of 42 in Boston on December 20, 1918 due to complications from influenza, a disease that claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in the days following World War I. His personality, enthusiasm and energy made its mark on the American League. On O'Loughlin's death, Hall of Fame umpire Billy Evans noted 'Silk' was a great partner who worked every game like it was his last saying, "Silk was a bundle of nerves. From the start of the game until the finish he was on edge. Baseball was a serious proposition for him."

<sup>1</sup> O'Loughlin Biography File, Baseball Hall of Fame.

<sup>2-8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *More than Merkle*, David W. Anderson, 2000, University of Nebraska Press, pp. 155-56.

<sup>10</sup> *Connie Mack and the Early Years of Baseball*, Norman L. Macht, 2007, University of Nebraska Press, p. 395.

## BLUNDERS

*continued from page 1*

Rob discusses a couple of Deadball Era blunders: the White Sox' replacement of Jack Fournier with Chick Gandil and the Red Sox' sale of Babe Ruth. He also discusses some Deadball Era trades: the 1903 Cardinals' Mordecai Brown trade (on the list below), the A's 1910 trade of Joe Jackson, John McGraw's 1913 trade of Heinie Groh and his 1916 trade of Edd Roush.

In the spring of 1912, an unattributed syndicated article, "Twenty Greatest Blunders in History of Baseball" appeared in a number of newspapers. Dennis and I want to use the article to have a "Deadball Era Blunders" feature in the next couple of issues of *The Inside Game*. Our goals are to:

- List, identify, and explain each of the blunders.

*Many of the blunders are quite obscure, almost one hundred years after this list first appeared. We want committee members to submit explanations of the blunders that we have not fully explained below and add facts to better understand the ones we have.*

- Evaluate which of these blunders still deserve to be on a "Top Twenty Deadball Era Blunders" list.

*This list was put together just over halfway through the Deadball Era.*

- Propose other blunders which deserve to be on the Top Twenty Deadball Era list.

We do not want to rank the blunders. It will be challenging enough to come up with the list!

In order to minimize "clutter" on our Yahoo group and to have a feature for this newsletter, we are asking that you send:

- your explanation of the unidentified blunders and supplemental info on others (first point above)
- your evaluation as to whether one or more of the blunders on this list really aren't blunders (second point above)

- your proposed blunder or blunders that belong on a Deadball Era Blunders list (#3 above)

to Dennis at [denpajot@sbcglobal.net](mailto:denpajot@sbcglobal.net). We can then organize the input for the next issue of *The Inside Game*.

I will get the ball rolling by proposing a Deadball Era blunder:

***When Frank Farrell, co-owner of the New York Highlanders, fired George Stallings late in the 1910 season and replaced him with their first baseman, Hal Chase.***

The team had struggled, finishing in last place in 1908 with a 51-103 mark. Stallings took over the following year, and the Highlanders came close to the .500 mark, with 23 more wins than the previous year (74-77). In 1910, Stallings led New York to the first division. The team was 78-59 after play on September 20, just a game out of second place. They had been in second recently and would finish there at the end of the season.

Stallings had demanded that the team get rid of Chase, whom he had accused of "laying down" on them. Instead, Farrell let Stallings go. Chase had orchestrated the "coup" behind the scenes. The corrupt star first baseman not only got rid of Stallings; he got the job himself. Two years later, after Chase had been relieved of his managerial duties, the New York Americans sunk back down to last place and a 50-102 record in 1912.

In 1914, Stallings led the Miracle Braves to the World Championship, while the Yankees continued to struggle.

Here are the twenty blunders, **in bold**. They appear exactly as they were written nearly a hundred years ago. Our identifying comments follow. We need help to identify some of them and expand on others.

### ***Twenty Greatest Blunders in History of Baseball***

Duluth News-Tribune, March 4, 1912  
& Boston Daily Globe, March 7, 1912

***When Cincinnati traded a kid named Christy Mathewson for a great pitcher named Rusie.***

This December 15, 1900, trade is technically just before the start of the Deadball Era (1901-1919). Amos Rusie never won another game; Mathewson won 373. This was not a “blunder” as much as a “backroom deal” involving owners Andrew Freedman and John Brush. It is interesting that the Mathewson biographies (by Ray Robinson and Philip Seib), as well as the Rusie biography (*More Ghosts in the Gallery* by David Fleitz) give somewhat different perspectives on the deal. The extent to which the backroom deal was known in 1912 has never been determined.

