

The Inside Game

"Let's get this lumpy, licorice-stained ball rolling!"

Vol. 1, No. 2

The Official Newsletter of SABR's Deadball Committee

October '00

From the Chairman

The Anti-Dode

by Tom Simon

If you even recognize the name of Dick Egan, you probably think of him as a mediocre Deadball Era second baseman who spent most of his nine-year career with the Cincinnati Reds.

To members of the DBC Bio Subcommittee, however, he's a dastardly fiend, the sort who tortures kittens in his spare time. Think of Charles Manson, Albert Belle, and Kathy Lee Gifford rolled into one. In short, he's a sort of Anti-Dode Paskert.

Actually, if Egan had been like that, he undoubtedly would have found a place in our collection of N.L. Deadball Era biographies. But because he was not, he became the poster boy for all those Deadballers with decent careers but who lacked that certain something to capture our interest. The role just as easily could have been filled by John Hummel or Otto Knabe, but we chose poor Dick Egan.

For several months now, Steve Constantelos, Fred Ivor-Campbell, David Jones, Lyle Spatz, Dave Anderson, and I have been exchanging a flurry of e-mails considering the pluses and minuses of guys like Al Bridwell, Tim Jordan, Bill Killefer, Carl Lundgren, Lee Magee, Rebel Oakes, and Irv Young. At times we sounded like a college admissions committee at the height of Affirmative Action: "So-and-so was of such-and-such descent," one of us might say.

Ultimately, though, we resembled the admissions committee for the Hell's Angels: If you were a boozier with a good nickname who got into bar fights, allegedly threw games, and committed suicide at the age of 29, we liked you. If you were steady-but-unspectacular and went on to live a normal life, you were in danger of being branded another Dick Egan.

Somewhere I've got a T-206 depicting Egan with goofy red lips that make him look like an evil clown. If I can find it before next year's DBC meeting in Milwaukee, we can burn it as a sacrifice to Dode Paskert, asking him to look favorably upon our bio project.

Round One: The National League

Plans for Bio Project Set

Imagine going to your mailbox and discovering a 400-page volume containing biographies of 138 National League players, umpires, managers, and executives of the Deadball Era!

In mid-October SABR approved the DBC Biography Subcommittee's plans, so that vision will become reality in 2003. And if all goes well, SABR will publish a similar volume covering the American League in 2006.

After several months of discussion and deliberation, the DBC Bio Subcommittee announced its plans for a two-volume set of Deadball Era biographies on August 31. Each volume will be the approximate size of *The Negro Leagues Book*, published by SABR's Negro Leagues Committee in 1994.

The biographies will be organized by team, with each team's chapter appearing in its order of finish for its cumulative Deadball Era record. Each chapter begins with an overview of the team's history during the era, and subjects will be placed within each chapter in order of their debut with the team.

Most subjects will receive a two-page, 1,000-word biography, but 37 stars and "near-stars" will receive four-page, 2,000-word treatment. Each biography will include between two and six photos.

A complete list of subjects appears on pages 2-3. All who wish to participate in the project should contact Lyle

Spatz, 331 Colony Point Place, Edgewater, MD 21037, (410) 269-4043, spatz@annapolis.net.

The Bio Subcommittee set the following guidelines for contributors:

1. Biographies should cover the subject's entire life, but with special emphasis on the Deadball Era (1901-19).

2. Contributors are encouraged to assess the player's career and playing style. In the case of outfielders, contributors should determine whether the subject played primarily left, center, or right field.

3. Footnotes are unnecessary, but citations in the text to significant sources are encouraged.

4. The book will contain sidebars, so feel free to suggest potential sidebar material if you come across information that doesn't fit with the flow of your text.

5. Contributors are strongly encouraged to submit photocopies

of at least two photos of each subject, one of which is preferably a portrait. Photos of the player in the uniform of the team in whose chapter the player appears are preferred. In addition, please let us know where the photo can be obtained.

6. For subjects receiving longer treatment, we could use as many as six photos.

7. If you come across a SABR member who has already done definitive research on your subject, please encourage him to write the article. There are plenty of unclaimed subjects for you to claim.

