

The INSIDE GAME

The Official Newsletter of SABR's Deadball Era Committee

Volume 4, Number 2: "Let's get this lumpy, licorice-stained ball rolling!" May 2004

From the Chairman

The Beauty of Hot Springs

by Tom Simon
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I have to admit that I felt a bit uncomfortable at my first SABR National Convention. It was at Pittsburgh in 1995. Back then, of course, the Deadball Era Committee didn't exist, and just about the only SABR members I knew were Henry Thomas, whose biography of Walter Johnson I'd helped to edit, and the guys I'd met through the Larry Gardner Chapter. None of the Vermont guys made it to Pittsburgh, however, so I spent most of the weekend hanging out with Henry and my wife, Carolyn, who'd accompanied me to the Steel City.

These days the National Convention is one of the highlights of my year, especially now that I've met so many members from all over the country via the DEC. But I still remember how it felt to be a relatively new SABR member, and how intimidating it was to be thrown into a group of several-hundred people whom I'd never met but who somehow all seemed to know each other.

Which brings me to the subject of this column: the beauty of Hot Springs, a vibrant village nestled amidst the Ouachita Mountains with architecture that has changed remarkably little since the Deadball Era. But that's not the type of beauty I'm talking about. What I want to convey to those of you who have not been to a "Boiling Out" is the beauty of a get-together that's small enough that you have no choice but to spend time with and actually get to know each and every one of the SABR members in attendance.

Whether riding the airport shuttle with Jonathan Dunkle and Richard

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Spring Training 1908 Redivivus: The Hot Springs 11 in Whittington Park. Shown clockwise from top: Madison McIntire, Stew Thornley, Steve Constantelos, Richard Smiley, Mike Dugan, Rich Klein, Trey Strecker, Tom Simon, R.J. Lesch, Jon Dunkle, and Mary-Kate Dugan.

Chasing Ghosts

by Richard Smiley
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Hot Springs is a vibrant ghost town. The vibrancy is undeniable. It is seen in the bustling lobby of the Arlington Hotel where guests are constantly checking in, mingling over drinks, moving towards the health club, waiting to enter the luxurious dining room, and going for the baths. The vibrancy is seen

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Rubes and Reulbach:
Finkel's Boner Costs Wombats

Sportsman's Park II, 1902–08

by Ron Selter

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Sportsman's Park II was built before the 1902 season for the St. Louis Browns in downtown St. Louis replacing the former park (Sportsman's I) on that site. The site was a rectangle bordered on the West, North and East by city streets. The plat was larger East–West (500 ft) than North–South (438 ft) and amounted to about 5.0 acres in size. This was smaller than typical of major league ballparks used in the first decade of the twentieth century.

Sportsman's Park II replaced the rundown stands of Sportsman's Park I with a new wooden grandstand and bleachers. The field was oriented with Home plate in the northwest corner of the plat. The seating consisted of: (1) a single deck covered grandstand that curved behind home plate and stretched between first and third bases, (2) bleachers that ran along the right field and left field foul lines and converged with the foul lines in the left field and right field corners, and (3) a separate set of left field that ran from the left field foul line to nearly the center field clubhouse. There was no seating in the right field area. The right field fence was parallel to the left field foul line and ran until meeting the clubhouse in center field. At the east (center field) end of the left field bleachers was a diagonal scoreboard. The park's capacity (excluding standees) was about 18,000.¹

The playing field (in fair territory) was nearly rectangular in shape—the only exception being the diagonal center field scoreboard, which masked most of the center field clubhouse. If a player cleared the scoreboard with a mighty drive, the area in front of the clubhouse and behind the scoreboard would have been in play. No game account mentions what would have been a memorable occurrence.

In the seven seasons the Browns played in Sportsman's Park II, the offensive performances were definitely of the Deadball type. The average game at Sportsman's Park II produced 6.98 runs—not a bad scoring average until you learn that 6.98 runs/game was the total for both teams! Thus the ratio of runs per game for Sportsman's Park Vs other AL parks was 0.92. From this the estimated ratio of batting average at STL versus other AL parks was derived and was estimated to be 0.959. Truly, Sportsman's Park II was no haven for hitters. The story for home

runs (HRs), total of both teams, in the park was a little different. Home runs averaged 19.3 per season, while the HR park factor ranged from 53 to 170 and averaged 110 (the average AL park was by definition 100). Unlike contemporary times, the impact of HRs on total runs scored was minimal. The above average rate of HRs at Sportsman's Park II added all of about 3 runs per season to the total runs scored.

