

BLACK SOX SCANDAL



Vol. 14, No. 2, December 2022

Research Committee Newsletter

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Chairman's Corner

By **Jacob Pomrenke**

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The baseball world is returning to Chicago in 2023, and I hope you'll [join us for SABR 51](#) next summer. We'll meet on July 5-9 at the Palmer House Hilton, which has played host to so many memorable baseball events over the years.

There's a lot to see and even more to talk about than the last time SABR held a convention in Chicago, back in 2015. That summer, we published our Digital Library book, *Scandal on the South Side*, and gathered at the Chicago History Museum to view original Black Sox Scandal artifacts and documents.

This time around, convention attendees might have an opportunity to see a historic baseball from the 1919 World Series — which was recently discovered in a time capsule buried inside the Tribune Tower for the past 100 years.

The ball was used by Cincinnati's Hod Eller in

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A baseball used by Cincinnati Reds pitcher Hod Eller during Game Five of the 1919 World Series was recently rediscovered in a time capsule buried around 1920 inside the Tribune Tower building in Chicago. The baseball was accompanied by a letter written by *Chicago Tribune* sports editor Harvey T. Woodruff. (Photo: Jacob Pomrenke)

1919 World Series baseball discovered in time capsule

Rare artifact on display at Chicago Sports Museum

By **Jacob Pomrenke**

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After Hod Eller of the Cincinnati Reds set a World Series record by striking out six consecutive batters in Game Five of the 1919 World Series, even the 34,379 White Sox fans at Chicago's Comiskey Park couldn't help but give him a rousing ovation.

Eller's 5-0 shutout gave the Reds a four games to one lead in the best-of-nine World Series, putting Cincinnati on the verge of a championship that would later be tainted by the Black Sox Scandal.

"Before the eyes of the Chicago White Sox this afternoon, there spun a baseball that acted as a thing bewitched," Damon Runyon wrote in his syndicated column the next day. "A

species of pitching legerdemain [sleight of hand] was performed for them in a manner that left them as dazed and bewildered as an audience before which a great magician has just executed some astounding feat."

Like a magician's prop, the "bewitched" ball that Eller used to set his World Series record in 1919 seemed to disappear into thin air afterward. More than 100 years later, that baseball has finally resurfaced — in a time capsule buried inside Chicago's Tribune Tower building. The downtown landmark was renovated in recent years and is now home to luxury condos.

The time capsule — one of three metal boxes first discovered by construction workers in 2018 and opened in June 2022 — included an undated

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Game Five when he set a World Series record by striking out six consecutive White Sox batters. There's even documentation of how the ball ended up in the time capsule, thanks to former *Chicago Tribune* sports editor Harvey T. Woodruff. The ball is currently on display at the Chicago Sports Museum inside Water Tower Place, where Grant DePorter, CEO of Harry Caray's Restaurant Group, was kind enough to give a group of SABR members a personal tour last month.

We're still early in the planning stages, but we're hoping to arrange for an encore performance of *Black Sox on Trial*®, a dramatic re-enactment of the 1920 grand jury and 1921 criminal trial organized by the Illinois Supreme Court Historic Preservation Commission. I was honored to participate in panel discussions following the play's debut in Springfield and Chicago this fall.

The script, written by Scott J. Szala, uses Bill Lamb's book, *Black Sox in the Courtroom*, as its primary source, so the research is top-notch and the professional actors who portray Eddie Cicotte, Shoeless Joe Jackson, and the delightful Sleepy Bill Burns are terrific. It's a compelling effort at telling a complex story in a much more historically accurate way than any previous portrayal on stage or screen. (You can find more from Bill Lamb on the ethical lapses throughout the Black Sox legal proceedings on [page 4](#) of this newsletter.)

Two items that will definitely be somewhere on the SABR 51 convention schedule are a White Sox home game (July 7 vs. the St. Louis Cardinals) and the return of the [Chicago Baseball History Walking Tour](#), which some of you joined me on during the 2015 SABR convention or during the 2019 Black Sox Scandal Centennial Symposium. We'll make stops at the Congress Plaza Hotel, the old Criminal Courts Building, and other sites related to Black Sox history.

The Chicago convention promises to be a fantastic experience, and if you've never attended a national SABR event, this is one you won't want to miss.

If you have an idea for a Black Sox-related research presentation, a call for abstracts will be posted online in early February. Any SABR member is welcome to submit an abstract and give a presentation. If you have any other tips or suggestions for convention programming, Black Sox or otherwise, please feel free to email me at buckweaver@gmail.com with your thoughts.

The SABR 51 convention is open to all baseball fans, and registration will be available at [SABR.org/convention](https://sabr.org/convention) beginning in early 2023. Hope to see you there!

For more information about SABR's Black Sox Scandal Research Committee, e-mail buckweaver@gmail.com.

Catch up on Black Sox committee projects, research

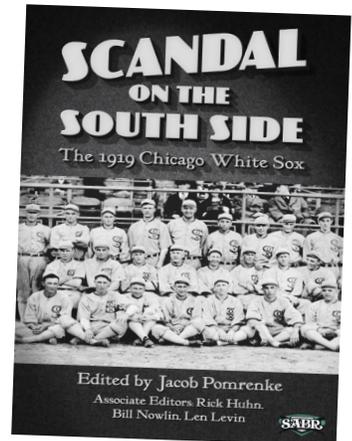
Want to dive deeper into the Black Sox Scandal? Here are a few ways to catch up on some of our recent committee projects:

◆ *Scandal on the South Side: The 1919 Chicago White Sox*, edited by Jacob Pomrenke, with associate editors Rick Huhn, Bill Nowlin, and Len Levin, is available from the SABR Digital Library at [SABR.org/ebooks](https://sabr.org/ebooks). All SABR members can download the e-book edition for free in PDF, EPUB, or Kindle formats. SABR members also get a 50% discount to purchase the paperback edition.

◆ *Eight Myths Out*, published in 2019, is an online project on the most common errors and misconceptions about the scandal. View it at [SABR.org/eight-myths-out](https://sabr.org/eight-myths-out).

◆ **2019 Centennial Symposium: Listen to highlights** from the SABR Black Sox Scandal Centennial Symposium, held on September 28, 2019, at the Chicago History Museum to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the 1919 World Series.

◆ **Infamous America podcast:** Season 2 of the [Infamous America podcast series](#), produced by Black Barrel Media in 2019, focuses on the Black Sox Scandal, using research from our *Scandal on the South Side* book.



Free download available at [SABR.org/ebooks](https://sabr.org/ebooks)

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HISTORY ON TRIAL: THE BLACK SOX SCANDAL



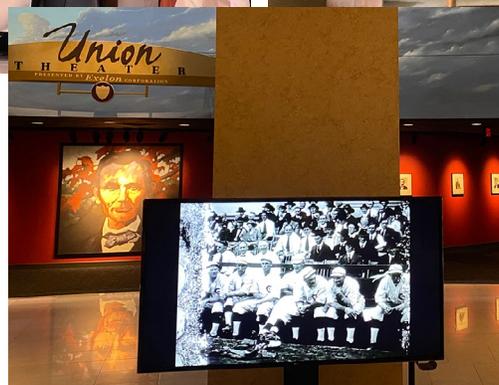
The Illinois Supreme Court Historic Preservation Commission organized two performances of the “History on Trial” series focusing on the 1919 Black Sox Scandal. The first took place on October 25, 2022 at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, Illinois, and the second event was on November 2 at the Spertus Institute in Chicago. Learn more at IllinoisCourtHistory.org. Above: Moderator and dramaturg Scott Szala, left, thanks narrator Erika Harold and the actors who staged the Black Sox re-enactment in Springfield. (Photos: Jacob Pomrenke and David Fletcher)



After the dramatic re-enactment, a panel discussion focused on the legal and ethical issues of the Black Sox trial. Panelists included SABR’s Jacob Pomrenke and attorney Mary Robinson (pictured above with Szala, center, in Springfield), author Bill Lamb, Raymond Doswell of the Negro Leagues Museum, and Cook County Circuit Court Judge Neil Cohen.