8. Drafts for the N.L. volume should be submitted to the Editor In Chief (to be determined) by December 31, 2001.



Roy Thomas

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Deadballers: The National League

The Deadball Committee's Biography Project Subcommittee has compiled the following list of Deadball Era subjects to be included in Volume I. Steve Constantelos, Fred Ivor-Campbell, David Jones, Lyle Spatz, Dave Anderson, and Tom Simon worked feverishly throughout the summer to complete the list.

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The Inside Game

In an effort to maintain a manageable size and format for The Inside Game, and due to the large number of articles submitted for this issue, several articles will be held for a future issue. We're considering a more wide-ranging format.

The Inside Game

**The Official Newsletter of
SABR's Deadball Committee**
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Hail to a Victor(y)!

by TOMSIMON

This year's crop of baseball books contains several focusing on the Deadball Era, but one that you won't find at your local bookstores is Gabriel Schechter's *Victory Faust: The Rube Who Saved McGraw's Giants*. Faust, you'll recall from Fred Snodgrass' chapter in *The Glory of Their Times*, was the 30-year old whacko who walked on to the 1911 New York Giants and used his jinxing power to lead them to the National League pennant. As unlikely as that sounds, this book demonstrates that it's actually an understatement of Faust's achievements.

If you're like I was when I first learned about this book, you're wondering how anybody could write 264 pages -- with legitimate type size and

margins, no less -- about Charles Victor Faust. Schechter accomplishes this by collecting every -- and I mean every -- mention of Faust from the contemporary newspapers. The 1911 rookie class of New York sportswriters included Heywood Broun, Fred Lieb, Grantland Rice and Damon Runyon, and they're all represented here by samples of their inimitable Deadball Era prose, often followed by Schechter's interpretations for those who don't speak Deadball-ese. The star of this book, however, may be Sid Mercer, who couldn't resist tucking daily nuggets of juicy Faust gossip into the "notes" section of his columns.

But this is also a well-written history of the 1911 New York Giants, masters of "inside baseball" who still hold

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Dick Egan *Deadball Era Fiend or Friend?*

by David Jones

In our attempts to pinpoint the greatest players of the National League during the Deadball Era, the DBC Bio Subcommittee searched statistical rosters and yearly registers to find any candidate worthy of inclusion in the book. In the course of this search, we considered and debated dozens and dozens of players. None of these candidates was as thoroughly rejected by the Subcommittee as Richard Joseph "Dick" Egan.

Egan was a second baseman for Cincinnati from 1908-13, one of the truly mediocre stretches in Reds history. In those six seasons, the Reds were never awful...and they were never good. Their best year came in 1909 when they finished fourth with a sterling 77-76 record. Dick Egan was the mediocre starting second baseman for this mediocre team. Like the Reds, Egan was never awful...and he was never good. He didn't hit for average (lifetime .249), nor for power (lifetime .300 slugging percentage). His 1963 obituary claims that he was "acknowledged as one of the best defensive second basemen in the National League during a period of ten years (1904-1914)" -- truly amazing when one considers that Egan wasn't even in the big leagues until 1908. And as for his fielding ability, *Total Baseball* disagrees with the obituary writer. In nine seasons, Egan racked up negative 14 fielding runs. Even if we don't believe in fielding runs, we should at least believe that there was some reason that in 1915 the Boston Braves switched him to the outfield.

Prior to his arrival in the majors, Egan toiled for four seasons in the minors, never batting higher than .254. A retrospective on Egan's career, published in April 1914 in *The Sporting News* (headlined "Richard Joseph Egan, Champion Sightseer"), said this about his minor league experience:

Arriving within sight of the Pacific, (Egan) amassed a whole lot more experience in a bunch. He joined the Los Angeles team in organized ball, which was fighting the Pacific Coast outlaws, and qualified for the army of the unemployed, as that league also blew.

Perhaps the most revealing source of contemporary opinion on Dick Egan comes through surviving correspondence between Cincinnati owner Garry Herrmann and Brooklyn magnate Charles Ebbets. On March 5, 1914, Herrmann sold Egan to Brooklyn for \$5,000. It appears that shortly thereafter, Egan decided to hold out for a higher salary, using, as many players did in 1914, the Federal League as leverage. For some reason, National League President John Tener determined that it would be unacceptable for the NL to lose a gem like Dick Egan. As such, after talking with Tener and getting the okay from Ebbets, Herrmann (acting as an agent of the National League) promised Egan a \$600 raise, to \$4,800 per year. Egan agreed. Switched to shortstop, Dick then proceeded to have the worst season of his career, batting .226 with an abysmal .914 fielding percentage.

