

KELTNER'S HOT CORNER



Ken Keltner Badger State Chapter

June 2020

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Upcoming Events:

Keltner Book Club
Zoom Book Club Meeting
June 10, 2020
7:00 PM



Milwaukee Baseball History
June 12 to Mid-October
Chudnow Museum of Yesteryear
839 N. 11th St., Milwaukee



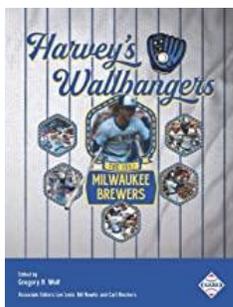
**Ken Keltner - Emil Rothe
Joint SABR Day Meeting**
February 20, 2021
Brat Stop - Kenosha



SABR 50
July 14-18, 2021
Baltimore, MD

Direct questions or comments to:
Dennis D. Degenhardt
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Harvey's Wallbangers: The 1982 Milwaukee Brewers



SABR's latest publication, "Harvey's Wallbangers: The 1982 Milwaukee Brewers," has arrived.

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

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

If you are like many of us missing baseball, here is an excellent opportunity to get some of that good feeling back reading about one of Milwaukee's all-time favorite ball clubs. Or as Richard Riis, one of the authors included on his social media posts, "Relive the good old days when summer meant baseball and only the catchers wore masks." He added, Available contact-free right now from Amazon and other fine booksellers."

Or, if you would like a printed copy of the book, and support the Ken Keltner Chapter, we have books available for \$29.99 including shipping. Contact [Dennis](#) to arrange for your copy.

Watch for details on a Zoom Keltner Chapter Meeting for a panel discussion on "Harvey's Wallbangers: The 1982 Milwaukee Brewers,"

May Ken Keltner Zoom Chapter Meeting with Jeremy Beer Another Success



Stay Home With SABR: Jeremy Beer (Ken Keltner Chapter)

On May 21, Jeremy Beer joined our Zoom Keltner Chapter Meeting to discuss his award winning biography, “Oscar Charleston: The Life and Legend of Baseball’s Greatest Unknown Player.” Like the book it was an interesting evening with a wide range of questions and good conversation. Jeremy not only discussed Charleston’s career but also the challenges of researching Negro League ballplayers, even a great one.

If you were unable to attend the meeting or would like to enjoy it again, please visit: <https://youtu.be/KuM8qxjydgQ>

After the meeting, Jeremy sent the following email:

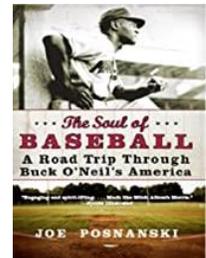
Thanks for having me join your chapter meeting tonight. It was a great pleasure. Please pass along my thanks for all the great questions, and my good wishes to all. Hope to see people in person at a SABR convention or ballgame sometime soon! Jeremy Beer

Congrats to Tom O’Connell who was the winner of a copy of “Oscar Charleston.”

Keltner Book Korner



Several years ago, we started a book club, but with all of all us busy, we never advanced to a second book. The Book club has been rejuvenated and will have a Keltner Book Club meeting on **Wednesday, June 10 @ 7:00 PM** to discuss Joe Posananski’s “The Soul of Baseball A Road Trip Through Buck O’Neil’s America.” With the challenges we are all facing today, the positive spirit of Buck O’Neil, a true ambassador for baseball before passing away at age 94 is inspirational with many baseball stories.



All are welcomed. If you do not have login instructions for the meeting, please contact [Dennis](#).

Do you have a recommendation for the next book for the Keltner Book Club? We are always looking for suggestions.

Have you read a good book lately, or a stinker? Share your thoughts with the chapter. Send your comments to [Dennis](#) to be include in the *Keltner Hot Corner*. Or, if you have recommendations, send those, too

<p style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">Milwaukee Baseball History</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">PRESENTED BY:</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p style="text-align: center;">Featuring Artifacts From:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">American Association Milwaukee Brewers MLB Milwaukee Braves MLB Milwaukee Brewers</p>
<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">New Museum Exhibit</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 0.8em;">BEGINNING CONTINUES UNTIL</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 1.5em; font-weight: bold;">June 12 Mid-October</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 0.8em;">Chudnow Museum of Yesteryear 839 North 11th Street Milwaukee, WI 53233 (414)273-1680 info@chudnowmuseum.org</p>	<p style="font-size: 0.8em;">Museum Hours: Wednesday-Saturday 10-4 Sunday 12-4</p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">Admission: Adults: \$7.00 Students/Seniors: \$6.00 Family Sunday: \$14.00</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>

Cory Ritterbusch Games Project

Keltner member Cory Ritterbusch of Shullsburg, Wisconsin enjoys researching and writing SABR Game Project articles. He has written three and is working on a fourth. Ritterbusch's first was about his hero Pee Wee Reese. Why is a 42 year-old Cubs fan's hero the Dodger Hall of Famer? As he tells everyone, "It started on my 9th Birthday when I saw his 1953 Bowman card. He became my hero that day. Still is, mostly." Not only does he enjoy researching the games, he would be willing to help anyone interested to learn how to conduct baseball research for games or any baseball history you may be interested in. Following is Cory's Games Project article.