Above: In Chicago, the Black Sox performance, which used Bill Lamb’s *Black Sox in the Courtroom* and SABR’s *Scandal on the South Side* as its primary sources, was narrated by attorney and TV anchor Irika Sargent. Left: A 1919 World Series film was shown to attendees in the lobby of the Lincoln Library before the Springfield performance.



HISTORY ON TRIAL: THE BLACK SOX SCANDAL

Ethical shortcomings in Black Sox courtrooms

This fall, the Illinois Supreme Court Historic Preservation Commission staged two performances of an original play, *Black Sox on Trial*®, based upon the legal proceedings emanating from the Black Sox Scandal. Audiences included members of the Illinois bar, some of whom received continuing legal education credit for attending.

A primary source for the play was William F. Lamb's 2013 book, *Black Sox in the Courtroom: The Grand Jury, Criminal Trial and Civil Litigation*. At the close of the performances, a panel discussion was held to assess ethical and professional responsibility shortcomings in scandal-related litigation. Excerpts of a pre-recorded interview with Lamb, conducted by attorney/dramaturg Scott J. Szala, were included in the panel.

A portion of Lamb's interview is reprinted below, lightly edited for clarity.

Question: Bill Lamb, please tell us how long it took for you to research and write *Black Sox in the Courtroom*.

Answer: Not quite four years. Research was initiated in July 2009 for what was intended to be a report on the crime and punishment aspect for the then-newly formed Black Sox Scandal Research Committee of the Society for American Baseball Research, of which I am a member. By 2011 that report had morphed into an article on Black Sox-related criminal proceedings for the scholarly journal *Base Ball: New Research on the Early Game*. In time, that article expanded into the book on the gamut of scandal-connected legal proceedings — grand jury, criminal trial, and civil litigation — published by McFarland in March 2013.

Q: As depicted in the play, significant legal, criminal, and ethical professional responsibility issues arose in the Black Sox Scandal and have particular significance for those members of the audience receiving continuing legal education credit. Let's separate the following questions into four areas: (1) the initial Black Sox grand jury proceedings and indictments in September-November 1920; (2) the post-indictment proceedings, including those involving the superseding indictments returned in March 1921; (3) the criminal trial in June-August 1921; and (4) Black Sox-related civil proceedings from 1921-25. First, please summarize some of the key criminal, legal, and professional responsibility issues in the initial grand jury proceedings.

A: The most striking feature of the initial grand jury proceedings was something that garnered little attention at

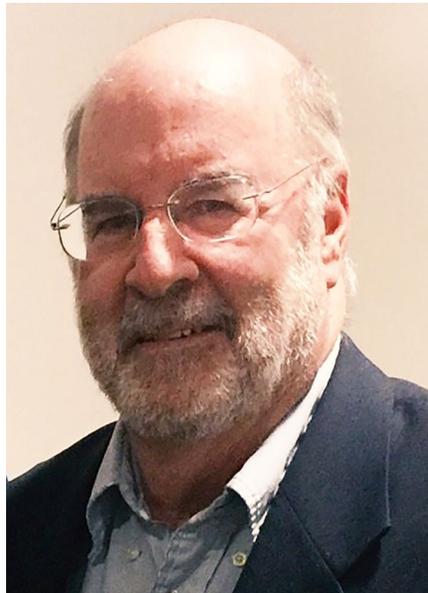
the time: the pervasive disregard of the legal mandate that grand jury proceedings remain confidential. The longstanding principle that grand jury proceedings were to be kept secret would be reaffirmed by the Illinois Supreme Court in *People v. Goldberg* only shortly after the Black Sox criminal case was over, and remains black-letter law throughout the country to this day.

This principle, however, was ignored in the Black Sox case. During the initial grand jury proceedings of September-November 1920, Judge Charles A. McDonald, the presiding judge of the Cook County criminal courts; Assistant State's Attorney Hartley Replogle, the lead grand jury prosecutor; and grand jury foreman Henry H. Brigham all made public statements about what was going on behind closed doors. The judge, prosecutor, and foreman also made public statements about the targets of the grand jury proceedings that might well have been deemed prejudicial to the fair trial rights of anyone charged in the case. Even more egregiously, the testimony adduced from grand jury witnesses was leaked to the press and published in newspapers on a daily basis.

That said, it is my opinion that the ethical and professional responsibility issues attending these grand jury irregularities are now probably only of interest to those in the legal community and scandal enthusiasts. Whatever the transgressions, they had no practical effect on the outcome of the Black Sox case. This is because the indictments rendered by the ethically compromised grand jury process were not used by the prosecution. Rather, these initial charges were *nolle prossed* (administratively dismissed) prior to trial by the Cook County State's Attorney. The Black Sox defendants were tried — and acquitted — on superseding indictments returned by an entirely different grand jury and derived from proceedings that were legally unremarkable.

Q: Tell us how grand jury secrecy or legal ethics were violated or potentially violated by the presiding judge, Charles A. McDonald.

A: Although I will be critical of him, I do not hold the view that Judge McDonald is one of the villains in the Black Sox case. To the contrary, McDonald is one of the good guys, having assumed an indispensable role in the exposure of the corruption of the 1919 World Series.



Bill Lamb

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Nevertheless, certain aspects of his conduct cannot be reconciled with present-day restraints on judicial behavior. As I understand Illinois law, out-of-court commentary on ongoing legal proceedings by a judge is currently prohibited by Illinois Code of Judicial Conduct Rule 63A(7). Another panelist far more learned than yours truly will provide more on this rule later this evening. But as far as I know, public pronouncement by a judge on matters before the court has never been deemed appropriate.

Despite that, Judge McDonald made several public statements that would now likely be considered violative of the judicial canon. To me, the interesting question then becomes: Why did he do it? My guess: It may never have occurred to Judge McDonald that he shouldn't. This may stem in part from unfamiliarity with the criminal process. Although he had been a judge for more than a decade, McDonald had only recently been appointed presiding judge of Cook County criminal courts, and the Black Sox panel was the first grand jury that he ever impaneled. So this was all new to him.

Perhaps more important was the singular nature of the Black Sox proceedings. Let me explain: I spent more than 30 years as a state and county prosecutor in New Jersey, and that experience teaches me that the overwhelming majority of grand jury proceedings are preceded by the following sequence of events: (1) a serious crime – burglary, robbery, homicide – is committed; (2) police respond to the scene and commence an investigation; (3) that investigation results in the arrest of a suspect who is charged with the offense in a criminal complaint.

Thereafter, the complaint is presented in secret to a grand jury to determine if there is evidence sufficient to require the accused to stand trial. If there is, the grand jury true bills (indicts) the accused. If not, the complaint is no-billed (dismissed). The true bill/no-bill is subsequently returned in open court and speaks for itself. Judicial commentary on the grand jury's action is neither required nor desirable.

The Black Sox case, however, was far different from the norm. The corruption of the 1919 World Series had not been recognized at the time it was played. There was no contemporaneous police investigation of Series games and no criminal complaint had been signed.

Rather, the grand jury process was beginning from scratch a year after the fact, with the panel being used in an investigative capacity. Ultimately, the issue became: Had members of the Chicago White Sox and certain gamblers conspired to rig the outcome of the Series? And if they had, what Illinois criminal statutes, if any, were thereby violated?

