

GEORGE MICHAEL

## Unsolved Photo Mysteries

**M**y Mom started me on my never-ending search for the perfect sliding photos back in 1947. A regular part of every summer day was spent going through the newspapers, searching for sliding photos, then identifying the players without looking at the caption below the photo. I became quite adept at looking for key elements and in doing so spurred a life-long love affair for photos of sliding action.

Over the past 50 years I have studied thousands of photos of sliding action looking for information and clues about the photograph. Who are the players, the umpire, and the stadium, when it happened and why it happened. In most cases the information, while occasionally wrong, is attached to the back of the photograph. But with the following photos the information has been detached from the back and I had to start from scratch.

Last year I wrote an article in the *Baseball Research Journal* in which I shared this identification process on a number of misidentified photos. I showed how I came up with the players involved, the date and the inning. The keys to identifying a photo are to recognize the teams, the players, the umpire, the stadium, the year, and then spend a lot of hours in a library. I was gratified at the response to the BRJ article.

Even with a lot of solid research, there are some photos that are true mysteries that require special assistance. In the article last year, for example, I included a photo of a 1932 Yankees' game, the details of which had eluded me for years. Several SABR members came to the rescue in late 2004. Encouraged by that feedback, I put together a group of mystery photographs that have frustrated me for years because I haven't been able to identify them. I know something about them, but not enough, and I am looking for some help.

What follows are nine photos where there is just not enough information available to solve the mystery—but first, the now-identified 1932 photo:

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### SOLVING THE 1932 YANKEES MYSTERY



#### WHAT WE KNEW

1. It's the Yankees.
2. The photo was taken before April 18, 1932 [a date stamped on back of the photo reads May 18, 1932].
3. A clean infield indicates that it is early in the game.
4. The Yankee in the foreground is Jack Saltzgaver, who played in the early games of 1932 against the Athletics and Red Sox.
5. From other photos, I know the shortstop is Lyn Lary.

#### WHAT WE DIDN'T KNOW

1. Whether the Yankees were playing the Athletics or the Red Sox [both teams wore similar uniforms in 1932].
2. The identity of the runner.