***When St. Louis traded Three-Fingered Brown to Chicago for Jack Taylor.***

On December 12, 1903, the Cardinals sent Mordecai Brown and Jack O’Neill to the Cubs for Jack Taylor and Larry McLean. Brown had just completed a 9-13 rookie season, with a 2.60 ERA. While his record was not good, he pitched for a terrible team (43-94), and his ERA was more than a half run better than the league average of 3.26.

In 1902, the St. Louis Browns had a successful inaugural season, only five games short of first place. Their lineup was led by virtually every star of the 1901 Cards, except for player-manager Patsy Donovan. The Robison brothers, owners of the Cards, were not active in protecting their personnel, with devastating results.

When the two leagues settled after the 1902 season, the National Agreement allowed American League teams to keep the players they had pulled from the established league in the previous two years. The Cardinals finished 44 1/2 games behind the pennant-winning Pittsburgh Pirates in 1902.

Taylor won 23 games in 1902 while leading the league in ERA at 1.29. He won 21 in ’03 and would go on to win 20 with the Cardinals in ’04. The Cards’ attendance had dropped by around 150,000 from 1901 to 1902 and remained there in 1903 while, in 1903, the Browns’ attendance

was 150,000 more than that of the Cards. Now realizing that they had to do something to bring back the fans, the Robisons traded for the 29 year-old veteran star.

Neyer covers this trade and notes that the Cubs’ president, James Hart, suspected Taylor of throwing games in the 1903 Chicago City Series though, in Dan Ginsburg’s SABR BioProject article of Taylor, the charges didn’t come out until 1904. Were the Cardinals aware of this?

Ginsburg noted that, while Taylor was acquitted of the charge, he was also accused of fixing games in the 1905 St. Louis City Series. But “no action was ever taken...and he returned to the Cardinals for 1906.”

The Lou Brock-Ernie Broglio trade is often considered one of baseball’s all-time bad trades though Rob Neyer points out that the trade did not seem so imbalanced at the time. When the Cards got Brock from the Cubs, he led them to three pennants. But the Cubs still “owe ’em” one more pennant: Brown led the Cubs to **four** NL pennants!

***When Charles Webb Murphy stood in the lobby of the Waldorf and called Rajah Bresnahan a policeman.***

In the 1910 meetings, Bresnahan and Murphy got into a heated shouting match in the hotel lobby. (Fleitz mentions this showdown in his Bresnahan chapter in *Ghosts in the Gallery*). There is no mention that Murphy called him a policeman or why that was an insult.

**• We need more information on this blunder.**

In 1912, Murphy, the owner of the Chicago Cubs, accused Bresnahan, the manager of the St. Louis Cardinals, of conspiring to let John McGraw and his New York Giants (Bresnahan’s former team) win games against Bresnahan’s Cards, to help the Giants win the pennant.

***When John Anderson stole second with three on.***

Peter Morris discusses the search for the source of the play that generated the phrase, “John Anderson play.” It referred to a player trying to

steal an already-occupied base. (*A Game of Inches: The Game behind the Scenes*). Morris finally tracked down the play in question: On September 24, 1903, with the bases loaded, the St. Louis Browns' Anderson was thrown out when he broke for second on a strikeout. In his Anderson BioProject bio, John Stahl notes that Anderson actually may have been taking too large a lead at first and/or broke with the pitch. Baseball lore may have unfairly charged Anderson with attempting a steal when that may not have been the case. (Was the play a hit-and-run?)



***“Honest John” Anderson  
Why was he running?***

### ***When Jack Chesbro lost a world’s championship on a wild pitch.***

On October 10, 1904, the final day of the season, Chesbro’s New York Highlanders needed to sweep a doubleheader against Boston to win the AL pennant. His ninth inning wild pitch in a tie game let Boston score the go-ahead run in Game 1 and clinch the pennant. (New York won the second game, 1-0, in ten innings.) Besides the fact that the pennant and not the world championship was at stake, had he not thrown the wild pitch, the game would have remained tied--no guarantee that New York would have won the game.

### ***When Merkle failed to touch second base and lost a pennant.***

So much has been written about Merkle’s “boner” on September 23, 1908. Was it really Merkle’s mistake, since umpires had not enforced the rule that cost the Giants? Moreover, the season still had a couple of more weeks to play out—plus the one-game playoff—before the Giants lost the pennant.

### ***When Marquard grooved one for Baker.***

In Game 2 of the 1911 World Series, Frank Baker’s two-run home run off Rube Marquard broke a 1-1 tie, and the Athletics beat the Giants, 3-1.