In New Jersey, on the very rare occasions when the grand jury acts as an investigative body, the proceedings sometimes result in the issuance of a presentment, a docu-

ment authored by the grand jury that publicly declares its findings on the subject of its inquiries. In the Black Sox case, the initial grand jury did, in fact, issue a report that could be likened to such a presentment. But simultaneously, the grand jury also returned true bills (indictments) that charged named individuals with the commission of specific criminal offenses. This combination of reports/indictments returned in the same case is highly unusual, and problematic for reasons that I need not go into here. Bottom line: The report and indictments issued by the grand jury provided the information that the press and public were then entitled to regarding the Black Sox case. Public comment by Judge McDonald was ill-advised and today would probably run afoul of Rule 63A(7).

Q: How did prosecutors violate grand jury secrecy or legal ethics?

A: Two ethical duties were imposed on the Cook County Assistant State's Attorneys assigned to the Black Sox case. Pursuant to Canon 20 of the then-applicable 1910 code of professional responsibility, Illinois attorneys were prohibited from making out-of-court public statements about criminal matters likely to go to trial. And grand jury prosecutors, like the grand jurors and clerical personnel, took an oath to keep secret all grand jury proceedings.

Lead grand jury Assistant State's Attorney Hartley Replogle violated his ethical duties in several ways. First and foremost, Replogle was likely the one who leaked grand jury testimony to the press. In addition, Replogle provided public commentary on the grand jury's work; offered his opinion on the culpability of grand jury targets; issued grand jury progress reports; and otherwise acted as if neither Canon 20 nor his oath to keep grand jury proceedings secret existed.

Q: How did the grand jury violate grand jury secrecy?

A: As previously noted, grand jurors are bound by oath to keep secret whatever takes place in the grand jury room. In the Black Sox case, grand jury foreman Henry Brigham emulated ASA Replogle, periodically making public statements about the grand jury proceedings; offering commentary on the charges; providing grand jury progress reports; and otherwise disregarding the obligation to keep his mouth shut about the Black Sox proceedings.

Brigham was also the generator of one notably unorthodox aspect of the grand jury proceedings. On September 28, 1920, White Sox star pitcher Eddie Cicotte appeared before the panel and admitted his complicity in the World Series fix. Cicotte also identified by name seven other White Sox players as fix participants. At the conclusion of the Cicotte testimony — and while the grand jury proceedings were still ongoing — true bills were voted for all the named players.

Ordinarily, public disclosure of such indictments should have awaited their return in open court at the conclusion of the Black Sox proceedings — which occurred in late October

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1920. But Brigham summoned the press and announced the true bills immediately on September 28 (even though the precise crime charged was unspecified and indictment documents had not yet been drafted). Whether 1920 Illinois law countenanced such a process is unclear; that return of indictments in such a precipitous and impromptu fashion was highly irregular is not.

Q: On September 27, 1920, a Philadelphia newspaper published a scandal exposé by fix insider Billy Maharg. Via wire service and within hours, the Maharg allegations were republished in newspapers from coast to coast. After meeting with White Sox corporation counsel Alfred Austrian and club owner Charles Comiskey the following morning, first Eddie Cicotte and then Joe Jackson appeared before the grand jury and testified about his personal involvement and that of other White Sox players in the corruption of the 1919 World Series (although details sometimes differed). A day later, that exercise repeated itself with Sox pitcher Lefty Williams. Prior to testifying, the three players each signed waivers of the constitutional right to remain silent afforded them by the 1870 Illinois Constitution. Later, as our play demonstrates, the players claimed that they did so under an oral promise of immunity, a claim later rejected by trial judge Hugo Friend. What was the upshot of the players' testimony?

A: Simple. If credible, the Cicotte, Jackson, and Williams testimony established that White Sox players and gamblers had conspired to fix the 1919 World Series.

Q: Was there other questionable conduct by the judiciary related to the baseball investigation by the grand jury?

A: An ethically troublesome aspect of the grand jury inquiry proceeds from Judge McDonald's keen interest in baseball and his acquaintance with powerful figures in the game. One of these, American League President Ban Johnson, had previously floated McDonald as a candidate to fill a vacancy on the National Commission, the three-man body that governed Organized Baseball before the commissioner-ship was established in November 1920.

Interestingly, the Black Sox Scandal had not yet erupted when Judge McDonald gave his first-day instructions to newly impaneled Cook County grand jurors on September 7, 1920. Rather, McDonald invited the panel to investigate the recent public report that a meaningless late August

game between the Chicago Cubs and Philadelphia Phillies had been rigged by gamblers. The judge also instructed the grand jury to investigate Chicago's lucrative baseball pool selling racket.

Over the next two weeks, however, the grand jury docket consisted only of garden variety criminal cases. The panel did not conduct a substantive baseball-related session until September 22. And by that date, its focus had shifted to resurgent rumors that the 1919 World Series had been fixed, with the Cubs-Phillies game and baseball pool selling reduced to secondary importance.

This substitution of the grand jury target had been engineered by AL President Johnson during a private meeting with Judge McDonald at a Chicago-area golf club. Whatever the public interest in the burgeoning Series scandal — and it was growing daily in September 1920 — the influence that Johnson exerted over the grand jury proceedings via his relationship with Judge McDonald would have raised all sorts of ethical red flags had it been disclosed at the time.

Two other judges skirted ethical problems during the Black Sox legal proceedings. Although he had no immediate connection to the investigation of the 1919 World Series, the eventual prosecutor of the Black Sox criminal case — Cook County State's Attorney Robert E. Crowe — campaigned in the fall of 1920 as the Republican Party candidate for the chief prosecutor post while still sitting as a Cook County Circuit Court judge. Nowadays, Judge Crowe would be obliged to resign from the bench the moment that he announced his candidacy for political office.

Later, during the run-up to the Black Sox criminal trial, newly installed baseball commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis threatened federal prosecution upon anyone involved in the theft of Black Sox case evidence from the State's Attorneys Office. Given that Landis still retained his position as a United States District Court judge for the Northern District of Illinois, the threat was not an idle one. But Landis using his power as a federal court judge to further the discharge of his duties as commissioner of baseball was ethically dubious.

Q: Bill, is it your view that these first-indictment violations ultimately did not affect the rights of the defendants, but did adversely affect the proper operations and perception of the criminal justice system in Cook County during the 1920s because of these "extra-legal phenomena"?

A: In my view, the ethical missteps of those involved in



Charles A. McDonald was presiding judge of Chicago criminal courts and instructed the grand jury to investigate game-fixing rumors in the fall of 1920. He allowed the public disclosure of grand jury testimony, a blatant breach in grand jury law and legal decorum. (Photo: 1920 Bench and Bar of Illinois)

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handling the Black Sox case had no effect on the disposition of the charges. Proscribed extra-judicial commentary pertained to indictments that were administratively dismissed prior to trial. And the Black Sox accused were acquitted on the superseding indictments on which they were tried.

As for public perception of the Chicago criminal justice system, there is no evidence that anyone cared that the presiding judge, lead grand jury prosecutor, and grand jury foreman were making public statements that violated judicial/professional conduct commandments. As far as I can tell, such transgressions went entirely unnoticed until 2013. Attitudes have changed since then, however, and that there is concern today is demonstrated by the play and panel discussion being put on this evening.

Q: Now let's talk about the post-indictment proceedings. First, what significant events took place after the initial indictments?

A: Following the return of the initial Black Sox case indictments, three significant events occurred: (1) the Republican Party landslide in the November 1920 elections placed a new State's Attorney (Robert E. Crowe) and a new cadre of prosecutors in the Cook County State's Attorneys Office (SAO), none of whom had any familiarity with the Black Sox case; (2) prosecutors' expectation that the grand jury-confessing defendants (Cicotte, Jackson, and Williams) would turn state's evidence were disappointed, leaving the SAO without the fix insider needed to prove its case against the non-confessing ballplayer and gambler defendants; and (3) in March 1921, a prosecution motion to continue the proceedings indefinitely was unexpectedly denied by Judge William Dever. Instead, the judge set a quick mandatory trial date.