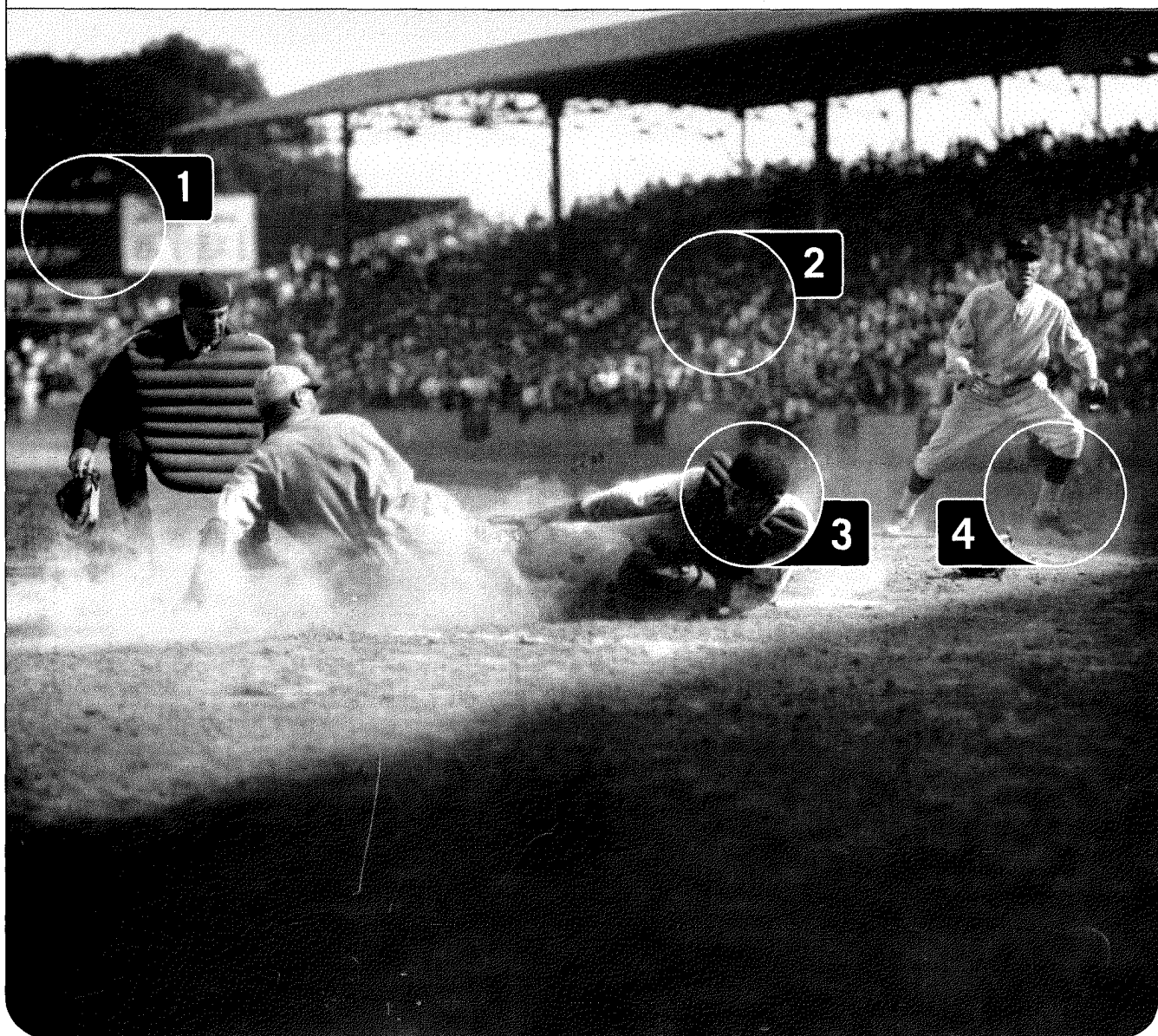
#### THE ANSWER

Several SABR members pointed to a key clue; the "sock" on the runners left sleeve which is barely distinguishable. Now knowing the runner is a Red Sox player, I studied the early 1932 games for the Yankees and Red Sox and found the play on April 16, 1932. The umpire is Bill Dinneen. Dave Smith of Retrosheet verified the facts: "In the first inning of April 16, 1932, Max Bishop was forced at second base."

#### CASE CLOSED

## #1: THE SENATORS MYSTERY

This photo is very frustrating because there are only a few clues.



### WHAT WE KNOW

1. The location is Griffith Stadium in Washington, D.C.
2. The crowd indicates a sellout game.
3. The catcher appears to be Muddy Ruel.
4. The socks worn by the Senators pitcher appear to match Senators uniforms from 1924 or 1925.

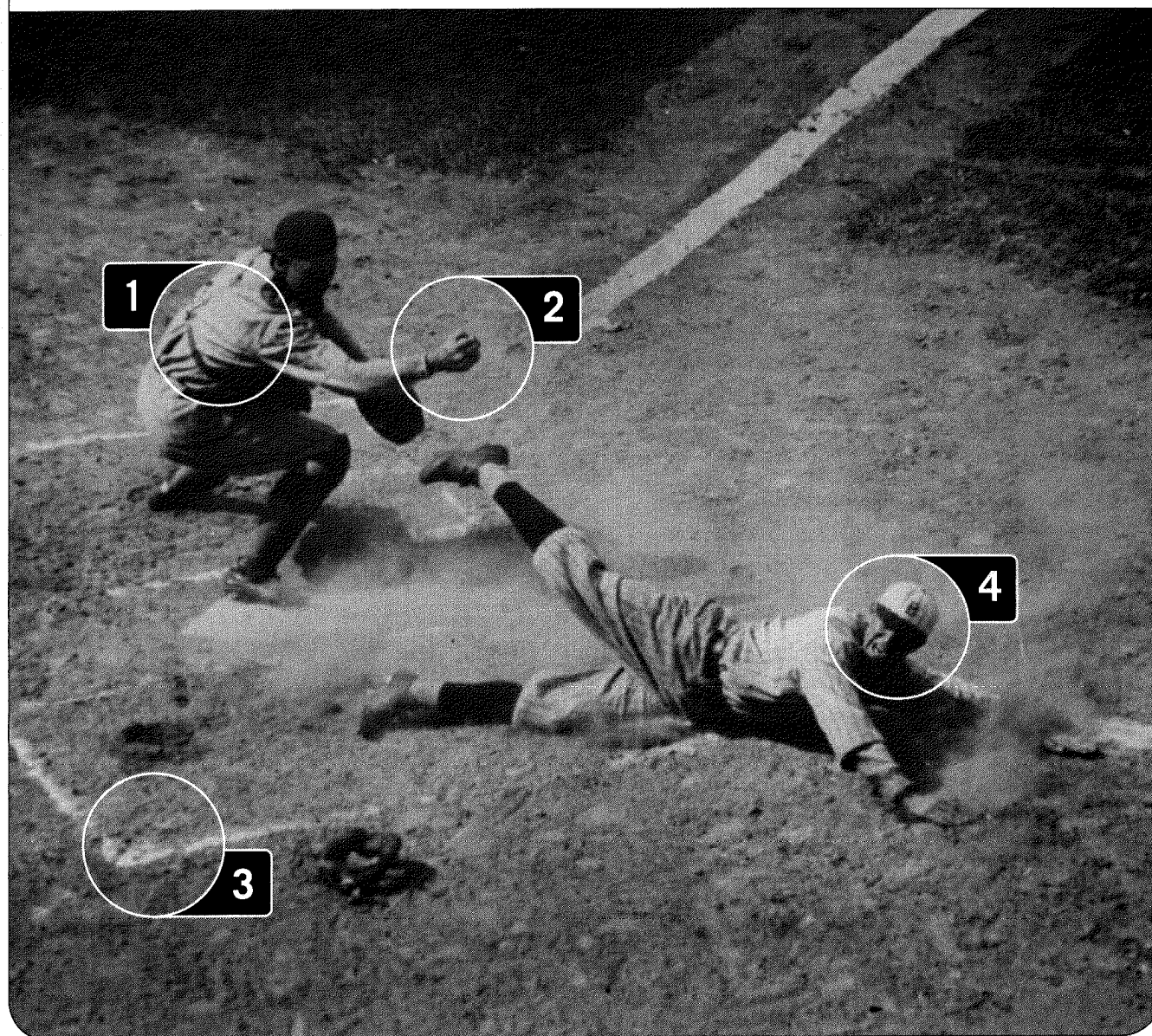
### WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