### ***When Matty grooved one for Baker.***

In Game 3 of the 1911 World Series, Frank Baker’s ninth inning home run off Christy Mathewson tied the game at 1-1 and sent it into extra innings. The Athletics won in eleven innings, 3-1.

The wording “grooved one” suggests that the pitchers served up “fat” pitches. Mathewson’s (ghost-written) column of the morning after game two was critical of Marquard’s serving up Baker’s blow: “Baker’s home run was due to Rube’s carelessness.” Continuing, “Marquard was told just what not to pitch to Frank. Well, Rube pitched just what Baker likes.” Ironically, the very day that column appeared, Mathewson served up a home run to Baker, too. Marquard (his ghost) then wrote, “Just what happened, Matty?” (Fred Lieb, *The Story of the World Series*.)

### ***When Charles Webb Murphy panned the National Commission.***

The Cubs’ owner was often critical of the National Commission. His criticism of the Commission can be considered a blunder because ultimately he alienated the baseball establishment and sold the Cubs. While it was often assumed that he was driven out of the game, Lenny Jacobson explains in his *Deadball Stars* and BioProject bio of Murphy that he got such a high price from Charles Taft for his Cubs (more than \$500,000), that he readily sold of his own volition.

•**Was there a specific incident this refers to?**

***When Clark Griffith allowed Miller Huggins to leave Cincinnati.***

On February 3, 1910, Griffith, the manager of the Reds, sent Huggins to the Cardinals with Frank Corridon and Rebel Oakes for Fred Beebe and Alan Storke. Huggins went on to lead the league in walks twice and in on-base percentage once. Oakes also was a strong performer for both the Cards (four seasons) and the Federal League's Pittsburgh Rebels, where he was player-manager. Beebe won only 12 games for the Reds and had only one more season as a regular. Storke died just six weeks after the trade ("a victim of grip (sic)," *New York Times*, March 19, 1910).

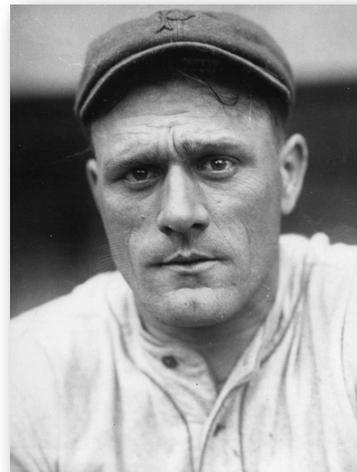
Because Huggins, a Cincinnati native, was so popular in his hometown and because Griffith did not have great success managing the team, there was some discussion at the time that he traded Huggins to get rid of a potential replacement. (Griffith had managed the Reds to fourth and fifth place finishes. After he led them to a sixth place finish in 1911, he moved on to the opportunity with the Nationals.)

***When Bill Hinchman loafed on his grounder to Bobby Wallace at St. Louis, Oct. 4, 1908.***

On October 4, 1908, two days after Addie Joss' perfect game, Hinchman's Cleveland Indians played a 3-3 tie with Wallace's Browns. Joss came in to relieve and was on third base (Bill Bradley was on second), when Hinchman came to bat in the ninth inning with the score tied. He grounded through the box, and shortstop Bobby Wallace knocked the ball down and then threw to first. Shortly after Joss crossed the plate, Hinchman was called out at first; the run, of course, did not count.

During the ensuing argument with umpire Jack Egan, Egan explained that Hinchman should have beaten the throw but "didn't hustle." (John Phillips, *Who Was Who in Cleveland Baseball, 1901-1910*). After two more scoreless innings, the game was called and was made up as part of a

doubleheader the following day. The Browns won that game, and a few days later, the season ended with the Indians just one-half game behind the pennant-winning Detroit Tigers.



***Bill Hinchman  
"Didn't hustle."***

***When Sherwood Magee belted Finneran on the bugle.***

On July 10, 1911, Sherry Magee punched umpire Bill Finneran after he was called out on strikes. He was suspended for the season, an unusually harsh penalty. At the time, Magee's Phillies were just one-half game out of first place, tied with the Giants and trailing the Cubs. While Magee was reinstated a few weeks later (August 16), by then the Phils had fallen to fourth place, 6 1/2 games out of first.