The Browns and the visiting teams combined for 135 HRs in the seven seasons (1902–08) of Sportsman's Park II's existence. Of these 39 were Inside-the-Park Home Runs (IPHR) and an additional seven were bounce HRs. Only 96 Over-The-Fence (OTF) HRs were hit—this includes the seven bounce HRs. The distribution of OTF and IPHRs were vastly different. OTF HRs were reported as: 55 % left field, 45 % right field and none to center field. Over 90% of IPHRs were to center field. At Sportsman's Park II, IPHRs accounted for 28.9% of total HRs.² For all major league parks during the same time period, IPHRs accounted for 42.3% of total HRs. This suggests that Sportsman's Park II was smaller than the average Major League ballpark during the first decade of the Deadball Era. The last notable items concerning HRs are: (1) there are no game accounts of any HRs clearing the left field bleachers on the fly, and (2) the longest HR at Sportsman's II was by Nap Lajoie (June 30, 1902) that was hit far up and near the center field end of the left field bleachers—an estimated distance of 420 ft.³

The dimensions for Sportsman's II must be considered estimates, as they were derived from the plat dimensions and the known dimensions of the later Sportsman's Park III. The data for the park's configuration (unchanged from 1902–08) are shown below.

¹ *Green Cathedrals*, Philip J. Lowry, Revised Ed. 1992.

² Compiled by author from newspaper accounts in the *St. Louis Globe Democrat*, 1902-08.

³ *St. Louis Globe Democrat*, July 1, 1902.

Category	LF	CF	RF	Backstop
Dimensions	330	428	315	60
Fence Heights*	12	12	12	
Ave. OF Distance**	351	407	331	

* Estimated from photos and contemporary descriptions

** Computed from park diagram



Grandstands from Sportsman's Park. Photo courtesy of Chicago Daily News Negatives Collection, Chicago Historical Society (SDN-005710).

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“Let’s just hope he (McEntire) uses better judgment when he designs those bridges.” Commissioner Simon

“Rubes and Reulbach” is Engineer’s Formula for Diceball Success Finkel’s Boner Costs Wombats By Grantland Spice

HOT SPRINGS, ARK.—One might question Madison McEntire’s judgment for leaving his home in suburban Little Rock on the weekend of his wife’s birthday to spend the day with a group of strangers. But when the mild-mannered engineer returned home early the next morning, \$60 richer from an afternoon at the track and with a prize for winning the Deadball Dice Tournament, even Mrs. McEntire had to admit that the haul made Mad Mac’s lapse in sanity appear almost rational—especially in comparison to that of his vanquished foe, the bone-headed Jan Finkel. “Madison has brought me a lot of interesting presents over the years, but never one quite like this,” said Mrs. Mac about her husband’s prize, a genuine ad for a Reach baseball from a 1916 issue of *Baseball Magazine*. “I know the perfect place to hang it: Just above the entrance to the doghouse where Madison will be resting his six-foot, four-inch frame.”

The luckiest day of McEntire’s life began at Oaklawn, where he hit an Exacta on his very first bet, but it would have ended in cruel and ignominious defeat for his Madison Avenues if it hadn’t been for the horrendous decision-making of Finkel. Centuries from now, when the subject turns to the great scapegoats of baseball history, people on planets that have yet to be discovered will undoubtedly mention Finkel in the same breath as Merkle, Snodgrass, and Buckner. And yet the retired English professor from Maryland is even more blameworthy than the aforementioned gents, for he had a plan that would have prevented his downfall – if only he had stuck with it.

With the series tied at one game apiece and the Diceball championship of this and every other galaxy on the line, Finkel selected Vic Willis to pitch the rubber match for Wagner’s Wombats—even though Commissioner Simon read him the passage on page 312 of *Deadball Stars* detailing Willis’s history of failure in important contests like this one. “I’m gonna have Willis pitch to one batter and then switch to [Lefty] Leifield,” Finkel announced before the game to a group of well-wishers who had just presented him with a laurel wreath to place upon his dome of elephant tusk. But after retiring the hot-hitting Bob Bescher for the first out, Willis remained in the game, to the surprise and disgust of every right-thinking fan on this and every other planet, and was torched for four singles, two walks, and a

sacrifice fly. By the time the conflagration had ended and Leifield had finally replaced Willis in the box, the score was already 5-0 and the Avenues were on easy street. Then, as if to convince even the most skeptical that Finkel’s dome is truly crowned with ivory, the Wombats southpaw whitewashed the Avenues for six innings, yielding only two harmless hits before his removal for a pinch hitter in the top of the eighth inning. Howie Camnitz gave up a meaningless run in the bottom half of the eighth, making the final score 6-1 in favor of the Avenues, but it undoubtedly would have been 1-0 in favor of the slow-witted Finkel, if only he had stuck with his original plan.