Rather than take a high-profile but unready case to trial, SA Crowe responded to the Dever ruling by administratively dismissing the original indictments. In the ensuing days, the Black Sox case was re-presented to a new grand jury (mostly by means of reading previous grand jury testimony into the record). It was this second grand jury which returned the superseding indictments that would be brought to trial. These new indictments expanded both the criminal charges preferred and the roster of defendants.

Q: The play shows that prosecutors were unsuccessful in obtaining jurisdiction over all of the defendants. Why was that?

A: Because all of the Black Sox defendants, save Buck Weaver, were non-Illinois residents, prosecutors were obliged to obtain jurisdiction over the corpus (body) of the accused as required by the Constitution. In America, except under unusual circumstances, criminal defendants cannot be tried in absentia. This was not a problem with the indicted ballplayers, all of whom appeared in the court voluntarily. (Note: Fred McMullin did not arrive in Chicago in time for jury selection; the charges against him were therefore severed for separate trial at a later date.)

The gambler defendants were another matter. Sport Sullivan and "Rachael Brown" could not be found by the SAO.

Other gambler defendants were located but refused to appear in court voluntarily and had to be extradited. Although of constitutional stature, the extradition process is relatively simple and straightforward, and extradition proceedings routinely result in the issuance of the requisite court order. But attempts to extradite Hal Chase from California were bungled by the SAO which forwarded paperwork that did not satisfy extradition prerequisites. Meanwhile in New York, Abe Attell escaped extradition via courtroom proceedings that bordered on farce, his lawyer arguing shamelessly that there were actually *two* Abe Attells and that the SAO was trying to extradite the wrong one. In the end, the charges against five indicted gamblers — Sullivan, Brown, Chase, Attell, and Ben Franklin (excused on illness grounds) — were never brought to trial.

Q: Now let's discuss the criminal trial of June-August 1921. The play highlights some of the actions or strategies of the

attorneys or rulings by the trial court that helped lead to the acquittal of the in-court defendants. Please provide the audience with a deeper review of those points.

A: First, it is my opinion that the nature of the charges redounded greatly to the benefit of the prosecution. At the heart of the government's case was the charge of conspiracy, a crime then defined by Illinois statute and still-applicable common law as consisting of an agreement between two or more parties to commit an illegal act. Period. Unlike today, no overt act — something taking the plot past the talking stage — was required for conviction.

In the Black Sox case, a conspiracy existed the instant that a White Sox ballplayer and a gambler agreed to fix the 1919 World Series. Although this seems widely unappreciated, as a matter of proof and as a matter of 1919 Illinois conspiracy law, it did not matter whether or not any game of the Series was actually thrown. Once the agreement to



Henry H. Brigham, American Car Company president who served as foreman of the Cook County Grand Jury in the fall of 1920. He later testified on behalf of the White Sox at Joe Jackson's back-pay lawsuit in 1924.
(Photo: Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois)

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A group photograph of the Cook County Grand Jury that returned the original indictments of the Black Sox and gamblers in October 1920. Grand jury foreman Henry Brigham (fifth from right) followed prosecutors' lead by making public statements about the proceedings and offering commentary on the charges. (Chicago Evening Post)

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fix the Series was reached, the crime of conspiracy had been committed.

Showing that the throwing of the Series was an “unlawful act” required some legal shoehorning, however, as Illinois did not then have on the books a statute that criminalized the throwing of professional sports contests. A Los Angeles superior court judge had recently determined that game-throwing was not a criminal act in California. (I pause here to add parenthetically that Illinois, California, and a host of other states quickly passed sports corruption statutes in the aftermath of the Black Sox Scandal. But these new criminal laws could not be applied retroactively.) But Black Sox trial judge Hugo Friend rejected the reasoning of the Los Angeles case, ruling that the deception practiced upon World Series bettors fit within the ambit of the Illinois fraud statutes that criminalized obtaining money by false pretenses or via a confidence game.

The legal ledger, however, was not entirely one-sided. The Confrontation Clause of the Illinois Constitution and rules against the courtroom use of hearsay evidence undermined the prosecution’s case against the non-confessing ballplayer defendants (Chick Gandil, Swede Risberg, Happy Felsch, and Buck Weaver), all of whom had been identified as fix conspirators in the grand jury testimony of Eddie Cicotte, Joe Jackson, and Lefty Williams.

But Cicotte, Jackson, and Williams remained silent at trial, as was their constitutional right. This meant that when the Cicotte, Jackson, and Williams grand jury testimony was read to the trial jury, judicially ordered editing of the text substituted the anonym “Mr. Blank” for the names of Gandil, Risberg, etc., rendering parts of the narrative unin-

telligible to the jury.

Overall, the Black Sox criminal case was reasonably well-tryed, if not error free. Presiding over his first significant case as a trial jurist, Judge Hugo Friend was patient, fair, and legally astute. In my opinion, his only erroneous ruling entailed excluding expert opinion testimony from ballplayers and umpires offered by the defense on the issue of whether or not the 1919 Series had been thrown.

The prosecution can be faulted for over-indicting the case by including Midwestern tinhorns (David Zelcer, Carl Zork, Ben Franklin, and the Levi brothers) in a plot supposedly financed by New York City criminal mastermind Arnold Rothstein. The prosecution also hurt its chances by failing to introduce the damning admissions of fix participation that Happy Felsch had made to a Chicago sportswriter. Even so, the prosecution presented an overwhelming case for conviction against Eddie Cicotte, Joe Jackson, and Lefty Williams, and a persuasive, if circumstantial, case against Chick Gandil, Swede Risberg, and gambler defendant David Zelcer.

Q: Some commentators have theorized that Judge Friend’s charge to the jury requiring “proof of intent to defraud the public” to be demonstrated for conviction was outcome determinative of the defendants’ acquittal. Why do you disagree with that?

A: The argument that the court’s jury instructions precipitated the acquittal of the accused is a non-starter, in my opinion. Defendants’ intent to defraud the public was self-evident. The betting public, after all, was the ultimate victim of the crime. Just ask yourself this: What bettor would have put his money on the Sox if the plot to rig the World Series had not been concealed by the accused? In addition, no Black Sox case juror cited the court’s instructions as grounds for his verdict. Indeed, after the trial was

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over, jurors disclosed their intention to acquit the accused once the prosecution rested its case – a determination made well in advance of even hearing the court’s instruction on the applicable law.

As for the verdict — not-guilty as to all nine remaining defendants on all 24 charges rendered in a breathless two hours and 47 minutes — it is my opinion that the verdict is contrary to the weight of the evidence produced at trial, at least in the case of defendants Cicotte, Jackson, and Williams, if not the others. And the only plausible explanation for their acquittals is jury nullification.

In brief, jury nullification is that dread but mercifully rare courthouse phenomenon whereby jurors disregard their oath to dispassionately apply the law as explained by the court to the jury-accepted facts of the case in deciding upon guilt or innocence. Whether the jury has come to sympathize with the accused or taken a dislike to the crime victim or wants to send some type of larger message to the public at large, a verdict of not guilty is returned — notwithstanding the fact that defendant’s commission of the crime charged was proven.

A detailed forensic examination of the verdicts here can be found in “[Jury Nullification and the Not Guilty Verdicts in the Black Sox Case](#),” published in the Fall 2015 issue of SABR’s *Baseball Research Journal*. For now, suffice it to say that juror bonding with the accused during the course of the Black Sox trial and immediately after the verdict was rendered is unmistakable. For me, the malfeasants in the Black Sox case include the criminal trial jurors.

Lastly, within hours of the jury’s verdict, the acquitted players were permanently banished from Organized Baseball by edict of Commissioner Landis. Here, Landis applied the banishment precedent established by the minor leagues in the wake of the Los Angeles court’s dismissal of the indictments returned against corrupted Pacific Coast League ballplayers.