***When Pittsburgh and Detroit passed up Grover Cleveland Alexander.***

At Syracuse, of the New York State League, Alexander had a spectacular 1910 season: a 29-11 record with a 1.85 ERA. He gave up only 254 hits and 74 walks in 345 2/3 innings pitched. The Tigers' scout suggested they not sign him since he threw sidearmed. (John Skipper, *Wicked Curve*). Jack Kavanagh's biography, *Ol' Pete*, mentions a *Baseball Magazine* account (January 1915) that Clark Griffith and his Cincinnati Reds had a "string" on Alexander, but let him go, based on reports from a scout. Kavanagh questions the name of the scout cited in the article, but not the heart of the story—Griffith's mistake to let Alexander go.

**•What about the Pirates? Neither biography mentions them.**

Fred Lieb would probably consider this a key Deadball Era blunder, not faulting just one or two teams. As he and Stan Baumgartner wrote in their A.S. Barnes team history, *The Philadelphia Phillies* (reprinted by Kent State University Press), “There is no greater indictment of the scouting departments of four decades ago than the fact that no big league club purchased this great youngster before his name was dropped into the draft mill. For Grover hadn’t exactly hid his light under a bushel in Syracuse.” The Phillies didn’t purchase Alexander; they drafted him instead and were lucky to have landed him.

***When Cincinnati allowed Marty O’Toole to get away without a trial.***

O’Toole is most remembered as the “\$22,500 Lemon” for the money the Pirates paid for him in the summer of 1911 (they bought him from St. Paul). However, almost three years earlier, he appeared in three games with the Reds. In his BioProject bio of O’Toole, Dick Thompson suggests that O’Toole threw his arm out, tossing too many innings in the minors. Between 1908 and 1911, O’Toole won 91 games in the minors. Thompson also says that a minor salary dispute over \$109 angered the Reds’ owner Garry Herrmann, who did not bring O’Toole back in 1909. While O’Toole did appear in three games for the Reds (he won one of them), his 15 innings were not much of a “trial.”



***Marty O’Toole  
While in the minors, pitched in 107 games  
before his 20th birthday.***

**•Since O’Toole went on to win only 27 Major League games, is this a Top Twenty Blunder?**

***When Hughey Jennings underestimated Babe Adams in 1909.***

Adams was a rookie in 1909 (he had appeared in a handful of games in 1906 and 1907), when he won three games for the Pirates in the 1909 World Series against Jennings’ Tigers. The Tigers (and the baseball world) were surprised when the Pirates had Adams start Game 1 of the Series, and not one of their more heralded pitchers (Willis, Camnitz, Leifield, Leevee, and Philippe).

**•Just how did Jennings underestimate Adams?**

***When Cleveland let Ed Killian go to Detroit.***



***“Twilight Ed” Killian  
100-74, 2.38 in 205 games with the Tigers***

Killian won 100 games for the Tigers between 1904 and 1910 and was a key starter in the pennant-winning seasons of 1907-09. He started with Cleveland, where he won three games in 1903. That winter, the Indians traded him and Jesse Stovall for Billy Lush, coming off a fine season (.274, 14 triples and a .379 OBP) and who,

as it turned out, played just one more professional season (.258, .359 OBP in '04). Indians' manager Bill Armour (who would manage Killian with the Tigers in 1905-1906) felt he needed another outfielder for 1904 and Lush apparently fit the bill.

At the time of the trade, Indians fans were more critical of the loss of Stovall, who had gone 5-1 for the 1903 Indians. He, too, would play only one more season—he was 2-13 for the '04 Tigers. His brother, George, started a long career with the Indians in 1904. (John Phillips, *Who was Who in Cleveland Baseball, 1901-10.*)

### ***When Bresnahan made faces at umpire Billy Klem.***

In June, 1911, Klem hit Bresnahan in the head with his facemask. (Klem was just fined \$50. When Magee was suspended for the season a month later—see Magee/Finneran entry—the disparity in severity of penalties led Phillies president Horace Fogel to charge that the league and its umpires were favoring the Giants, whom the Phils were fighting for the pennant.)

#### **• Just what does “made faces” refer to?**

### ***When Horace Fogel switched his famous Hermann (sic)-Murphy letters.***

The president of the Phils, a protégé of Cubs' owner Murphy, was critical of the National Commission and its president, Garry Herrmann. During the 1911 or 1912 season, Fogel mistakenly mailed a letter intended for Murphy (which was critical of Herrmann) to Herrmann, and the letter intended for Herrmann to Murphy. After the 1912 season, the National League banished Fogel for making charges about the integrity of the game.