Nearly overlooked in the shadow of Finkel’s massive boner was some serious bone-pulling by Mad Mac in the second game of the series, which was played in front of a standing-room-only throng of eleven, the largest crowd ever to witness a dice baseball game on this or any other planet. With the score tied at 2-2, Ed Reulbach opened the bottom of the ninth inning by getting a popup out of Honus Wagner, who, bothered by the strains of “Tessie” every time he came to bat, was held to one-for-ten in the series. Now facing the Irish part of the lineup, Reulbach allowed Mike Donlin to reach second on a dropped fly by Bescher, and Danny Murphy and Bill Sweeney walked to load the bases. That Reulbach was tired was obvious to everyone on this and every other planet; everyone, that is, except Big Mac, whose questionable judgment was further maligned by the fact that his star righthander had not given up a single earned run in complete-game victories over Des Moines and White Clay in the first two rounds of the tournament. To the surprise of nobody but McEntire, the exhausted Reulbach forced home Donlin with the winning run by walking Roger Bresnahan.

But this was the luckiest day of McEntire’s life, and the unluckiest of Finkel’s. That the breaks were favoring the genial Arkansan was never more evident than during the opening game of the series. Neither team had laid a cleated extremity upon the dish when Bescher coaxed a two-out walk from Addie Joss in the bottom of the fifth. The “King of Basestealers” pilfered second and third, prompting Mad Mac to ask about his chances of stealing home. Making up an impromptu rule, Commissioner Simon declared that Bescher would be safe on a roll of zero, one or two on the ten-sided die, knowing that only an ivory-domed bonehead would accept a 30% chance of stealing home with the heart of his order coming up. But with \$60 in his wallet reminding him that this was his day, McEntire decided to send Bescher – and rolled a one!

Finkel finally broke up Rube Waddell’s shutout in the top of the sixth when Murphy’s outfield fly plated Wagner with the equalizer, but Donlin tried to score on Fred Tenney’s two-out single to center and, despite a 70% chance of success, was gunned down by Ty Cobb when Finkel rolled an eight. With one out in the bottom half, Cobb singled and stole second and third. The bloodthirsty crowd urged Mad Mac to attempt “another Bescher,” anxious to see the Peach splattered on the pavement, and the foolhardy engineer nearly obliged – but this time rolled a two! Waddell struck out five batters over the last three innings to preserve a 2-1 victory for the Avenues. When asked what he thought of McEntire’s daring baserunning, Commissioner Simon responded, “Let’s just hope he uses better judgment when he designs those bridges.”

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Rubes and Reulbach, cont. from page 3.

NOTES – Attendance at game three of the championship was eight, which was disappointing after the record-breaking crowd at game two.... The Avenues played their home games on the west side of the conference room, while the Wombats played theirs on the east side.... Finkel blamed his two defeats on his failure to get comfortable with the oversized dice used in the Avenues' home games.... Both semifinals were decided in two games, with the Avenues topping Jonathan Dunkle's White Clay Mountebanks and the Wombats sweeping Steve Constantelos's Warren Rabbits.... White Clay shortstop Hans Lobert, playing out of his preferred position at third base, committed six errors in one game. . . . Reulbach took a perfect game into the eighth inning in a first round matchup against R.J. Lesch's Des Moines Undertakers, but Red Murray spoiled it with a one-out single after Commissioner Simon jinxed the effort by calling everyone's attention to it.... Mike Dugan's Hot Springs Bathers were gracious hosts, bowing out to the Wombats in the first round despite home runs by Sam Crawford and Harry Davis.... Frank Baker and Larry Doyle homered for White Clay in the first round, accounting for the tourney's only other roundtrippers.... The lucky number for Richard Smiley's Reb's Raiders was seven: They scored all seven of their runs in the bottom of the seventh in their only victory, a 7-1 pasting of the Mountebanks.... Frank Isbell of Trey Strecker's Hitless Wonders committed three errors at second base but atoned for his dismal fielding by knocking in three runs on three hits in a 4-3 victory over the Rabbits.... Frank Chance of the Rabbits was a perfect four-for-four with a walk in a 5-3 win over the Wonders.

From the Chairman, continued from page 1.