“Regardless of the verdict of juries,” Landis declared, baseball would take the measures necessary to preserve the integrity of the game. And with that, the Black Sox were consigned to the wilderness of outlaw baseball. The criminal case, however, was over, with SA Crowe administratively dismissing the outstanding charges against Fred McMullin and the absent gambler defendants a few days later.

Q: Finally, let’s address your fourth major issue – the civil litigation. Briefly give us the highlights of these cases.

A: Although there was some press grumbling about the play of the White Sox at the conclusion of the 1919 World Series, the corruption of the fall classic was not exposed until very late in the following season. With the exception of Chick Gandil, the Black Sox played for Chicago in 1920. Prior to that season, White Sox management had extended new, and in some instances multi-year, contracts to Joe

Jackson, Lefty Williams, and other players who would be implicated in the scandal. Those contracts were unilaterally terminated for cause by the club and the players released after the corruption of the Series became public.

Following their acquittal on the criminal charges, four of the players instituted breach-of-contract civil lawsuits against the White Sox: Buck Weaver in Chicago; Happy Felsch, Joe Jackson, and Swede Risberg in Milwaukee where the Chicago White Sox were incorporated. Defamation claims and other grievances were also asserted in the Milwaukee suits.

Only one of the civil cases ever made it to trial: Joe Jackson’s breach of contract suit in early 1924. The highlight of these courtroom proceedings in Milwaukee was the cross-examination of plaintiff Jackson by White Sox lead trial counsel George Hudnall. Under close questioning, Jackson repudiated – well over 100 times – the sworn testimony admitting his Series fix participation that he had provided to the Cook County grand jury on September 28, 1920.

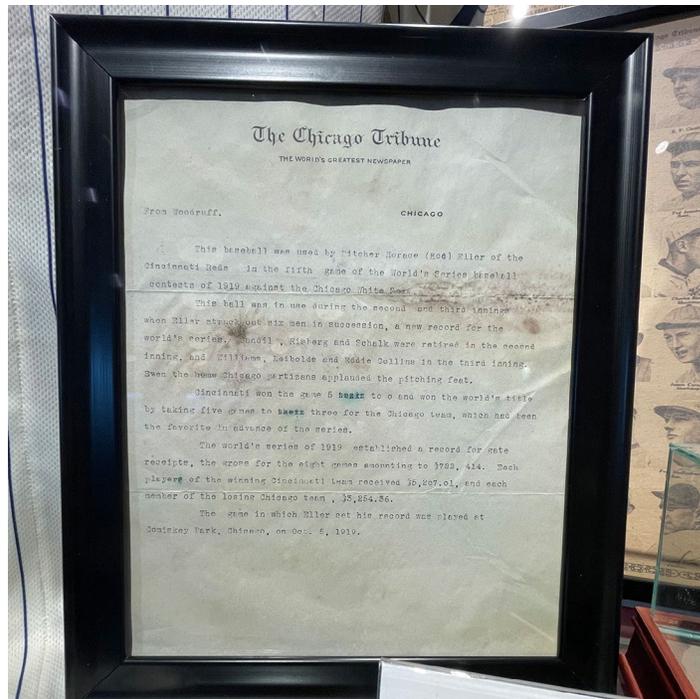
An infuriated Judge John J. Gregory subsequently held Jackson in contempt of court and had him jailed overnight. And later, the Milwaukee County District Attorney filed a perjury complaint against Jackson. But the complaint languished unprosecuted for years as Jackson stayed well clear of Wisconsin. Eventually, the Jackson perjury complaint was administratively dismissed by the DA. In the meantime, hapless Happy Felsch pled guilty to a criminal charge of false swearing while testifying as a plaintiff’s witness during the Jackson civil case and was sentenced to a one-year term of probation.

Much to Judge Gregory’s chagrin, the civil trial jury returned a \$16,000+ verdict in Jackson’s favor. The court promptly vacated the award, ruling that it had been founded on perjured testimony. The Jackson suit was thereupon dismissed by the court.

But when explained to the press by the civil jury foreman, the award given to Jackson was not capricious. The jury had not believed Jackson’s denial that he was involved in the World Series fix. Rather, the award was premised on the legal principle of condonation. The jury concluded that White Sox management had privately uncovered Jackson’s participation in the Series fix before it extended a new contract for the 1921-23 seasons to him.

By offering a new contract to him despite that knowledge, the club had effectively condoned (forgiven) Jackson’s World Series misconduct. Having done so, the White Sox could not subsequently void Jackson’s contract just because the public became informed of the misconduct that White Sox brass had known about all along. The jury therefore decided that plaintiff Jackson was entitled to his unpaid salary for the 1922 and 1923 seasons.

In time, all four civil suits were quietly settled out of court for nominal amounts. This brought the legal proceedings in the Black Sox case to a close. And that ends my presentation, as well. Thanks for inviting me to appear, Scott. I have enjoyed it.



Above: A 1919 World Series baseball and a circa-1920 letter written by *Chicago Tribune* sports editor Harvey T. Woodruff are on display at the Chicago Sports Museum at Water Tower Place. Both items were discovered in a time capsule buried inside the Tribune Tower building in downtown Chicago.



Left: Harry Caray's CEO Grant DePorter led a private tour of the museum on November 3 for SABR members Bruce Allardice, Richard Smiley, Bill Pearch, Jacob Pomrenke, Dan Wallach, and John Racanelli. (Photos: Jacob Pomrenke)

► TIME CAPSULE

Continued from page 1

letter written on *Chicago Tribune* letterhead by Harvey T. Woodruff, the newspaper's sports editor, who explained the significance of the baseball.

"This ball was in use during the second and third innings when Eller struck out six men in succession, a new record for the world's series," Woodruff wrote. "Gandil, Risberg and Schalk were retired in the second inning, and Williams, Leibold and Eddie Collins in the third inning. Even the home Chicago partisans applauded the pitching feat."

While some artifacts from the time capsule will be headed uptown to the Chicago History Museum, the fate of the 1919 World Series baseball remains unclear. Right now, Eller's baseball and Woodruff's letter are temporarily on display at the [Chicago Sports Museum](#), located inside Water Tower Place next to Harry Caray's restaurant.

Grant DePorter, founder of the Chicago Sports Museum and CEO of Harry Caray's Restaurant Group, said the baseball might be worth \$1 million or more.

"It was a record-setting baseball," he [told Rick Kogan of the *Tribune*](#) in September. "It is hard to put a price on it."

DePorter said Hod Eller was known for his "shine" ball, which involved putting paraffin wax on one side of the baseball. This baseball, he said, "has a mark where the paraffin shine was placed and the ball's dark coloring would be attributed to the fact that it was placed in a time capsule for 100 years with paraffin present."

Eller's record of six consecutive strikeouts during a World Series game has been tied twice — in 1966 by Moe Drabowsky of the Baltimore Orioles and in 1985 by Todd Worrell of the St. Louis Cardinals — but never broken.

DePorter's collection at the museum includes many artifacts from the White Sox' 2005 World Series season and the Chicago Cubs' 2016 championship, but the time capsule ball is one of the rare baseballs from the notorious 1919 World Series known to have survived. (Others are on display at the Reds Hall of Fame in Cincinnati and the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown.)

"No piece of memorabilia has made me more insane, combing through archives, old newspapers, websites," DePorter said. "I think of this baseball as a treasure and it tells a great story."

Charles Comiskey inducted into Cardinals Hall of Fame

By Brian Flaspohler

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On August 27, 2022, a hot sunny day, the St. Louis Cardinals inducted three new members into their Hall of Fame: Matt Holliday, Julián Javier, and Charles Comiskey.

Charles Comiskey? Why would the Cardinals choose to recognize the founder of the American League's Chicago White Sox — someone who last played in St. Louis in 1891, one year before the date that the Cardinals organization has long identified as its own founding?