#### **• Does anyone have more information on the letter?**

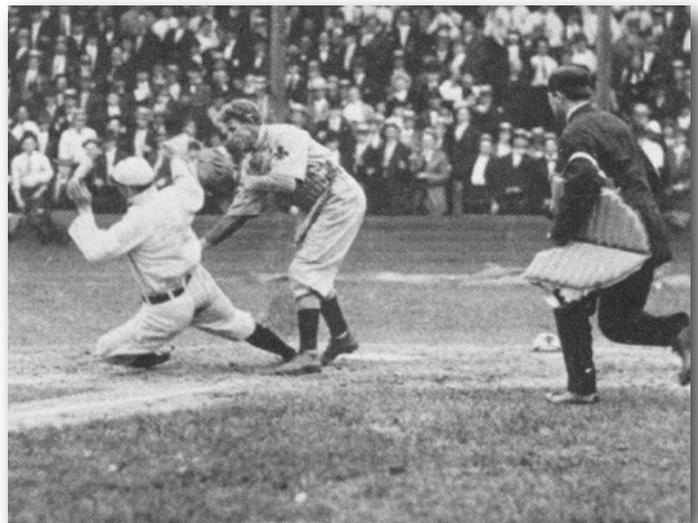
### ***When McGraw parted with Mike Donlin prior to the 1911 world's series.***

On August 1, 1911, McGraw's New York Giants sold Donlin to the Boston Braves. After a two-

year absence from baseball (1909-1910), Donlin had returned to the Giants during the 1911 season, but appeared in only 12 games before the trade. Playing regularly for the Braves, Donlin hit .315 the rest of the season. The Giants lost the World Series that year to the Philadelphia Athletics, four games to two. They hit only .175 in that Series.

### ***When Lou Criger touted Ty Cobb as a bonehead.***

Criger, the longtime catcher of the Boston Red Sox (1901-1908), played 16 seasons. In his biography of Cobb, Charles Alexander writes that in Spring Training 1909, Criger (then with the Browns) was bragging that Cobb didn't bother him and that “I've got his 'goat.” Alexander goes on to discuss the showdowns between the two, when Cobb tried to run on Criger. While Cobb claimed that he ran wild on Criger, writes Alexander, the catcher held his own against Cobb (throwing him out twice in a June game). Cobb never stole second, third, and home in succession on Criger. In his book, *Peach: Ty Cobb in his Time and Ours*, Richard Bak has a spectacular 1909 photo of Cobb sliding safely into home, “under Criger's unprotected shins.”



***Cobb sliding into Criger  
Bennett Park, 1909  
Was he really safe?***



## NO MORE WORLD'S SERIES

BY MARK RUCKHAUS

Before I get rolling, first I'd like to thank Dennis Pajot, who always does a tremendous amount of research, always provides plenty of vignettes and other information to *The Inside Game* and definitely kick-started this piece, tinged with sarcasm for your entertainment, with an article he found in the *Milwaukee Journal* from 1913. Thanks, Dennis. And now...

With the World Series being played not long after this issue goes to press, or wherever it goes (the ether, maybe) nearly a hundred years ago, there was an undercurrent afoot, led by National Commission member and Reds co-owner Garry Herrmann, to scuttle the World's Series, as it was called then, in favor of a month or more of interleague play.

Though the reasons revolved around money, other excuses were found to mask that such as lack of interest by fans of the non-contenders and the evils of players writing or otherwise having their names attached to newspaper columns (read: ghost-written) in conjunction with the Series. If you've read the "Twenty Greatest Blunders" piece in this issue, there was a bit of a brouhaha between Christy Mathewson and Rube Marquard after Matty wrote (or had it done for him) about Marquard serving up a home run ball to Frank Baker in the '11 Series only to have Mathewson serve up a gopher ball of his own to Baker the next day with Marquard turning the tables on his teammate.

For those of you who watch "The Colbert Report," the following, which contains actual articles and quotes, will bear more than a passing resemblance to a regular segment on his show: "The Word." After all, people don't always mean what they say and you often have to read between the lines. Terms such as "World's Series" (though the *NY Times* and *Milwaukee Journal* saw fit not to capitalize it) and "base ball" and other punctuation, etc., appear as they actually did.

**From the *Milwaukee Journal*, October 4, 1913:**

"This year may bring out the last world's series, according to baseball gossip here. In many quarters agitation for the abandonment of a world series each fall and the substitution of an interleague post season series in which all of the sixteen major league clubs could share, has been going on for some time.