Smiley, sharing a bottle of wine with the *bon vivant* Jan Finkel, hiking the West Mountain Trail with Steve Constantelos and Rich Klein, enjoying The Arlington's seafood buffet with R.J. Lesch and his wife, Christee, or staying up late with the entire crew playing Dice Deadball, you can't help but feel something special. You may have experienced a similar feeling if you're fortunate enough to be part of a local chapter whose meetings attract fewer than twenty people, but it's a feeling that would be hard to replicate at the National Convention.

I realize that I'm jeopardizing the beauty of these get-togethers by telling you about how great they are. It reminds me of the TV show I was watching tonight about the world's most beautiful beaches; the show was touting the feeling of solitude of a certain beach on American Samoa, but what will happen there now that it's been featured on the Travel Network? I can only hope that like American Samoa, Hot Springs is just difficult enough to reach that it scares away all but the truly dedicated.

Chasing Ghosts, continued from page 1.

on Central Avenue where tourists and residents crowd the local eateries while cars speed up and down the roadway. And it is seen at the Oaklawn Race Track where crowds come on weekends to take in the excitement of thoroughbred racing.

That Hot Springs is a ghost town is also undeniable. This can be seen in the plaques that line the sidewalks of Central Avenue which celebrate the town's storied past. It can be seen

in the huge empty bathhouses which line Central Avenue and suggest the majesty of days gone by. And it can be seen in the images of Victorian Hot Springs visible in hotel lobbies, storefront windows, and tourist shops. For a period of about 50 years (around 1875 to 1925), Hot Springs was the place to be in America.

As part of the entertainment for that bygone era, Hot Springs welcomed major league ballplayers who came individually and in teams to partake in the baths, enjoy the society life, and prepare for the new season. On a mild March weekend in 2004, members of the Deadball Era Committee came to town to chase after these baseball ghosts by sharing their experiences of treks through the mountains, baths in hot spring waters, and trips to makeshift baseball fields. Along the way we learned some things about the players and environment of the Deadball Era and we became acquainted with each other.

Throughout our stay, events kept referring back to each other in a way that illuminated the era to us. In one of our presentations, Steve Constantelos made use of a rough metric (stolen bases per time on first base) to explore the accuracy of Frank Lane's assessment that Bob Bescher was the "King of Basestealers." His presentation revealed that Bescher would indeed take off from first almost as often as anyone in the Deadball Era. This reverberated throughout our diceball tournament as Bescher ran wild for the winning team headed by Madison McEnitire. Likewise Jon Dunkle's focus on pitchers who didn't pitch on Sundays and R.J. Lesch's exploration of Deadball Era vaudeville, was echoed in parts of Eddie Frierson's electrifying performance of "Matty." Eddie truly brought one of our ghosts to life! Appropriately, his performance was staged at the Malco Theater which was built during the 1930s on the location of what was once the town's vaudeville house.

Although most of our stay was centered on activities around the Arlington Hotel and Central Avenue, we did venture out in search of the ballfields of long ago. Following in the footsteps of a wonderful tour which Don Duren gave to the attendees of the first DEC Hot Springs excursion in 2002, we traveled to four distinct sites around town. We began by visiting the county courthouse building. Through some diligent research by Mike Dugan, we were able to establish that the courthouse grounds were owned by the Chicago League Ball Club in the late 1800s and were certainly the site of spring training for the Cap Anson-led White Stockings—the first spring training ever to be held in Hot Springs. From land maps of the time, it seems likely that the courthouse building itself sits on the part of the land which would have been the ballfield!

From that site we proceeded on to the local Boys Club where we beheld numerous ballfields. Amidst these fields was property which in a previous life was Majestic Park—the spring training home of the World Champion Boston Red Sox of the Babe Ruth era! Being on this field was quite thrilling—the sky was somewhat clear, the temperature was in the 70s, signs of new growth were present throughout the landscape, and workers were preparing the surrounding fields for an upcoming tournament. What a great atmosphere for reflecting on the past.

After the trip to Majestic Park, we went to the site of the other main DEC ballpark—Whittington Park. Now a

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Chasing Ghosts, continued from page 4.

Weyerhaeuser parking lot, in its heyday it was the home base for the Pittsburgh Pirates of Honus Wagner and Fred Clarke. In a later incarnation, it hosted Negro League games. As it now stands, the parking lot is abutted by a hill which contains embedded rows of crumbling mossy concrete slabs. Much to our surprise in 2002, Don Duren assured us that these slabs were part of the 3rd base grandstands for one of the later incarnations of the park. We never got a group photo during the first trip even though this location seemed like the ideal spot. In 2004 this was rectified as the entire DEC delegation climbed on the slabs and stood for a photo in their best deadball cheering poses. Mission accomplished!