June 1, 1940: Pee Wee Reese gets beamed by Cubs, leading to bleacher changes at Wrigley

This article was written by Cory Ritterbusch

Babe Ruth joined the Brooklyn Dodgers as they traveled by train to Chicago for three games at Wrigley Field in the first half of the 1940 season. A baby-faced rookie shortstop known as the Little Colonel was likely in awe of the stardom. But the game's most famous player could not have advised Pee Wee Reese on the park's "10th Man" that lurked in the outfield bleachers,¹ as those bleachers were constructed after Ruth's playing days in 1937. What happened in extra innings on June 1, 1940, would go on to influence how batters could protect themselves in the batter's box and help add a distinct element to the outfield bleachers at Wrigley Field.

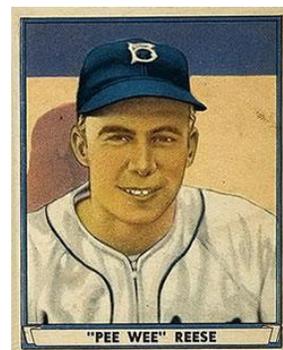
A crowd of 8,855 entered Wrigley Field that Saturday to watch the skidding Dodgers (21-10, two games behind Cincinnati), and Cubs (18-19, eight games back). It was the Dodgers' Tex Carleton on the mound, fresh off a no-hitter, going for Brooklyn. He would roll through the early frames, going up 3-0 against the Cubs' Ken Raffensberger. The sixth inning saw the Cubs tie the game, 3-3. It remained stalled at 3-3 into extra innings.

With two out and no one on in the top of the 12th inning, the Cubs pitcher, right-handed-throwing Texan Jake Mooty, delivered a pitch to Reese. Reese lost sight of the pitch among the white shirts worn by spectators in the center-field bleachers. The white ball struck Reese just behind his unprotected ear, dropping him limp on his back. The Dodgers' dugout quickly sprinted to tend to the likable shortstop.²

Conscious but disoriented, Reese was put on a stretcher and ambulated to nearby Illinois Masonic Hospital. Reese mentor and Dodgers manager Leo Durocher pinch-ran and took his place at shortstop. But the Dodgers' spirit was deflated and the first Cub to bat in the bottom half, former Dodger Al Todd, hit a 400-foot home run to win the game.

There was a Sunday doubleheader the next day, but the Dodgers were more concerned about the results at the hospital. Reese was their promising new 20-year-old shortstop coming at a high cost of \$75,000. Reese had the skills and the demeanor to lead the Dodgers franchise into the future. Larry MacPhail, Brooklyn's general manager, took a big risk with Reese. The Boston Red Sox has seen him as so important that they bought the Louisville Colonels team to ensure that they got him. But now he was a Dodger and the seasoned baseball man MacPhail called him "the most instinctive baserunner I have ever seen."³

Reese spent 10 days at the Chicago hospital before spending more time back home in Louisville recuperating from the "severe concussion."⁴ The day after Reese was pegged, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that 23-year-old Lyle Neuman of Wilmot, Wisconsin, had died days after getting



beaned in a Wisconsin Rural League game.⁵ Reese returned on June 21 to hit a single, double, and triple. Neuman could not.

To make matters worse, three days before Reese's return, his teammate Joe Medwick was knocked unconscious at Ebbets Field from a blatant beaning by Bob Bowman to finish an argument that began at a hotel.⁶ The constant baseball visionary MacPhail took note. Although there had been flirtations with designing batters' helmets since Ray Chapman's death in 1920, baseball leaders and players were still hesitant regarding the idea.

On June 29 NL President Ford Frick and other league brass met in St. Louis to discuss the increasing problem, citing the Reese and Medwick incidents. These head injuries became a rallying point for MacPhail and Frick to "galvanize the targeted development of protective headgear."⁷ MacPhail partnered with orthopedist Dr. George E. Bennett of the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine.