"August Herrmann, chairman of the national commission and owner of the Cincinnati club, has long advocated that the regular league seasons be reduced to 112 games in each league, to be followed by an interleague schedule of sixty-four games, by which each National League team would play four games at home and four abroad with each American League team. The total winning percentage of the two schedules might determine the title of world's champion.

"The present wrangle between members of the New York and Philadelphia teams who will be parties to the championship fight this year, and the national commission, because of the rule prohibiting series players from writing or allowing the use of their names over newspaper stories has given impetus to the argument for abandonment of the big series after this year." [The writing has given impetus? The World Series would be ditched because players write or lend their names to newspaper articles? Isn't that sort of like shooting an ant with an elephant gun? Certainly there's more to it.]



**Garry Herrmann**  
***Nobody is sitting within five seats of him. The people in the background look amused, but he doesn't.***

**Barney Dreyfuss Plan, *Sporting Life*,  
November 1, 1913, p. 11):**

“A plan for a month of interleague games starting the first of September with each club in the National League meeting each club in the American League, playing two games at home and two abroad, is to be presented at the next meeting of the National League by President Barney Dreyfuss of the Pirates. The plan as formulated by the chief official of the Corsair club does not mean that the World’s Series would be abolished. Indeed, the author of the plan declares that this should remain as it is. The purpose simply is to keep up the interest in base ball among the fans of the losing clubs in September by introducing new teams and new faces. “As things are at present,” said President Dreyfuss, ‘only the pennant-winning clubs and runners-up make fair profits during the closing weeks of the race, and in some cities where the teams trail early the loss in profits starts before mid-season. [So it is the money! And what’s preventing the also-rans from actually trying to compete as some teams don’t stand a chance from opening day?] With the introduction of the interleague games the interest would be stimulated. I have no fear that these games as suggested by me would take the edge off the interest in the big series. Even if it does the two clubs that wax fat on these games could afford to fall off a little for the benefit of the other 14 clubs in the league. [“Fall off?” What does Dreyfuss mean by that, take some of that Series money and give it to the other teams? Corporate welfare?] The two pennant-winning clubs of the regular season could come together in the Fall just as usual.’ Dreyfuss’ plan is a modification, and apparently an improvement on the plan suggested by Garry Herrmann, Chairman of the National Commission, just after the World’s Series. Moreover, Mr. Dreyfuss’ plan is largely a defensive measure. The Pittsburgh management lost \$30,000 in the last month of the season, he said, and it is safe to assume that other clubs out of the championship race lost heavily.” [With cup in hand: “Sorry we finished a distant fourth and drew less than half of what the Giants did. Just wait till next year when we finish seventh. By

1917, we’ll be in the NL basement. Could you please help? Even a couple thousand would go a long way.”]



**Barney Dreyfuss**

***“Only the pennant winning clubs and runners-up make fair profits during the closing weeks of the race.”***

***Sporting Life*, October 25, 1913, p. 3**

In an article written by Harvey T. Woodruff and headlined “Ban Johnson Would Object to Abolition” with a sub-headline of “Admits That Evils Are Cropping Out But Thinks They Are Compensated for By the Universal Interest in the Big Event”...

“Because of the impossibility of caring for all the fans who wished to attend the games as well as the bickering over scalping, players writing for the papers, and other troublesome subjects [Gambling, maybe? Oh, we’ll deal with that only when we’re forced to. How about the Federal League, as the upcoming rise in salaries would cut into the owners’ profits? And “caring for all the fans?” OK, at least that’s a quote from Woodruff, who wrote the article and not from Johnson or anyone else in power. They care about what the fans bring with them, like the green pieces of paper with pictures of dead presidents on them.], there developed in the East this year a marked sentiment against the continuation of the World’s Series. Garry Herrmann’s old idea (*Ed. note: New York Times*, Oct. 16, 1913, “several years ago”) of shortening

the regular league schedules and playing an interleague series in which all the clubs should participate, beginning in the latter part of August, found many new supporters. After considering this question carefully, President Johnson announced himself opposed to any change. 'While I recognize many of the necessary evils of the World's Series [such as sharing revenues with the players],' said Mr. Johnson, 'the one great big point in its favor is that it arouses tremendous interest in every city, village and community in the whole country. This interest redounds to the benefit of base ball as a national pastime, and our efforts in a broad way should be to strengthen base ball throughout the country rather than in the cities of the major leagues alone.'