One year later, a peeved Ebbets came knocking on Herrmann's door, claiming that Herrmann himself was responsible for the extra \$600 in Egan's salary. (Not only had Egan been given a raise, but in the insanity of the 1914 baseball wars he was also given a three-year contract at that sum.) In an April 1, 1915, letter to Herrmann, a desperate Ebbets, faced with the unappetizing prospect of two more years of Dick Egan, pleaded for help:

I note what you say relative to Egan. While it is true that Egan for some reason did not care to sign contract at \$4200 at the time I met him...nevertheless he promised positively to do so and gave me his word of honor that he would...I think he just squeezed \$600 more than he expected to get; he is not worth either the \$4800 or \$4200. I wish we could dispose of him for any old sum. He may be a fair ball player but there are many reasons relative to him that would make it desirable if we could dispose of his services. He has as you know a contract in which the 10 day clause was eliminated; otherwise I would long ago have released him to a minor league club. Do you know anybody that wants him?

Sincerely,

C.H. Ebbets, President.

To which Garry Herrmann responded, and I'm interpreting liberally here, "Of course no one wants him, he's Dick Egan, he's got a three-year contract, you can't send him to the minors and you're paying him \$4,800 to bat .226."

In a subsequent letter, Ebbets came right out and asked Herrmann to pay the extra \$600 of Egan's salary. To which Herrmann replied in an April 8th letter:

Under no condition, will I consider a proposition in so far as the Cincinnati Baseball Club is concerned to pay any part of Egan's salary. Why we should be requested to consider a proposition of this kind, is something I cannot comprehend.

Respectfully,

Aug. Herrmann, President

The matter was dropped on May 12, 1915, when Ebbets sold Egan to the Boston Braves for any old sum. Egan would be finished in the majors after 1916, when he batted .223 with a .282 slugging percentage.

He's No Dode. . .



...but Reds second sacker Dick Egan is the poster boy for players who didn't make the cut for the Deadball Committee's NL biography collection. (photo courtesy National Baseball Library)

The Windy City Series

by Ron Hanson

The 1906 World Series was special to Chicago sports fans. It was the first and thus far the only cross-town world series in the Windy City. The mighty Cubs, who had dominating teams during the first decade of the Deadball Era, were expected to win the series. They did not. Instead, the underdog White Sox, the so-called "Hitless Wonders," took the series in six games. Taking statistics out of context, it would be easy to say it was a fluke, an anomaly, a collective lucky hop. After all, during the 1906 regular season the White Sox had a team batting average of only .230, dead last in the American League and well below the league average of .248. They were last in home runs (6), second from last in triples (52) and third from the bottom in doubles (154). Their strength appears to have been their pitching. They had two 20-game winners in Frank Owen and Nick Altrock, while Doc White and Ed Walsh won 18 and 17 games, respectively. But even with a team ERA of 2.13, it was the Cleveland Naps who commanded the best pitching that year, posting three 20-game winners of their own and a league-leading ERA of 2.09. The Cubs, on the other hand, led the National League in hitting with a .266 team average. They were second in the league in home runs (20) and doubles (181), and shared the league lead in triples with Cincinnati (71). Cub pitching dominated the National League. With two 20-game winners in Three Finger Brown and Jack Pfeister, along with 19 and 17 wins from Ed Reulbach and Carl Lundgren, the Cubs posted a league-leading ERA of 1.75. So how did the White Sox do it? How did they win the pennant and go on to beat the Cubs?