Our final ballfield site visit took us across the street from Whittington Park and up a hill to a small open field which was once Fogel Field. Here the Phillies (and later the Pirates) conducted their spring training. This site is unique because unlike the previous places that we had visited, nothing had been done to it! The wooden structures providing dugouts for players, seats for customers, and refreshments for all are, of course, long gone. But the field itself is still standing—peaceful and serene. A clipping from a 1912 Hot Springs newspaper called attention to the first triple play of the season which the Phillies had pulled off on Fogel Field. In this setting, it was easy to imagine those players

Get Yer Fed Shirts Here!

by Tom Simon
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With the funds in the Deadball Era Committee's treasury now depleted, I am excited to announce our new fundraiser: Federal League t-shirts! Be the first on your block to own a t-shirt of the Baltimore Terrapins (black), Brooklyn Tip Tops (gray), Buffalo Buffeds (blue), or Chicago Whales (white). The shirts were designed by graphic artist extraordinaire Glenn LeDoux, who also designed last year's DEC t-shirts and this year's Deadball Stars of the National League. You can see what they look like at Paul Wendt's DEC website:

<http://world.std.com/~pgw/Deadball/FedShirts.gif>

The shirts are \$15 apiece, plus \$5 postage on orders of 1-3 shirts, or go for the "Jim Gilmore Special" -- a set of all four for \$60 and we'll throw in the postage for free. And remember that all profits from the sale of these shirts go towards the DEC's good works: last time those works included plaques for the Ritter Award winners, software for The Inside Game editor Charles Crawley, covering Eddie Frierson's travel expenses to Hot Springs to perform "Matty" at Boiling Out II, etc. Please make checks payable to Tom Simon and send them to me at 118 Spruce St., Burlington, VT 05401. Be sure to make clear what size(s) and team(s) you want, and allow several weeks for delivery, as we won't be printing the t-shirts until we have a pretty good idea of numbers.

Get 'em While They're Hot!



Before They Were the Bombers: The New York Yankees' Early Years, 1903-1915. Jim Reisler.

(Jefferson, NC: McFarland) 2002. 282 pages, with source notes, bibliography, and index. \$35.00, hardcover. Order information: www.mcfarlandpub.com or 1-800-253-2187.

A Book Review

By Steve Constantelos

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Perhaps because it is set a century ago, Jim Reisler's *Before They Were the Bombers* can be enjoyed by those who love the current incarnation of the Yankees and those who can't stand them. Readers will discover the team's weak sister early years, years full of bad luck and bad attitude, all while AL President Ban Johnson did everything he could to give his new league a boost in the nation's biggest city with the rival Giants of John McGraw looming only a few miles away (and at times much closer).

Deadballers will find a lot to savor as Reisler delves into the lives of first manager Clark Griffith, a declining but still punchy Willie Keeler, the saucy Kid Elberfeld, the *annus mirabilis* and quiet fading of Jack Chesbro, unsavory owners Frank Farrell and Big Jim Devery, and, most notable of all, the notorious Prince Hal Chase, far and away the team's singular star of the era. Reisler's is a compelling portrait of the corruptible and corrupting Californian, like a distillation of Martin Kohout's award-winning volume. We get tantalizing looks at emery-baller Russ Ford, Native American submariner Jack Warhop, "Slow Joe" Doyle, fleet Dave Fultz, the morally dubious Arthur Irwin, manager George Stallings before his ascent, manager Frank Chance well after his, and, of course, the manager and erstwhile terrorist, Harry Wolverton (see p.195). Reisler so deftly outlines the careers of these characters, and the city they competed in, that one wishes for more detail, and for more players to get the same treatment. What could we have learned about Al Orth, Jimmy Williams, Flash Maisel, Ray Caldwell, Joe Knight, or Birdie Cree if the author had shone his light on their shadowy histories? So many players

came and went with these Highlanders, the author clearly had to draw the line somewhere.

