

## MINOR LEAGUE COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER, SPRING, 1992

Minor League History Journal, Volume I, has been issued.

The response has been excellent. The committee plans to develop and issue volume II. If you did not participate in volume I and would like to participate in volume II, contact David Kemp. Regular categories will include: exceptional teams, biographies of minor league stars, development of the minor leagues, minor league travel experiences, seasonal and career statistical analysis, departmental leaders, pictorial essays of historical parks, and minor league chronology. Submissions for volume II should be submitted to David Kemp by August 1, 1992.

The contents of Minor League Stars III were shipped to Mark Alvarez in January. Mark arranged for scanning of the material, which saved many hours of work. The book should be out by mid-summer. Updates of MLS I and II are available upon request to David Kemp.

Minor League Encyclopedia: Lloyd Johnson and Miles Wolff have developed the following outline for the proposed encyclopedia:

I-History of the National Association from 1901 to the present.

II-League standings and league leaders, 1901-1961, 1962-1992.

III-League Records

IV-Leagues by name, year, state, and city.

V-All-time statistical leaders, both single season and lifetime.

The encyclopedia will incorporate the research of many of our members, some of whom have projects that have been in the works for years. It will be essential that the committee's 200 plus researchers participate in the completion, documentation, and verification of records and standings for the encyclopedia. Ideally, it should be revised on a regular basis. The index of minor league researchers will play an important role in completing this project. Please update any projects you have completed or begun to David Kemp. You will be contacted for assistance in finding missing information. Suggestions and proposals for contents are solicited.

Because of the recent editorial decision by the Sporting News to discontinue publishing obituaries of prominent baseball players, Miles Wolff, minor league committee member and publisher of Baseball America, has proposed that his publication take on this responsibility. To do this he needs our assistance in documenting the deaths and career accomplishments of prominent minor leaguers. Bill Carle of the Biographical Committee is receptive to the idea of having that committee cooperate with Baseball America concerning major leaguers.

We have been flooded with requests from both major and minor league franchises for a variety of information, including lists of players, all time rosters of towns in organized baseball, current addresses of former players, and so forth. There are many people in our committee who have both the interest and the competence to answer these requests. David Kemp has established the following policy concerning these requests: He will provide relevant information concerning available resource and research persons. In many cases the request will involve a quick referral or check of available records. Other cases will require more extensive research. In the latter case, David will advise the person or organization requesting the information that the researcher should be compensated for the time and expenses incurred in conducting the research. The researcher and the requesting organization should reach an agreement on compensation. We have an organizational responsibility to promote and encourage the documentation of minor league history. We also have the right to expect and receive reasonable compensation for services rendered. We need to keep these in balance.

Plans for convention: We have requested that the minor league committee meeting be scheduled for late Saturday morning. We should have the Minor League History Journal and Minor League Stars III on hand at that time, both completed through the combined efforts of the committee membership. Other projects and proposed projects can be discussed at the convention. We should have another newsletter, with further details, out before the convention.

In response to our query about the most stolen bases in a minor league game, Dick Thompson writes that Frederick "Fritz" Werber (brother of Bill Werber) stole seven bases for Augusta on June 11, 1927, in a South Atlantic League game against Columbia. Lloyd Johnson adds three additional seven stolen base games. Earl Silverton stole seven bases in a nine inning game for Idaho Falls (Pioneer League) on September 4, 1947. Don Jameson of Riverside (Sunset League) duplicated the feat against Tijuana on May 18, 1950. Around June 1, 1952 Rudy Escobar of Houma (Evangeline League) stole seven bases, while hitting a homer and three doubles in seven at bats to lead his team to a 25-3 win over Alexandria.

Along those same lines on July 16, 1952 Pueblo (Western League) stole seven bases in the six run first inning of a 13-11 victory over Omaha. Catcher Gil Shark accounted for three of the thefts. Six of the stolen bases, including three steals of home, came on three successive pitches while pitcher Danny Hazling was at-bat. This broke the previous minor league record of six stolen bases in one inning, set by the Southern Association Atlanta against Birmingham on June 19, 1949.

Bob Hoie writes about the 1991 Appalachian League and its unbalanced schedule. He reminds us that our criteria have been used to classify non-organized baseball leagues not those leagues which have been signatories to the National Agreement or members of the National Association. Bob continues, however, that "the 1991 Appy wasn't a league with a championship season in any traditional sense. The potential damage to the integrity of a minor league season caused by the emphasis on player development has been recognized since the Landis era but the Appy schedule may be the first time that a league has officially stated that the league championship is irrelevant." Bob also asks if anyone can identify an earlier league with such an unbalanced schedule.