I think it was a combination of two things. First, there was the pitching. The old adage that good pitching will beat good hitting is probably true, and the White Sox had great pitching. But by the same logic Cleveland should have won the pennant and the Cubs should have won the World Series because they had *even better* pitching. Since neither of these things happened, something else propelled the White Sox to glory in 1906. I think it was an opportunistic offense, measured by a statistic I have called scoring percentage (SP). Scoring percentage is measured by taking the total number of runs a team has scored, and dividing that by the sum of hits and walks. So, $SP = R / (H + BB)$. For example, a team that scores 600 runs, has 1000 hits and 400 walks would have an SP of .428, which means that this team scores its base runners 42 percent of the time (the 1998 Yankees had an SP of .423 and went on to win the World Series). I believe this is an important statistic because it measures collective effort, and baseball is a *team* sport. Not only do you have

to get runners on base, but you have to take advantage of that by scoring them. How often have you seen this kind of line score: team A gets 3 runs on 10 hits and loses to team B who scored 4 runs on 6 hits? Team B was out hit but was able to take advantage of its opportunities. Failure to capitalize on scoring opportunities is critical because there are so few of them in a game. Once they are squandered they are gone forever. Let's go back now and look at some of the data and see how the White Sox stack up against other teams.

The Deadball Era was noted for an offensive approach called the "inside game" (or "small ball"). It was typified by getting men on base, moving them along by bunting or hitting to the right side, stealing bases, and scoring them with singles, sacrifice flies, or thefts of home. The home run's role was minor.

In 1906 the White Sox had 1,132 hits during the regular season, again dead last. But, they led the league in walks with 453. They scored 570 runs, for an SP of .359. This was second in the league (tied with Cleveland) to New York's .382. Thus the White Sox may not have had as many base runners as other teams, but scored those runners more often than all but two teams. One of those teams, New York, did not have as good pitching. Cleveland battled the Sox almost down to the wire, as only four victories separated the two teams at season's end. The White Sox won the pennant with great pitching and timely run production.

The Cubs won the National League pennant in similar fashion. Combined with their great pitching was an offense that led the league in hits (1,316) and runs scored (704). They also led the league with an SP of .399. The World Series was actually very close in many ways. Both teams hit poorly (or pitched well), the Cubs hitting only .196 while the White Sox hit .198. The White Sox scored 22 runs on 37 hits while the Cubs scored 18 runs on 36 hits, and each team collected 18 walks. What put the White

Sox over the top? They were more efficient in scoring, measured by an SP of .400 while the Cubs squandered opportunities and posted an SP of only .333.

Hitless Wonders? Perhaps, but I would rather think that they epitomized the inside game. What's that other adage, something about good pitching and timely hitting?

Hail to a Victor(y)

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the single-season steals record (347). Have you considered how difficult it must have been to keep Josh Devore, Red Murray, Larry Doyle, et al, in pants? I hadn't until I read on page 122 that this was a real concern. You'll also read now-familiar stories of Rube Marquard's turnaround and Bugs Raymond's fall from grace, but I bet you don't know about the racist Atlantan who thrashed Christy Mathewson, Chief Meyers and Al Bridwell and sent John McGraw cowering. You'll also meet forgotten characters like Harry Sparrow, a socialite who occasionally worked out with the team, and Louis "Plaintiff" Drucke, a pitcher who earned his nickname by suing a subway company when injuries suffered in a derailment shortened his career.

Schechter gives us a flavor for the era by working in descriptions of sweatshop fires, killer heat waves, aviation disasters, psychotic stalkers and vaudeville -- which sounds like it could kill you if none of the aforementioned had gotten to you first. The book also contains a nice collection of photos and illustrations obtained from a wide variety of sources. The cover is a bit amateurish, but this book shouldn't be judged by its cover. A bargain at \$16 postpaid, *Victory Faust* may be ordered from Charles April Publications, PO Box 754, Los Gatos, CA 95031-0754. Order a copy today -- you won't be disappointed.

Deadball Committee Dope

A 'RED' FOR THE 'REDHEAD'

Have you noticed "redheadedkids@hotmail.com" among the list of DBC member e-mail addresses? That handle belongs to Scott Turner of Tucson, Ariz., who was officially the Committee's 100th member. Scott's reward was a T-206 card of Red Murray, presented by DBC chairman Tom Simon. We assume that, like Murray, someone in the Turner household sports a red mane.

TRANSACTION

The rights to Fred Clarke's biography, claimed by Bill Lamberty, was traded for two loaves of lemon bread to Angelo

Louisa. The transaction is pending approval of the Chairman's office.