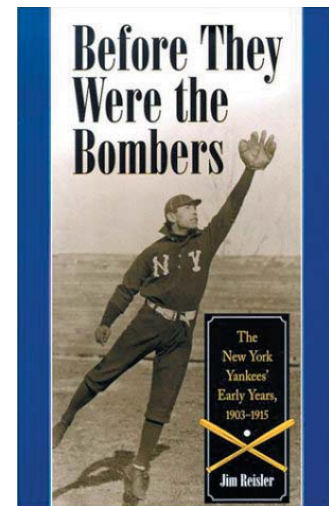
The book may be a little too dense for the novice Deadballer or casual Yankee fan, but Reisler does his best to bring would-be cranks into the fold, with stories of other teams and their players, gambling "wise guys," the evolution of ballparks from wood to steel and concrete, smallpox scares, and New York's subway and blue laws, peaking in Chapter 13 where the author details attending a game on July 4, 1907. Reisler's narration rises to a fever pitch in Chapter 10, where the excitement becomes infectious as the Highlanders so nearly clinch the pennant—although one might argue with the author's giving away the ending at the chapter's beginning! I also really enjoyed the author's account of his visit to the site of old Hilltop Park in the postscript.

"Why only up to 1915?" 1915 was the year the cultured Colonel Jacob Ruppert, Jr. and engineer-adventurer Captain Tillinghast L'Hommedieu Huston bought the team from the hapless Farrell and Devery, so one could see the natural break there. But many readers may be left wondering what happened during those years of slowly increasing success before the truly epoch-making acquisition of Babe Ruth in 1920. The managerial career of Wild Bill Donovan and the coming of Miller Huggins, Wally Pipp, Frank Baker, Bob Meusel, Carl Mays, and Bob Shawkey would be well worth telling. Some of the other editorial decisions are also questionable. The anachronistic epigra, though usually amusing, also usually seem like non sequiturs. And then there is the nesting doll-like series of introductory chapters, the rather simple name-only index, and the appendix of the book, which is a good way to keep tabs on the basic cast of Highlanders and the AL goings-on as a whole, but might have better included more detailed year-by-year rosters and stats.

Reisler's writing is spirited and affable, and he has particular affection for the words "natty" and "wacky." The text, however, is burdened with various bits of misinformation, typos, and a few malapropisms. The author, for instance, is mistaken about the (non)-relationship between Chick and Jake Stahl, and the reason for the former's suicide (112). The difference between "modern" and "all time" records is not made clear (72, 77).

"Kitty" and "Bransfield" are one and the same man (46-47). Frank Baker did not acquire his nickname before the 1911 series (194). Perhaps most grievous to the DEC member, the term "Deadball Era" is spelled a few different ways before the reader has made it past page 42.

One expects that the inaccuracies do not apply to the more original research of the author. And there are not enough errors to put off the plucky DECer or hopelessly mislead the Deadball newcomer. Moreover, these flaws are ably combated by Reisler's detail and his enthusiasm for what is largely an untold story. *Before They Were the Bombers*, which I think has a place in many a DEC member's and Yankee fan's bookshelf, holds many pleasures, both expected and unexpected—the origin of the Yankee nickname (and pinstripes), the peculiar number of disputes between the Highlanders and umpire Silk O'Loughlin, the quotable Cy Young, a game with a crowd of less than 200, Keeler and Chase taking their turns at playing second base, and Frank Chance's holding spring training in Bermuda. I wonder if our committee chairman, when planning the next DEC meeting, will be similarly inspired...



What Makes an Elite Pitcher? Young, Mathewson, Johnson, Alexander, Grove, Spahn, Seaver, Clemens, and Maddux. Warren N. Wilbert.

Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland, 2003. ISBN 0-7864-1456-1. Softcover. \$29.95.

A Book Review by Jan Finkel

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Warren Wilbert's latest book is the logical culmination of his statistical analysis. In his books in collaboration with William Hageman (*Chicago Cubs: Seasons at the Summit* and *New York Yankees: Seasons of Glory*) and *Rookies Rated: Baseball's Finest Freshman Seasons* he focused on individual seasons. In *The Best of Baseball: The 20th Century's Greatest Players Ranked by Position* he evaluated each player in the context of his best eight seasons. Now Wilbert examines the "elite" pitchers in the light of their whole careers. In all cases his touchstones are the Total Player Rating (TPR) or Total Pitcher Index (TPI) in *Total Baseball*.

Wilbert's "elite" pitchers are nine of the ten highest rated pitchers (omitting from the main discussion Kid Nichols, who spent the majority of his career in the 1890s) according to the Total Pitcher Index in the seventh edition of *Total Baseball*. This respected system takes into account a pitcher's hitting and fielding as well as his work on the mound, and provides few surprises. Wilbert gives each pitcher a chapter that begins with an introductory sketch. He then lists outstanding pitchers (Hall of Fame members or major stars) his elite pitcher faced, usually providing a thumbnail sketch of each one before summarizing the results of their head-to-head match-ups. In a tenth chapter Wilbert discusses his pitchers' performances in post-season play.