'It is undoubtedly true that an interleague series with 16 major league teams competing would sustain local interest in the closing weeks of the season in more cities than the present world games. On the other hand, such a series would remove the great financial incentive for teams to win their league pennants and share in the juicy financial melon which falls to the players. Even now, eight of the 16 major league clubs participate in post-season series and I think the custom will grow. Our Chicago City Series is not second in interest to the World's Series here at home (*Ed. Note: Maybe 'not' is a typo and should be 'now.'*). When either the Browns or Cardinals were up in the race their interleague games drew big crowds. Cleveland and Pittsburgh finished an interesting series this year. Perhaps the result of the last three World's Series have made me see some advantages in the present system which are not quite so clear to my National League contemporaries on the National Commission.' [Only I, the great Byron Bancroft Johnson, can see the advantages. How utterly pompous!]

Later in the article are quotes from National League President Thomas Lynch, aligning himself with Johnson, even though Johnson appeared to think otherwise, and Giants' manager John McGraw. Lynch first (quotes also appeared in *New York Times*, Oct. 17, 1913):

"The World's Series today is the biggest event in American sports and arouses country-wide interest. An interleague affair would be so long-drawn out that interest would lag and games would become merely local contests, instead of national importance."

McGraw (expanded quote from the *Times*): "This interclub series has been the argument for second division clubs for several seasons. You wouldn't hear a protest from any of these clubs if they happened to win a pennant. They hate to see the victors get the spoils they justly deserve, and want to declare themselves in on the post-season harvest. There isn't a chance of the world's series being dropped. It is too great an event in baseball. I am not saying this because the Giants have been in the last three world's series, but I would say it, no matter which clubs in the National League won the pennant. [But it's so much easier to say when you're on top.] I am strongly opposed to the interclub plan." [If you really want to know why, keep reading.]

#### **New York Times, October 15, 1913**

"The New York Club has lost its protest against the edict of the National Commission, made two seasons ago, providing that 25 per cent of the world's series receipts be contributed to a general fund for the other seven clubs in the league. Two years ago the clubs who have missed the post-season prosperity made a loud protest and argued that they, by their work during the season, made the world's series possible and should reap a few slight benefits somewhere. [Like those 'Save the Children' ads, let's start by showing pitiful pictures of Bob Hedges and Helene Britton, as both St. Louis clubs finished last this year. "We didn't stand a chance right from the opening bell and, as a result, became doormats for the rest of the league. Won't you please help?" 'Just 58 cents a day, less than the price of a cup of coffee, can help support an owner for an entire week.' Here's fifty bucks; maybe they can buy a condo in Florida.] The New York Club objected, and the matter has been hanging fire now for more than a year. It was

*continued on page 20*

## ZAPPALA

*continued from page 3*

Disappointingly, the Zappalas lightly reword my anecdotes and sentences while failing to credit either SABR (which published the material both in book and online formats) or me.

If you must peruse the text of this book, stick to the well-written concluding essay by Joe Orlando, who authenticates cards for a living while writing about them in a way that engaged the interest of someone who hopes to retain rather than sell his baseball cards. Alas, the Zappalas fail to meet the standard set by Orlando. The book jacket notes that Tom Zappala, who penned the majority of the text, has a “passion for anything related to baseball history.” The pictures of the cards alone would make this book a handsome embellishment to a coffee table; however, too much of its text has only a tangential relationship to baseball history rather than serving as an actual example of scholarship.



## SZALONTAI

*continued from page 4*

At one point, Szalontai opines that by 1932 “the game had deteriorated” thanks to the new “long-ball mentality.” Please--if your readers aren’t aware that you favor one type of baseball over another by the book’s halfway point (let alone from the *title*), hitting them upside the head with your opinion won’t help.

It would have helped greatly, however, had the book made its intended point: Year-by-year leaders suggest that teams which led the league in stolen bases and sacrifice hits more often than not found themselves in the second division, while pennant-winners rarely led in either category. So, if nothing else leaves readers skeptical about this volume’s theories, consider this nugget: In winning three consecutive pennants from 1929 to 1931, the Philadelphia A’s “...pilfered only 136 bases during that span and they did not steal a single base in eighteen World Series games...” What we learn here is that although ‘small ball’ can often be an intricate and fascinating chess match, high sacrifice hit and stolen bases totals do not a winning team make.

Had Szalontai considered the theory that perhaps teams with *less* talent *have* to steal more bases and move runners along to stay competitive, he may have paused before trying to convince us of the superiority of ‘small-ball.’ And I would have snoozed with his book in my lap less often.