DEADBALL BY THE NUMBERS

Jim Sandoval gleaned the following from the June 29, 1916, issue of *The Sporting News*: "Cleveland American League players wore numbers on the sleeves of their uniforms in Monday's game with Chicago for the first time in the history of major league baseball so far as known. The numbers correspond to similar numbers set opposite the player's names on the score cards, so that all fans in the stands might easily identify the members of the home club."

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Deadball Strategy

The Stolen Base... Deadball Weapon of Choice

by Ben Baschinsky

From the period of 1901-19, when inside baseball was played, the stolen base was an integral part of the game. Theft artists such as Ty Cobb, Sam Mertes, Bob Bescher, Sherry Magee, Eddie Collins, Clyde Milan and Max Carey dominated. Teams as a whole during this time stole bases with a reckless abandon never to be seen again with the regularity that prevailed during this era.

With the exception of the Boston Braves, every Deadball Era team stole 200 bases or more in a season at least once. Long before they became the Go Go Sox many decades later, the White Sox accomplished the feat 10 times. The Cubs and Highlanders each pilfered 200 bases in nine seasons. The Giants (347 in 1911 and 319 a year later) and Reds (310 swipes in 1910) were the only teams to exceed 300 stolen bases.

At the other end of the spectrum, the '06 Red Sox were the only team of the period, not counting the shortened

1918-19 seasons, not to steal at least 100 bases in a season (they stole 99).

Teams of the Deadball Era were built for speed, witnessed by the fact that several strung together multiple 200-steal seasons. The dominance of some teams is evidenced by the distance between the league-leader in stolen bases and the second-place squad. The 1901 White Sox out-stole New York 280-207, while the 1912 Giants stole 319 to Cincinnati's 248. McGraw's Giants led the NL in steals from 1904-06, and from 1911-14. Chicago dominated the AL from 1901-04.

The '02 Brooklyn Dodgers stole 145 bases, but a year later posted the era's largest increase by swiping 273. The 128 extra steals can be attributed to replacing third baseman Charlie Irwin's dozen with Sammy Strang's 46 in '03, by replacing Tom McCreery's 16 in '02 with Jack Doyle's 34 in '03, and by Jimmy Sheckard stealing 67 in '03 after swiping just 25 the year before.

The Tigers had the largest increase of any AL team, jumping to 280 steals in 1909 after swiping just 165 the year before. Ty Cobb's production was the major impetus, his total increasing from 39 to 76. Sam Crawford's total doubled to 30, while George Moriarty stole 34, 24 more than Bill Coughlin had in '08.

The Deadball Pirates led the majors with 4,465 steals, an average of 248 a season, followed by New York's 4,355. The Boston Braves, playing in a spacious park, surprisingly trailed the pack by swiping 2,681, or 149 a year, measly by contemporary standards.

In 1912, the AL stole 1,809 bases, a one-year record. From 1920-29, neither league exceeded the 968 bases stolen by the 1920 NL. No team in the '20s stole as many as 200 bases, and the '28 Cubs and Reds paced the Senior Circuit with just 83 steals. With millenium baseball dominated by juiced-up sluggers and shrunk-down parks, a return to Deadball strategy is not likely.

by **Bill Lambert**

Long before interleague play was foisted upon the baseball-loving public in 1995, rivalry between leagues was part and parcel of baseball. Records of organized world's championship series date to 1884, when Providence of the National League smited the American Association champion Metropolitan three games to none.

The fall of 1903 brought a refinement of this concept, however, which would eventually give us what we know as the World Series. That first fall of peace between the two major leagues brought some classics.

Ban Johnson's American League signed peace terms with the NL on January 10 in Cincinnati, agreeing to abide by the National Agreement and formally creating a two-major league system for the 1903 campaign. That set the stage for a true championship between the two leagues.

When it became apparent in August that Pittsburgh would win the NL and Boston the AL, the team's respective presidents, Barney Dreyfuss and Henry Killilea, signed an agreement that would pit the teams to decide a world champion. There was an agreement that no player would be eligible who was not on his team's roster on September 1, a

rule that still stands. The nine-game series would begin with three games in Boston, followed by four in Pittsburgh and two more in Boston if necessary.

Terms of the agreement stated that the teams would divide gate receipts evenly, with each team settling with its players as it saw fit. Boston, however, was hindered by a technicality. Its player's contracts expired on September 30, so Pilgrim management was obligated to negotiate with its players, and ceded most of the profits to the combatants. Pittsburgh players were bound to the team until October 15.