This should be fascinating reading. Unfortunately, it is a struggle because of egregious factual errors and stylistic stumbles. Thus a book whose title is a question begs a further one: Where are the editors and proofreaders?

A handful of examples will suffice. We find that Warren Spahn pitched for the Milwaukee *Brewers*; that on May 16, 1980, Tom Seaver pitched for the Reds (correct) *and* the Mets; and that 1997 (it was 1996) was Joe Torre's first season as manager of the Yankees.

The stylistic fluffs are even more grating because Wilbert's workmanlike, self-conscious writing ("2 to 1" as opposed to "2-1" for a score, "15 and 10" instead of "15-10" for a won-lost record, or "world series" in place of "World Series") leads to some real clunkers. Of Seaver and a young Nolan Ryan we read: "But between them and another bright and shiny young Met by the name of Jerry Koosman, they soon made believers out of New Yorkers first, and then the rest of the baseball world, however nonplussed it, as well as they, might have been when, in 1969, their team, those same Mets who had lost 101 games in 1967 and another 89 in 1968, turned the world upside down, winning everything in sight, including the world series laurel wreath!" The effect is like driving through a small town in which the traffic lights haven't been synchronized. The syntax of a single phrase can play havoc with a sentence: "Amazingly, his [Alexander's] pitching, always a thing of finely-tempered perfection, *did suffer not significantly* during those latter years (emphasis added)." A competent editor or proofreader could have prevented all of this distraction.

Despite all the problems, the reader willing to dig can find some genuine nuggets. The pitcher logs (for example, Young-Waddell, Grove-Ruffing, Seaver-Carlton, and the like) are invariably interesting. Wilbert often includes a box score of a memorable game, such as Young's perfect game against Waddell on May 5, 1904. However, some of the box scores are jumbled, with the winning and losing pitchers both appearing in the same box.

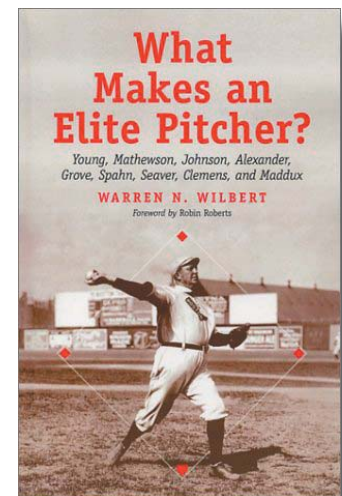
The logs can be idiosyncratic, too. That is, Wilbert includes Burleigh Grimes in the Mathewson log. Mathewson's last year, 1916, was Grimes' first, and they never faced off, so why take up the space? On the other hand, Joe Wood, who was certainly a major star, is never mentioned even though he and Johnson participated in one of the great pitchers' duels of all time in 1912. Making Wood's omission still less understandable is that despite his

short career he ranks 72nd out of 300 in the *Total Baseball* list.

Other nuggets are the surprising bits of information that jump off the page. For instance, Walter Johnson gained much of his fame as a result of his winning and losing so many 1-0 games. Not so well known is that Johnson had three of those 1-0 losses hung on him by a southpaw named Babe Ruth (June 6, 1916; August 15, 1916; and May 7, 1917). Other nice bonuses are Wilbert's discussions of Johnson's encounters with Ty Cobb (.367, what he hit against the rest of the world) and Ruth (.321), Spahn's confrontations with Stan Musial (.314) and Willie Mays (.322), and Maddux' match-ups with Barry Bonds (.243) and Jeff Bagwell (.262). Wilbert shows his capacity for solid research by noting that Cobb's 368 plate appearances against Johnson are the most for any major league hitter against a single pitcher; his average against Johnson was obviously no fluke.

Also adding to the book is the large collection of photographs. We find a picture of just about every pitcher—some of them amusing shots of Clemens, Ryan, Mike Mussina, and others at very young ages, before they bulked up. Wilbert also provides a useful bibliography. The book is attractive in appearance, printed on good paper, and well indexed.

What Makes an Elite Pitcher? has value for the persistent reader. Taken as a whole, it covers *most* of the significant pitchers of the twentieth century. The discussions, pictures, and box scores bring back a lot of memories. One piece of advice is to read the book in small segments. It's not a bad book. With editing and proofreading—and perhaps one more draft—it could be outstanding.



The Tour to End All Tours: The Story of Major League Baseball's 1913-1914 World Tour. James E. Elfers.

Lincoln: University of Nebraska
Press, 2003. Paper. 292 pages. ISBN:
0-8032-6748-7. Price: \$24.95.