A personal note. I'm writing a history of the Carolina League, which will be published in 1994. If anyone has any particularly vivid memories of the league or any other contributions, let me know at Jim Sumner, 3215 Warwick Drive, Raleigh, NC 27606. I especially need final stats for 1966-1968. If anyone has access to the complete final stats, I will gladly reimburse for photocopying and postage. On May 15, 1966 Rocky Mount's Dick Drago and Darrell Clark pitched no-hitters in both ends of a doubleheader against Greensboro. Does anyone know of any other instances of this happening?

The Minor League History Journal contains an article on Class E minor leagues. Our indefatigable Bill Weiss has also been researching the subjects. His findings follow.

Class D was the lowest rung on the ladder of the National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues from its organization in 1901 until December, 1937, when the NAPBL voted unanimously to set up an E classification.

The purpose was to permit leagues composed of small towns with limited financial resources to enjoy the benefits of organized baseball. Class D had a salary limit of \$1,200 per team per month and a player limit of 15 men. The Class E salary limit was \$750 per month, exclusive of a player-manager's salary and the player limit was 13. Further, Class E leagues could schedule as few as four games a week. They were to be restricted to using players who had never been higher than Class E. The Sporting News predicted that "ten or more circuits will qualify for membership."

One opponent of Class E ball was Harry Smith, president of the Class D Ohio State League. He said that D leagues would be handicapped seriously in recruiting young players because the athletes would refuse to leave Class E, which would pay them a small salary and leave them time for other employment, for a less lucrative fulltime job in Class D.

Within a few days of the National Association's vote, Ray Ryan, president of the Class D Appalachian and Mountain State Leagues, announced the formation of a Class E Southwest Virginia League. Among the eight interested cities were Pulaski, Wytheville, and Marion, members in recent years of the present Appalachian League. A 75 game schedule was proposed and Ryan estimated that it would cost each club about \$3,000 a year to operate. However, nothing ever came of these plans and no Class E league was organized until 1943.

In 1942, the first full year of United States involvement in World War II, 31 minor leagues started the season; five disbanded during the season. Of the remaining 26, 17 suspended for the duration during the following off-season. One of the suspended leagues was the Class C Northern League, whose members included the neighboring cities of Duluth, Minnesota and Superior, Wisconsin. On May 14, 1943, the Class E Twin Ports League, with four teams in Duluth and Superior, was admitted to the National Association. The league had been organized by Frank Wade, president of the Duluth Northern League club.

All players were signed by the league and assigned to the clubs in an effort to provide balance. If a player was sold to a higher classification team, the money would go to the league. Most of the players worked in defense plants or shipyards in the area. Voluntarily retired players belonging to other clubs could play if they received permission from those teams. In addition, the rule requiring all players to be rookies was waived.

The four teams were the Duluth Dukes (operated by the Northern League club), the Duluth Heralds (owned by the local newspaper), the Superior Bays, and the Marine Iron and Shipbuilding Company.

Wally Gilbert, Brooklyn third baseman from 1929-1931, a veteran manager, and a Duluth resident, was player-manager for the Marine Iron team. George Treadwell, another experienced pilot, managed Superior.

The rosters were typical for wartime. In age, they ran the gamut from Superior's 16 year old pitcher Bob Connolly (the local team's former batboy), through ten year veteran outfielder Jersey Joe Goldfine (not related to Howe Sportsdata CEO Alan Goldfine), to 45 year old Marine Iron centerfielder Ad Stemig, a local farmer whose pro career began in the middle 1920s. Marine Iron's opening day winning pitcher, Rudy Gamblin, was deaf. Connolly won his first two starts, giving up only 4 runs and 11 hits in 18 innings.

The league had problems from the outset, especially with the cold, wet weather. The May 30 opener at Superior was halted in the sixth, while 11 of the first 16 games on the league schedule were rained out. Twilight games were tried at Superior. They were popular with the fans but proved impractical because so many of the players had to work until 5:30 or 6 P.M.

One after another, players of draft age were called into the service, adding to the problems. Clubs scrambled to find replacements. The Dukes signed 35 year old former Brooklyn hurler Less Munns, and he won 2 games over the July 4 weekend.

An ominous sign of the future came during the first week in July when officials of league-leading Superior disclosed that they were considering dropping out because of poor attendance. They decided to continue but a week later the league's directors voted to suspend operations and the twin Ports League went out of business on July 13. Although provisions for Class E leagues remained a part of National Association rules through 1959, no other league of that classification was ever organized.

Not only was the league ill-fated, but also so were some of its participants. Less than two weeks after the league folded, Superior pitcher-outfielder Jerry Coleman, a local high school coach, drowned. On July 3, 1947 Stan "Midnight" Wilson, an ex-Heralds hurler pitching for Sweetwater in the Longhorn League, threw the pitch which fatally struck Ballinger outfielder Stormy Davis in the head. On July 24, 1948 George Treadwell, by then the manager of Duluth's Northern League team, was at the wheel of the team bus when it was struck head-on by a truck; the bus caught fire, killing Treadwell and four of his players.