Some members of the Bob Broeg St. Louis SABR chapter have speculated as to how the Cardinals settled on 1892 as the team's origin and why team officials are more open today to celebrating Comiskey's pioneering role in the history of St. Louis baseball. The story begins, so to speak, in Pittsburgh.

Back in 1987, the Pittsburgh Pirates celebrated their "100th anniversary" with a jersey patch on their uniforms, a centennial yearbook, and other events. However, the Pittsburgh franchise actually originated in 1882 as the Alleghenys, one of the founding members of the American Association, a rival to the National League. Five years later, the Alleghenys moved from the AA to the NL and eventually became known as the Pirates. So the event the Pirates celebrated in 1987 was actually the 100th anniversary of the team's move to the NL.

Around the same time, the Cardinals' marketing department discovered their team had also first played in 1882, as the St. Louis Brown Stockings. (The name was shortened the next year to the Browns.) Like the Alleghenys/Pirates, the Browns/Cardinals were one of the founding members of the American Association.

Since 1982 had come and gone, this would not do; the Cardinals couldn't miss their own 100th anniversary! So, like the Pirates, the Cardinals chose to tie the team's anniversary to its move to the National League, which occurred in 1892. Thus, the Cardinals announced that the team would be celebrating its 100th anniversary in 1992. A [season-long celebration](#) ensued with a jersey patch, a fan vote for a Cardinals' all-time team co-sponsored by the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and McDonald's, and a pregame "centennial celebration" ceremony in June 1992.

Obviously, celebrating the 100th anniversary of joining the National League is a little complicated for a brief sound bite, so "Est. 1892" became the phrase commonly used on historical murals and banners, along with Cardinals shirts, hats, and other items, for the past three decades.

A story well told becomes the truth. Even though pretty much every baseball historian, Major League Baseball, and Baseball Reference understand that the Cardinals franchise first began play as the St. Louis Brown Stockings in 1882, the modern organization and most Cardinals fans have come to believe the team was established in 1892 instead.



Charles Comiskey III speaks at the St. Louis Cardinals Hall of Fame induction ceremony for his grandfather, Charles Comiskey, on August 27, 2022, at Busch Stadium in St. Louis. (Photo: Taka Yanagimoto / Courtesy of the St. Louis Cardinals)

Fast forward to January 29, 2022, when the Bob Broeg St. Louis SABR Chapter held its [annual Hot Stove luncheon](#) with Cardinals President Bill DeWitt III, son of the team's majority owner Bill DeWitt Jr. as the keynote speaker. After concluding his prepared remarks, DeWitt took questions from the audience. He was asked why the team doesn't recognize the 1880s American Association history of the franchise. To our surprise, DeWitt was not only aware of the pre-National League origins of the franchise but agreed that Cardinal history should be tracked to its 1882 founding. He did not agree the team should raise an 1886 world championship banner, but he did go so far as to say the franchise really should change those shirts and banners to "Est. 1882."

Soon afterward, DeWitt reached out again to the Bob Broeg Chapter. He said the Cardinals wanted to use their "organizational choice" to add a member of the 1880s Browns to the team Hall of Fame. A student of history, DeWitt was knowledgeable enough to suspect that the first choice should be Charles Comiskey, the leader and captain of four pennant-winning Browns teams in the 1880s. DeWitt connected with SABR member Bob Tiemann, a prolific author and an expert on 19th-century baseball, who agreed that Comiskey was the most deserving candidate from that era for the Cardinals Hall of Fame.

In May, the Cardinals announced their 2022 Hall of Fame inductees. Matt Holliday was the top recipient in the fan vote, Julián Javier received the nod from the Red Ribbon committee as the veteran player, and Charles Comiskey was the organizational choice. Baseball historians from the Bob Broeg Chapter rejoiced! Inducting Comiskey was clear

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Above left: Charles Comiskey's plaque is on display during the St. Louis Cardinals Hall of Fame induction ceremony on August 27, 2022, at Busch Stadium in St. Louis. In the background are Cardinals Hall of Famers Mark McGwire, Jim Edmonds, and Chris Carpenter. Above right: Comiskey played first base and served as team captain with the St. Louis Browns of the American Association for nine seasons, leading the team to four consecutive pennants between 1885 and 1888. (Photos: Taka Yanagimoto / St. Louis Cardinals and Trading Card Database)

► COMISKEY

Continued from page 11

evidence that the team officially recognized the American Association Browns in the history of the Cardinals franchise. A pregame ceremony was held on August 27 at Busch Stadium. Charles Comiskey III, the grandson of the White Sox owner, spoke on behalf of his grandfather, whose contributions to the team's early history are little known outside of SABR circles.

Before he moved into the executive ranks, Comiskey was a pioneering player for the St. Louis Browns. Historian Bill James has claimed that Comiskey was one of the earliest first basemen to play off the bag, allowing him to field ground balls that might otherwise go into right field for base hits. (More recent research has shown that this practice was in widespread usage before Comiskey.)

But there is no question that Comiskey was a great leader on the field. The 22-year-old was signed by the St. Louis Browns to play first base on their inaugural team in 1882. His leadership skills were immediately recognized and when owner Chris von der Ahe fired his manager late in 1883, he turned to Comiskey to finish the season as player-manager. Comiskey took on the role permanently late in the 1884 season. Comiskey's Browns emphasized pitching and defense and won four straight pennants in the American Association from 1885 through 1888. Comiskey was also highly skilled at shielding his charges from von der Ahe's meddlesome ways.

The Browns tied the National League champion Chicago White Stockings in a controversial 1885 postseason series, but beat the White Stockings in the 1886 World Series. Comiskey led the Browns to two more AA pennants in 1887 and 1888, although they lost to the NL champs both times.

In 1890 Comiskey jumped to the short-lived Players

League, but in 1891 he returned to the Browns for what turned out to be the American Association's final season. His overall record as manager of the Browns was a gaudy 562-272, with a .674 winning percentage and four pennants in just six full seasons leading the team.

Comiskey's value in St. Louis was obvious even though his offensive skills were average at best, with an OPS+ of 92 over nine seasons in a Browns uniform. But he did achieve a rare statistical feat only one other player in major-league history has ever reached: In 1887, he stole 117 bases and drove in 103 runs. Pete Browning also entered the 100/100 club that same year for the Louisville Colonels. No player before or since has joined the pair in that unusual club.

Comiskey's importance to the St. Louis Browns was undeniable. As soon as he left the team — taking the 1886 postseason trophy with him — the Browns immediately sank out of contention in the National League. In 1900, they took on the nickname Cardinals, but it took another two decades before they contended for a pennant again.

Meanwhile, Comiskey played and managed for three more seasons with the Cincinnati Reds before he bought a team in the Western League in 1895 and moved into the ownership ranks. Five years later, when the Western League transitioned into the American League, Comiskey became one of the founding members of the new major league as the owner of the Chicago White Sox.

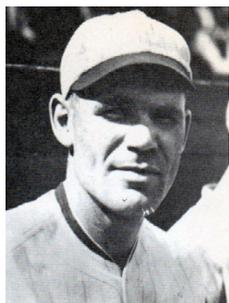
By the time Comiskey died in 1931, his name had become synonymous with the White Sox. In fact, the St. Louis Browns' 1886 World Series trophy, called the [Wiman Trophy](#), still resides in the Chicago White Sox archives.

In the summer of 2022, the Cardinals reached back to a time before the American League existed to honor Charles Comiskey for leading their team to four pennants in the 1880s, when St. Louis played in the American Association and was called the Browns.

Honest Eddie Murphy honored in Hancock, New York

More than a century after John “Honest Eddie” Murphy’s professional baseball career began, his hometown of Hancock, New York, celebrated his legacy by [establishing a new scholarship fund](#) for high school athletes.

Murphy’s role in baseball history centered on two of baseball’s top teams during the Deadball Era of the early 20th century: Connie Mack’s Philadelphia A’s and the notorious Chicago White Sox, where eight of Murphy’s teammates were bribed to throw the 1919 World Series. Murphy’s solid play and integrity despite the Black Sox Scandal earned him a lifelong reputation for honesty.