### ***Publishers’ contacts for books reviewed in this issue:***

**Da Capo Press**  
11 Cambridge Center  
Cambridge, MA 02142  
(617-252-5200)

**Peter E. Randall**  
5 Greenleaf Woods Dr.  
Suite 102  
Portsmouth, NH 03801  
(603-431-5667)

**McFarland**  
Box 611  
Jefferson, NC 28640  
(336-246-4460)

## CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN *continued from page 2*

were constantly scraping for runs throughout the Deadball Era, the average team in 1911 scored a robust 4.5 runs per game and batted in about 128 more runs than it did in 1906. Yet, surprisingly, sacrifice hits, walks, and triples were all higher in 1911 than they were in the quintessentially-Deadball season from five years prior, suggesting that a turn away from the Deadball Era style was not complete.

It is particularly noteworthy that offensive performance from one hundred years ago continues to spark discussion in the modern-day baseball environment. Perhaps the Deadball Era remains relevant today partially because game strategy often remains largely unchanged, especially when it comes to competing in close games. The practices of bunting, stealing bases, and advancing runners remain as fundamental today as they did a century ago.

Rather than thinking of the Deadball Era as one continuous period from 1901 through 1919 where the style of baseball was the same throughout, it may be useful to break it into sub-periods: the formative years lasting through the cancellation of the 1904 World Series; followed by a pitching-dominated period through 1910; then an offense-dominated game from 1911 through 1914; and concluded by a normalization of statistics when pitchers compensated for the offensive surge. Even if these categorizations are imperfect and are by no means unique, they offer at least one way to put some order to a period that had some noticeable statistical ups and downs.

Virtually every era in baseball has individual seasons that stand out. The 1968 season, where pitchers dominated, and the 1987 season, where hitters developed a stronger footing, are two examples. The 1911 season could well be considered the greatest outlier of the Deadball Era. The perpetual struggle between pitchers and hitters to achieve some kind of equilibrium

has been going on since the early days of the game, and watching these forces at work is part of what makes following baseball history so much fun.



**Joe Jackson**  
**.408 was only good enough for  
second best in 1911**



## **NO MORE WORLD'S SERIES** *continued from page 18*

finally settled so that the New York Club will have to return last year's and this year's share to the fund, the amount being about \$40,000. [Kaching!] The American League has never objected to the practice, but has turned the money over as ordered without protest."

**MLB.com, September 8, 2011**

"As the Astros await approval of a transfer of ownership to a group led by Houston businessman Jim Crane, an industry source has confirmed for MLB.com that Commissioner Bud Selig has asked Crane to agree to move the Astros to the American League if he's approved as owner." [What goes around comes around. Interleague play every night and a World Series. Ah, what Major League Baseball could have had 98 years ago, without the lights, of course. Who needs "either/or?" They could have had both!]

## THE LAST WORD

by **David W. Anderson**

*[Editor's note: In addition to the intro and book excerpt he most graciously provided for this issue, Dave has some thoughts about writing and publishing that I thought should be shared with fellow SABR members, some of whom have made a few bucks--"few" being an almost literal term--from their own published writings.]*

I have written this column to show what I am doing as a SABR member. I am writing this to give you some thoughts on the future of books, according to me.

First, I love books. I love the feel of them, the fact that I can learn something from them and that I can retrieve information from them because they are on my shelf. But when you see that the industry is changing from regular book publishing to now include e-publishing, it should give us pause for thought.

Things are changing. I guess the demise of Borders made this come home. When I publish *You Can't Beat the Hours*, I have to make this demand: We can publish the book through regular channels, but I will also want to e-publish my work.

In the August 29, 2011 *Wall Street Journal*, Jeff Trachtenberg writes that book publishing is changing and the sales part of the industry barely looks like it did just six months ago. The big question is what happens when physical sales decrease. For the publisher, e-books are more profitable than a hardcover, especially when you look at inventory and returns.

In our world of baseball publishing, only the big stars can get advances. For instance, the Stan Musial bio by George Vecsey, or *The Last Boy* by Jane Leavy--I am sure they got something for their efforts. But for most of us, we don't get advances, thus we write because we love the game and gaining recognition for our individual research.

The bottom line is book publishing is changing. Some companies are ready, some are not. Some are responsive, some are not. Some will survive this and others will not. I put it this way: Publishers need to change the way they are thinking. As the saying goes, if you want to shoot yourself in the foot, make sure you take your shoe and sock off first.

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