A Book Review

By R. J. Lesch

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The New York Giants and Chicago White Sox embarked on a tour around the world following the 1913 season. The tour started with a month-long trek across the continental United States from Cincinnati to San Diego, then north along the Pacific Coast to Seattle, playing thirty-one exhibition games in all. Then the tour set sail for Japan, China, the Philippines, Australia, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Italy, France and England, playing another fifteen games in front of thousands of spectators who had never seen a baseball game before. Leading the tour was John J. McGraw, manager of the Giants, and Charles A. Comiskey, owner of the White Sox.

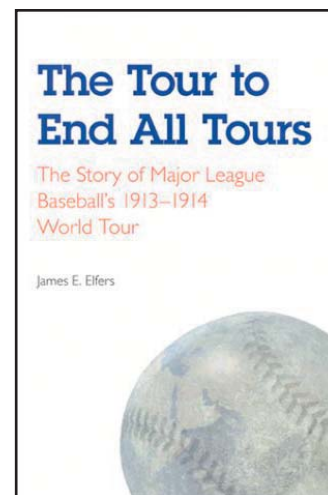
The tour was big news at the time, but within a few decades it had all been forgotten amid the upheavals surrounding two world wars and global economic depression. In telling the story of this tour, James Elfers takes us back to that time. The tour ends six months before the outbreak of World War I. The tourists sail home from Europe at the end aboard the luxury liner *Lusitania*, which would be sunk in the course of that war. The tourists see the last surviving passenger pigeon in Cincinnati, and three months later meet the last khedive of Egypt in Heliopolis. They meet dignitaries ranging from the Pope and the King of England to Sir Thomas Lipton, the *de facto* ruler of Ceylon (as Sri Lanka was then known). Airplanes make appearances in Elfers's narrative, as the single-engined conveyances of dashing aviators, but the tour traveled around the world as all long-distance travelers did in those days: by rail and by sea. Elfers introduces those of us accustomed to jetting from point to point on the world in hours to the reality of seasickness, the danger of typhoons striking without warning, and the simple

tedium of long-distance travel.

The tour included some of the great names of baseball; in addition to McGraw and Comiskey, the tour included Hall-of-Famers Tris Speaker, Sam Crawford and Red Faber, with Christy Mathewson and Walter Johnson, among others, appearing during the U.S. phase of the tour. In addition, the tour included names familiar to any baseball fan of the day: Germany Schaefer, Steve Evans, Larry Doyle, Fred Merkle, and Dick Egan. (Yes, that Dick Egan.) All were upstaged overseas, however, by the most famous American athlete of the day: Jim Thorpe, the Olympic champion who had taken up baseball as one of McGraw's Giants.

In *The Tour to End All Tours*, the baseball games are secondary to the human interest stories throughout. The reunion of the pugnacious John McGraw with his former Orioles teammate Dr. Arlington Pond, now practicing medicine in Manila, is touching. We get to sit in on the players' cutthroat shuffleboard league, organized to provide entertainment at sea. We're amused to find honeymooning couples (the Thorpes and the Doyles) traveling with bachelors on the make (Merkle and Speaker). We enjoy Joe Benz's impromptu verses, the lighthearted banter of Schaefer and Evans, and the eager hustle of youngsters Buck Weaver and Red Faber, as if we were there.

Elfers also dug up plenty of original source material. Of particular interest are photographs of the tour in Blue Rapids, Kansas, and the diary of Iva Thorpe, Jim's wife. The original material is sufficient to outweigh the rash of factual errors in the first two chapters, which give background for the tour. It is too bad that somewhere in the editing process someone didn't catch and fix some of the errors (such as making John McGraw the Giants' president, which he wasn't, and partner-owner, which he wasn't yet; or asserting that the Chicago Cubs have won only one world championship; or identifying the wrong Comiskey crony as Western League president). However, Elfers seems to have done a fine job with the tour itself, and that makes the book worth reading.



Top 10 Reasons to Bring Back the Dead Ball

by F. X. Flinn

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10. How about them buntin' Marlins
9. Wool flannels are actually cooler than you'd expect
8. Questec only works with clean white balls
7. It's been so long since someone threw a World Series
6. Betty Crocker mitt sales will skyrocket
5. We'll all be able to sit in the Yankee outfield
4. There's nothing like watching Roger Clemens throw that shineball
3. Games will start at 3 PM and be over by 5:30
2. The Washington Senators will play a great Inside Game
1. I can't wait to put on my bowler and head for the ballpark