Eddie Murphy

On July 30, 2022, Hancock Partners Inc., a local nonprofit dedicated to creating new economic development opportunities in the upstate New York region, organized the inaugural Field of Dreams Award Ceremony to honor Murphy, who was born in Hancock in 1891.

SABR member John Heeg, who [authored Murphy’s biography](#) for *Scandal on the South Side: The 1919 Chicago White Sox*, was on hand to

speak at the ceremony along with members of Murphy’s family who announced the new scholarship fund.

“He was a guy who decided to do the decent thing,” Heeg said. “I appreciate how this community celebrates him.”

Edward Murphy, the ballplayer’s grandson, said his grandfather was a “quiet and humble man” and recalled stories told about how Murphy would visit his family and take drives around the countryside with other baseball players like Babe Ruth.

A fire truck parade ran through the town square with members of the Deposit-Hancock Eagles high school baseball and softball teams, which both won New York Class D state championships in 2022. After the ceremony, the film *Field of Dreams* was shown on a large outdoor screen.

Hancock, located on the Delaware River just across the state line from Pennsylvania, is also known for being home to a lumber mill operated by the Hillerich & Bradsby Co. that provided Louisville Slugger bats to Babe Ruth, Ty Cobb, Joe DiMaggio, Ted Williams, and many other players.

After attending college at Villanova University and signing with the minor-league Scranton Miners at age 19, Murphy made his major-league debut with the Philadelphia A’s in 1912 and played in two World Series. He was traded to the Chicago White Sox in 1915 and platooned in right field with Nemo Leibold. In 1919, Murphy appeared in just 30 games but hit .486 and led the



Above: John Heeg, the author of Honest Eddie Murphy’s SABR biography, speaks about the former White Sox outfielder on “Honest Eddie Murphy Day” on July 30, 2022, in Hancock, New York. Below: Heeg and Hancock Village Judge Herb Buckley pose in front of the Eddie Murphy statue that stands in the Hancock town square. Buckley donated the statue to the village in 2019. (Photos: Kristin Barron / Courtesy of Hancock Partners Inc.)



EDDIE MURPHY FUND

Click below to donate to the Honest Eddie Murphy Athletic Scholarship Fund to benefit high school athletes in Hancock, New York:

♦ [GoFundMe website](#)

American League with eight pinch-hits. He made three appearances in the World Series against the Cincinnati Reds and was not involved in the bribery scandal that later wrecked the team. Murphy and the other “clean Sox” not involved in the fix were hailed as heroes by the public and by team owner Charles Comiskey, who sent each player a check for \$1,500,

nearly the difference between the winners’ and losers’ share of the 1919 World Series gate receipts. In retirement, he and his wife lived in Dunmore, Pennsylvania, raising their two sons. He died in 1969 at the age of 77.

1920s White Sox: the ultimate rebuilding project

By Bruce Allardice

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The term “rebuild” has in recent years become a staple of MLB commentary. The modern popularity of the term is perhaps inspired by the Houston Astros, who in 2010 deliberately tore down their team, traded their best players for minor leaguers of other teams, finished in the cellar, stocked higher draft choices, and soon emerged as a dominant team.

But there is nothing new about baseball organizations “rebuilding” their teams, or at least attempting to. Perhaps the earliest famous example of a tear-down and rebuild was when a cash-starved Connie Mack, faced with aging pitchers and the threat of the new Federal League luring his stars away, dismantled his Philadelphia Athletics after losing the 1914 World Series. The result was a swift and near-total collapse, from 99 wins and an American League pennant in 1914 to 43 wins and last place in 1915 and a record-low .235 winning percentage (36-117) in 1916. The A’s finished in last place through 1922 and did not achieve a winning record until 1925.

Unlike the present day, where a last-place team can at least be assured of a high draft pick that could improve their club over time, there was no baseball draft in that era. Today, there is also free agency and international signings, allowing cash-rich clubs to purchase known talent. This should make rebuilding easier today than in the past. The one advantage compared to today that 1910s and 1920s rebuilding had was that the minor leagues were largely independent and MLB clubs could purchase young talent like Lefty Grove on the more-or-less open market.

With that as context, we can view the Chicago White Sox in 1921 and subsequent years as a tear-down and rebuild — albeit a special kind of *involuntary* tear-down following the loss of eight players in the Black Sox Scandal. The talented core of outfielders Shoeless Joe Jackson and Happy Felsch, pitchers Eddie Cicotte and Lefty Williams,



Chicago White Sox owner Charles Comiskey, right, and manager Kid Gleason quickly acquired new players to replace the banned Black Sox after 1920, but struggled to return the team to a consistent pennant contender. (Chicago Daily News, Chicago History Museum, SDN-061761)

and infielders Chick Gandil, Buck Weaver, Swede Risberg, and Fred McMullin had helped lead the Sox to two AL pennants and a World Series title, with two other near-misses for first place, between 1916 and 1920.

The White Sox gained no compensation for the loss of these players. This can be considered the ultimate tear-down. So how well did team owner Charles Comiskey rebuild his roster after the 1920 season? In the context of the times, Comiskey did a much better job of rebuilding his club than did the Philadelphia A’s after 1914. The chart at the bottom of this page gives some statistics for the White Sox of the 1920s.

The suspended players were worth 25.8 Wins Above Replacement, as calculated by Baseball-Reference.com, in 1920, 8.6 WAR for the two pitchers and 17.2 for the position players. Without the Black Sox, the 1921 team suffered accordingly. Their replacements achieved only 3.5 WAR

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Year	W-L Record	Pythag Winning Pct. ³	Attendance (AL rank)	WAR (fielders)	WAR (pitchers)	WAR (total)	Team Fielding Pct. (AL rank)
1920	96-58	89-65	3	26.9	18.0	44.9	4
1921	62-92	61-93	4	13.7	6.9	20.6	2
1922	77-77	77-77	4	19.5	18.1	37.6	1
1923	69-85-2 ⁴	72-82	3	20.5	15.4	35.9	2
1924	66-87-1	71-82	3	20.5	5.7	26.2	8
1925	79-75	81-73	2	27.1	11.1	38.2	4
1926	81-72-2	83-70	3	28.3	15.9	44.2	1
1927	70-83	72-81	3	19.5	16.5	36.0	1
1928	72-82-1	70-84	3	13.8	15.5	29.3	3

► REBUILDING

Continued from page 14

overall: 8.7 for the position players, -5.2 for the pitchers. The team went from 19 games over .500 (96-58) to 15 games below .500 (62-92) in the span of one season.¹

Comiskey had no good options to replace his lost stars in 1921.² The criminal trial of the suspended players did not conclude until August of that year, and it was uncertain whether they might regain their status as major-leaguers. A true rebuild could only start with the 1922 season.

A quick word about ownership: By the 1920s, Charles Comiskey was a baseball legend, both as a player and as a front-office executive. However, recent age and health issues caused Comiskey to be less active in running the team and in scouting new players than he had been in the past.

As biographer Tim Hornbaker wrote, “Throughout 1920, Comiskey suffered from increased health concerns and it grew in severity to the point in which his doctors advised him to completely refrain from watching any ball-games. ... He relied upon his lawyer Alfred Austrian and team secretary Harry Grabiner to ... essentially manage the team in his absence.”⁵

Not only was Comiskey semi-retired throughout the 1920s, but the network of old friends⁶ he had always depended on to find young talent was also aging. While it is perhaps overstating things to blame the Sox’s downturn in the late 1920s solely on Comiskey’s absence, the illness certainly played a part.