The 1941 season saw the Brooklyn Dodgers utilize an early form of the batting helmet with Reese and Medwick the first users. Dubbed a "beanball hat,"⁸ it was a regular baseball cap with plastic plates sewn into the side interiors. It earned the praise of MacPhail, who in 1941 called it "the biggest thing that has happened to the game since night baseball — which he also helped create. By the end of the 1941 season, four teams had adapted the new gear."⁹

In June 1941, with the Reese scare still fresh in Brooklyn, the *New York Daily News* penned a letter to Cubs owner Philip Wrigley in Chicago demanding that he do something to assist the batters' vision at Wrigley Field.¹⁰ The letter cited the most recent victim of the "white shirt problem," Cubs All-Star Hank Leiber who was severely injured at Wrigley on June 24 from a Cliff Melton pitch — lost in the shirts as usual. Chester Smith of the *Pittsburgh Press* passionately expanded upon it, calling it "one of the most unusual letters ever written to a club owner."¹¹

Smith added, "For years now, both Cubs and visiting players have complained of poor visibility by the low bleachers. It is the worst background for judging a pitched ball in the majors. Lieber didn't see the pitch that hit him until the last second. Even the umpire, Babe Pinelli, lost sight of the pitch. Lost it because the ball came out of the shimmer of the white shirts of fans seated in those bleachers in direct line of home plate. Pee Wee Reese suffered the same experience last year when felled by Jake Mooty."¹² Smith's article was accompanied by a cartoon captioned, "Ahh Forbes Field. You never get beaned at this park!"¹³

With the "White Shirt Problem" now exposed, it would pick up steam. Research indicates that complaints from National League players about the batting background at Wrigley increased with regularity as the 1940s moved on, and especially as baseball normalized after World War II. When Boston Brave Tommy Holmes's 37-game hit streak in 1945 was broken at Wrigley Field, he said, "[L]ooking out into that white background was tough. A couple of [Hank] Wyse's pitches were at my chin before I knew it."¹⁴

Although reluctant, Cubs owner Wrigley started to experiment, eventually adding a shade screen for right-handed hitters to the center-field bleachers during the 1947 season.¹⁵ Likely due to the



increased criticism received around the 1947 All-Star Game at Wrigley Field,¹⁶ a cartoon poking fun at the Cubs' "much discussed white shirts" appeared in the *Boston Globe* in June 1947.¹⁷ After the All-Star Game, with American Leaguers now stepping in at Wrigley, Joe DiMaggio said, "It's bad, they really ought to do something about it."¹⁸ Detroit Tiger George Kell said, "It's rough."¹⁹

In 1951 Cardinals manager Ed Stanky demanded that the center-field bleachers (1,200 seats) be roped off while his team was there.²⁰ That process finally became permanent for the 1952 season,²¹ due part to

efforts by Hank Sauer²² and Ralph Kiner²³ among others. Sauer would ignite at Wrigley to win the 1952 NL Most Valuable Player Award, perhaps aided by the new hitter's advantage. The bleacher seats would remain in place to be used for Chicago Bears games until the 1970s, but were fenced off during baseball season. The space would eventually be converted into green juniper shrubbery in 1997.

Baseball, with its spirit largely based on tradition, can be slow to change. This 1940 game and its one errant pitch served as a catalyst toward providing momentum to solve one of the game's safety issues and give one of its parks some much needed refining.

Sources

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20 Sauer Big Reason for ChiCubs Pace," *Wilmington (Delaware) Morning News*, June 10, 1952: 24.

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

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

As the premier minor league of the Midwest, the American Association had a lasting imprint on the state of Wisconsin. The Milwaukee Brewers were a force in the circuit from 1902 through the 1952 season, while the Minneapolis Millers and St. Paul Saints, located just miles from the badger state, were always a hot topic in baseball news in western Wisconsin through 1960. This dynamic changed after Milwaukee left the loop in 1952, but the dairy state continued to impact the league, particularly through the Milwaukee Braves farm system.

The Louisville Colonels, the league's most prolific league champion, benefitted from a cadre of Wisconsin-born ballplayers. While a long way from the dairy state, Louisville, a farm team of the Milwaukee Braves at the time, had an improved competitive balance as a result of this influence during the final three seasons of their tenure in the league. From 1960 through 1962, the Colonels disposed of each competitor in the playoffs to claim the league championship and represent the circuit in the Junior World Series.

In 1960, the Colonels, managed by **Ben Geraghty** and **Bill Adair** (who stepped in after Geraghty's illness), finished second to the Denver Bears with a record of 85-68. On their regular season roster were five players who hailed from the badger state: **Bobby Botz**, **John DeMerit**, **Bob Hartman**, **Howie Koplitz**, and **Bob Uecker**. Louisville finished in second place, just 2 1/2 games behind the Denver Bears, with a record of 85-68. The team absconded with the league title after defeating Denver in a six-game final round of the playoffs before moving on to the JWS.