The series was "played grandly, cleanly, squarely and without friction" according to the 1904 Reach Guide. Boston took the series five games to three by winning game eight at Huntingdon Avenue Grounds 3-0 on October 13. Bill Dinneen earned his second win of the series, striking out Honus Wagner to close the issue.

Catcher Jake Stahl hit .309 for Boston, handling 14 chances without an error. Cy Young won twice in the series, which may be best remembered for Nuf Ced McGreevey's Royal Rooters tormenting Pittsburgh players by rhapsodizing a version of the popular show tune "Tessie."

Far from the national limelight, several teams staged cross-league exhibi-

tions to profit from the new-found peace between leagues. Local championship series were played in Philadelphia, St. Louis and Chicago. The Phillies were the only NL entry to prevail, winning seven of the 12 games played between the Quaker City rivals, although the series included five preseason games. Of the seven post-season games played, the Athletics won four. The Browns took four of seven fall games from the Cardinals, and won the spring-fall series seven games to four. In Chicago, the Colts won the first three games by a total of 22-1. Spurred by Charles Comiskey's financial incentives, the Whites rallied to win seven of the next 11 and gain a tie. At this point the Colts disbanded for the season in spite of Comiskey's offer of the entire gate just to play the decisive game. Commy's crew was declared Windy City champs.

In the Ohio championship, Cleveland rallied from a 2-1 deficit to beat Cincinnati 6-3, then split four games with the Cardinals in the final inter-league series of 1903. John McGraw turned down the Highlanders' challenge for a Gotham series.

The AL was a spectacular 35-27 in '03 exhibitions.

Ban Johnson Baseball's Czar

by **Zack Trisucit**

In creating the American League, Ban Johnson achieved two things that no other league had. The AL competed favorably with the established National League, and it took baseball's popularity to new levels.

Byron Bancroft Johnson was born in 1864 and attended Marietta College, where he was an excellent catcher deprived of equipment. After studying law in Cincinnati, Johnson became a sportswriter for the Cincinnati Commercial-Gazette. While Johnson was friendly with Reds manager Charles Comiskey, he was a strong critic of team owner John Brush, whom he called stingy with team spending and the "master of parsimony." Comiskey was able to convince Brush, who it appears was eager to remove Johnson from his bully's pulpit, that Johnson was perfect for the vacant presidency of the Western League. The league's name was changed to the American League before the 1900 season.

By refusing to sign the National

Agreement in 1901, Johnson had created a second major league. He ran his enterprise with absolute power, shifting franchises, maintaining competitive balance, and eliminating "rowdyism." Most importantly, fans were happy and franchises profitable.

Johnson's opening for establishing the AL as a major league came after the National League's Cleveland and Baltimore franchises were dissolved. The AL grabbed the Cleveland market, and transferred Comiskey's St. Paul franchise to Chicago. Johnson had just begun his plan to take the American League to the top.

Under Johnson's leadership, attendance increased and stars were stolen from the National League. Evidence even exists that Johnson isolated the Pittsburgh Pirates franchise from the player raids to create a supreme franchise among sinking ones. In 1901 Johnson received a new contract and expanded to the east, placing teams in Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, and Washington. The Milwaukee franchise moved to St. Louis in 1902, and a year later Baltimore's team would be transferred to New York.

With NL salaries capped at \$2,400, players came flooding into the new

league, 87 in all, and NL attendance fell below the AL's. The National League couldn't compete with Johnson and tried to make peace and hold their reputation.

After Johnson's league signed the National Agreement, the National Commission was formed, composed of the two leagues' presidents and an elected official. That elected official was Cincinnati president Garry Herrmann, Johnson's old friend. The alliance would give Johnson considerable power within the Commission and all of baseball.

While the Black Sox Scandal in 1919 would diminish Johnson's power, his league would win 14 of the first 24 World Series. Following the Black Sox Scandal, Johnson is credited with initiating an investigation into the scandal that would eventually erode his powers. He retired in 1927 and died in 1931 of diabetes. Branch Rickey probably described Johnson best: "The making or amassing of money was not part of Ban Johnson's life. He lived for the American League and the game of baseball."

Ban Johnson



AL President, 1900-27