The Rebuild

In 1921, the White Sox called up some young players for whom they held contract options, such as outfielders Bibb Falk and Johnny Mostil, and also purchased⁷ a trio of infielders from Salt Lake City: Earl Sheely at first base, Ernie Johnson at shortstop, and Eddie Mulligan at third base. None of these players were as talented as their Black Sox predecessors, and the Sox had no way to replace star pitchers Eddie Cicotte and Lefty Williams.

However, the White Sox in 1922 improved to a .500 record, due to the new position players maturing, worth almost 6 more WAR from the year before, plus a marked improvement in the pitching (11.2 WAR). New pitchers Dixie Leverett, Charlie Robertson, and Ted Blankenship replaced World Series hero Dickey Kerr (who was suspended in a contract dispute) and the gaggle of 1921 unknowns.⁸

In 1923, the White Sox purchased Willie Kamm, the Pacific Coast League’s top third base prospect, for a record-high fee of \$100,000. Kamm went on to have a solid, though not spectacular, career with the White Sox for the next nine seasons until he was traded away in 1931. The position players improved by 1 WAR, but the pitchers regressed a little, as ace Red Faber began to show his age.

Future Hall of Famer Ted Lyons also made a cup-of-coffee debut in 1923 before going on to a long 21-year career with the White Sox.

The pitching staff regressed further in 1924. Young starters Lyons, Ted Blankenship, and Sloppy Thurston showed promise, but Faber aged further and none of the other pitchers did much. One suspects that the team’s poor defense (ranked last in the American League) contributed to the pitcher’s woes.

1925 saw the first fruits of the rebuild, as the Sox posted their first winning record since 1920. The position players were remarkably healthy and Lyons emerged as a star hurler. The fielding also improved dramatically. The only fly in the ointment was that their best field players, future Hall of Famers Eddie Collins and Ray Schalk, were close to retirement.

The club improved more in 1926. The fielding improved again, and new starter Tommy Thomas — a minor-leaguer purchased from the Baltimore Orioles — solidified the staff, as the team ERA of 3.74 ranked third in the AL. The young starters led at least one newspaper expert to predict that the Sox would be pennant contenders that year.⁹

1927 marked a letdown for the White Sox, primarily in their position players. Collins left after 12 years to return home to the Philadelphia A’s, while Schalk only played in 16 games. First baseman Earl Sheely was also benched for not hitting and the team was unable to find suitable replacements. This trend continued in 1928, as the Sox failed to replace their aging or slumping players with players of equal value. Schalk retired to become manager, then quit in disgust halfway through the 1928 season.

Random Observations

1. White Sox attendance held up remarkably well, even in the lean years. They never dipped below league average in attendance, which gave team ownership the revenue to purchase new players.

2. Despite losing the Black Sox players, the team’s defense actually improved in 1921 relative to the league. This is in part due to the Sox jettisoning shortstop Swede Risberg and his .934 fielding average, and replacing him with Ernie Johnson (.947 FA in 1921). Johnson also had more range and turned more double plays at shortstop.

3. Throughout the decade, the White Sox’s fielding remained solid with the exception of 1924. The dynasty teams of 1919 and 1920 had below-league-average range factors, but they were above-average in that metric until 1926, relying primarily on Schalk at catcher and Collins at second base, along with ball-hawking outfielder Johnny Mostil and Willie Kamm at third base. Kamm led all AL third basemen in fielding average eight times.

4. The 1925 and ‘26 Sox had a better WAR among position players than the 1920 club.

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AROUND THE WEB

◆ **Don Zminda**, author of *Double Plays and Double Crosses*, gave a virtual presentation on the Black Sox Scandal to the Ethical Humanist Society of Chicago on November 6.

◆ **Douglas Jordan** looks back at the day **Eddie Collins** recorded his 3,000th career hit at the SABR Games Project.

◆ **Bruce Murray** at SiriusXM Radio explores the legacy of *Eight Men Out* with actor D.B. Sweeney and SABR's Jacob Pomrenke in "The Replay" podcast series.

◆ On the eve of the Field of Dreams Game in Iowa, **Marshall Kramsky** at WCPO-TV looks at how **Shoeless Joe Jackson's** legacy overshadows the Reds' 1919 World Series title.

◆ **Eric Boynton** of the *Des Moines Register* interviewed **Mike Nola** on how *Field of Dreams* keeps Shoeless Joe Jackson's story alive.

◆ **Tommy Birch** of the *Des Moines Register* dives deep into **Iowan Red Faber's** injury in 1919 and how it affected the outcome of the World Series.

◆ **Dean Karayanis** at the *New York Sun* looks at the risks sports leagues take in pushing legalized gambling.

◆ **Bill King** of the *Sports Business Journal* reports that BetMGM is planning to open a retail sportsbook at the Cincinnati Reds' home stadium, Great American Ball Park,

in 2023.

◆ **Thomas Ehlers** at Beyond the Trestle paid a visit to Royston, Georgia, for the annual vintage baseball game between the Ty Cobb Museum and the Shoeless Joe Jackson Museum.

◆ **Bill Pruden** of the IBWAA profiles **Dickey Kerr's** record in the 1919 World Series and his impact on Stan Musial's career.

◆ **David M. Zimmer** of the *Bergen (New Jersey) Record* explores **Shoeless Joe Jackson's** post-scandal visit to Hackensack, New Jersey, in the summer of 1922.

◆ **Harvey Sahker** of the *Calgary Herald* dives deep into **Happy Felsch's** outlaw baseball career in western Canada in the mid-1920s.

◆ **Steve Zalusky** at the *Daily Herald* in suburban Chicago reassesses **Ray Schalk's** Hall of Fame career.

◆ **Kheir Fakhreldin** at the Oak Park (Illinois) Public Library explains the backstory of **Ernest Hemingway's** 1918 visit to the Polo Grounds for a memorable Yankees-White Sox game.

◆ **David Hill** at Call to the Pen notes that New York Mets ace Jacob deGrom tied a major-league record for most consecutive starts allowing three earned runs or fewer, set by Jim Scott with the 1913-14 White Sox.

► REBUILDING

Continued from page 15

5. The 1922 pitching staff posted a higher WAR than the celebrated 1920 staff, which included four 20-game winners (Cicotte, Williams, Faber, and Kerr) for the first time in AL history.

6. Bill James' Pythagorean win formula — which uses total runs scored and runs allowed to determine an expected winning percentage — has the Sox overachieving their expected win total in 1920. The same calculation has them underachieving from 1922-26, although not by a large margin.

Conclusions

Despite the criticisms of Charles Comiskey then and today, it appears that the White Sox did a solid job rebuilding this team from the Black Sox Scandal, considering all the circumstances. By the fourth year of the rebuild, even with Babe Ruth and the New York Yankees dominating the American League, the White Sox were once again a winning team. This is comparable to the 2010-15 Houston Astros, who were rebuilding under much less difficult circumstances due to the rules of the time. The White Sox's leaner

years of 1927-35 — perhaps the lowest point in the club's history, at least on the field — cannot solely be blamed on the Black Sox Scandal.

Notes

1. All statistics from Baseball-Reference.com. Other systems have slightly different methods of calculating WAR.

2. See Bruce Allardice, "Comiskey's Options in 1920 Ranged from Bad to Worse," SABR Black Sox Committee Newsletter, June 2021.

3. The Pythagorean Winning Percentage is the expected won-loss record of a club based on runs scored versus runs allowed.

4. Two ties.

5. Tim Hornbaker, *Turning the Black Sox White: The Misunderstood Legacy of Charles A. Comiskey* (Sports Publishing, 2014): 293-294, 303.

6. For example, minor-league executive Ted Sullivan.

7. Some White Sox players were also dealt to Salt Lake in the deals, but basically it was a purchase.

8. Of the minor league pitchers brought into camp for 1921, one newspaper acidly asked: "Know any of them? Neither do we." *Salt Lake City Tribune*, March 30, 1921.

9. *Washington Evening Star*, March 17, 1926.