In 1961, Louisville again finished in second place with a record of 80-70 under Geraghty, six games behind the Indianapolis Indians. Once again the team fielded five top prospects from the Wisconsin baseball scene: Botz, Hartman and Uecker, plus **Connie Grob** and **Mike Krnsnich**. The Colonels competed in the playoffs and came away with the league championship after defeating the Houston Buffs, again in a six-game final round.

In 1962, fourth-place Louisville rose from a sub-.500 season to capture the league championship, this time subduing the Denver Bears under the tutelage of **Jack Tighe**. The team featured four returnees from Wisconsin, each of whom appeared in both regular-season and playoff contests: Botz, Grob, Hartman and Krnsich.

Here is an alphabetical overview of the Wisconsin-born players appearing with Louisville during those two seasons.

Bobby Botz. Born in Milwaukee on April 28, 1935, Botz attended Nathan Hale High School in West Allis. From the age of 20 he was under contract with the Milwaukee Braves, joining Eau Claire of the Northern League (C) in 1955 and producing a 13-3 won-lost record including 19 starts. After producing career numbers including a 17-9 record and a 2.55 ERA with double-A Jacksonville in 1959, Botz advanced to triple-A Louisville for the 1960 season. That year the 25-year-old appeared in 30 regular season games, splitting the season with the Indianapolis Indians, appearing in 18 games, with an additional 12 with Louisville. In the 1960 American Association playoffs, Botz made two starts, most notably Sept. 25 when he authored a complete game during Game 5 of the finals against the Denver Bears. It was Louisville's third win in the six-game series, as Botz benefitted from an offensive outburst in a 17-4 rout at Louisville's Fairgrounds Stadium. His only loss came Sept. 16 in a six-inning start against the St. Paul Saints in the semi-finals. Botz' summary line showed a solid contribution with 12 strikeouts against just two walks in 18.1 innings, giving up 14 hits, nine runs,

and seven earned runs in addition to his 1-1 record. The Colonels went on to defeat the Toronto Maple Leafs in a six-game JWS, with Botz making two appearances.

In 1961, Botz returned to the Louisville roster, making 46 appearances while compiling a sterling 2.11 ERA, a team best, and ranking sixth in the league. In his six starts for Ben Geraghty's boys, Botz' star was rising with four complete games and a

9-7 record during the regular season. The 5'11, 170-lb. righty claimed four complete games and two shutouts, striking out 65 batters while walking 37 in 132 innings. In the playoffs, his four appearances helped push the Colonels toward their second straight American Association championship. During Louisville's 13 playoff games, Botz came to the fore as a reliever. In four appearances, he won two and lost one while striking out 11 batters and walking just one in seven innings of work. He was particularly effective in game three of the semi-finals against Denver when he pitched two hitless innings to help preserve a comeback win for the Colonels. (A box score botch in both the *Louisville Courier-Journal* and *The Sporting News* gave Botz seven strikeouts in his two innings of work, effectively rendering his actual strikeout total unknown.) In the JWS Botz pitched just one inning against the Buffalo Bisons who swept the Colonels in four games.

Once again with Louisville in 1962, Botz was nearing the end of his professional career, making just six appearances and winding up with a record of 0-1. He made no playoff appearances with the team that year.

John DeMerit. Known as "Thumper," John DeMerit roamed the outfield for the 1960 Louisville Colonels as the team ascended toward the league championship. He was born January 8, 1936 at West Bend and attended Port Washington High School before beginning his college years at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. An all-around athlete, he began his professional baseball career as a member of the Milwaukee Braves at the age of 21, appearing in 33 games. In 1960 he played in 126 regular season games as a Colonel, with a slash line of .270/.317/.440 (batting avg./on-base pct./slugging pct.), producing 155 total bases. He ranked third on the club in home runs with 12 while **Mack Jones** led the squad with 17. In the playoffs, DeMerit played right field in 12 games, batting .333, tops on the team and fourth on the combined playoff leaderboard (among qualifying batters). He slugged .595, another team best, placing him fifth on the combined playoff leaderboard. In his four multi-hit games, Louisville won three and lost one. In his six JWS appearances against Toronto, DeMerit's slash line was .273/.318/.360. It would be his final year in a Louisville uniform, but he later claimed it was his "most satisfying season of my professional baseball career." Please see **Steven Schmitt's** SABR Bio: <https://sabr.org/bioproj/person/oe3ab4a2>

The American Association Almanac is a bi-annual paper publication available by subscription. The Fall issue will focus on the final ten years of the American Association playoffs. For more information, please contact Rex Hamann by email: pureout@msn.com

Watch Former Brewer Don August Pitching in Mexico

Tom Pippens interviews former Brewer pitcher, Don August on pitching in Mexico, adding to his baseball adventures following his major league career. Like Taiwan last month, August has another interesting tale to tell.



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

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