*Who is the pitcher? Is it Allan Russell? Who is the umpire? Who is the runner? Does the runner play for the Red Sox? Or is he wearing a Browns uniform?*

I rate this photo as a "10" on the difficulty scale because we can't see the runner's face or the front of his uniform.

## #2: THE DODGERS MYSTERY

This is a photo that is more than 80 years old, with no identification other than the fact that it is a "Pacific & Atlantic" photo. After a lot of research, it still remains a mystery.



### WHAT WE KNOW

1. The only road uniform that matches up with what the catcher is wearing is one for the Phillies.
2. The runner appears to be out as the catcher has the ball in his hand.
3. The undisturbed chalk line tells us that it was early in the game or it was a very low scoring game.
4. The runner plays for Brooklyn. The Dodgers wore this style uniform from 1918 to 1922.
5. The location is Ebbets Field.

### WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

*Who is the Dodger runner? Who is the Phillies catcher?*

If we can determine who the players are, then this photo will be a library research project to determine when the game was played, and when the play happened.



### #3: THE HOOPER MYSTERY

Every once in a while comes a photo that is absolutely confounding. This is such a photo.



#### WHAT WE KNOW

1. This is a clear photo of Harry Hooper of the Red Sox sliding into third base at Fenway Park. Also, the Red Sox uniform with a solid white hat was worn from 1912 to 1920. If Hooper is wearing a pinstripe uniform, it is from the 1912–1915 period, but it is not clear that the uniform features pinstripes.
2. The white above the stripe on the stocking was worn from 1912 to 1919.

#### WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

*For what team does the third baseman play?*

There is no known uniform from 1912–1919 that matches the one he is wearing. Also, *who is he?* Some researchers believe they see a Yankee “N.Y.” lettering on the first-base coach’s uniform—the Yankees wore this type of home uniform in 1915 and 1916.

This photo rates a “10” on the difficulty scale because we don’t have a clear view of the front of the uniform.

#### #4: A JACKIE ROBINSON MYSTERY

The difficulty in identifying this photo is in trying to figure out who the runner is being forced at second base.



##### WHAT WE KNOW

1. Jackie Robinson playing second base in a home uniform. So the game is obviously being played at Ebbets Field.
2. The Phillies uniform is pre-1950. Since Robinson played second base in the 1948 and 1949 seasons, this photo must have been taken during that period.

##### WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

*Who is the Phillies runner sliding into second base? Identifying this photo seems to require the expertise of a researcher who *really* knows the Phillies.*



**#5: THE CUBS MYSTERY**

I have had this photo for more than 10 years, and have never been able to confidently identify the Cubs second baseman. Many Cubs experts have looked at this photo without a definitive identification.

**WHAT WE KNOW**

1. The second baseman is a Chicago Cub at Wrigley Field.
2. The runner is wearing a pre-1951 Cardinals uniform (The Cardinals wore the striped sleeve up to 1951). Whitey Kurowski wore #1 for the Cardinals at this time, and since there is no health patch on his sleeve, the photo must have been taken between 1946 and 1950.

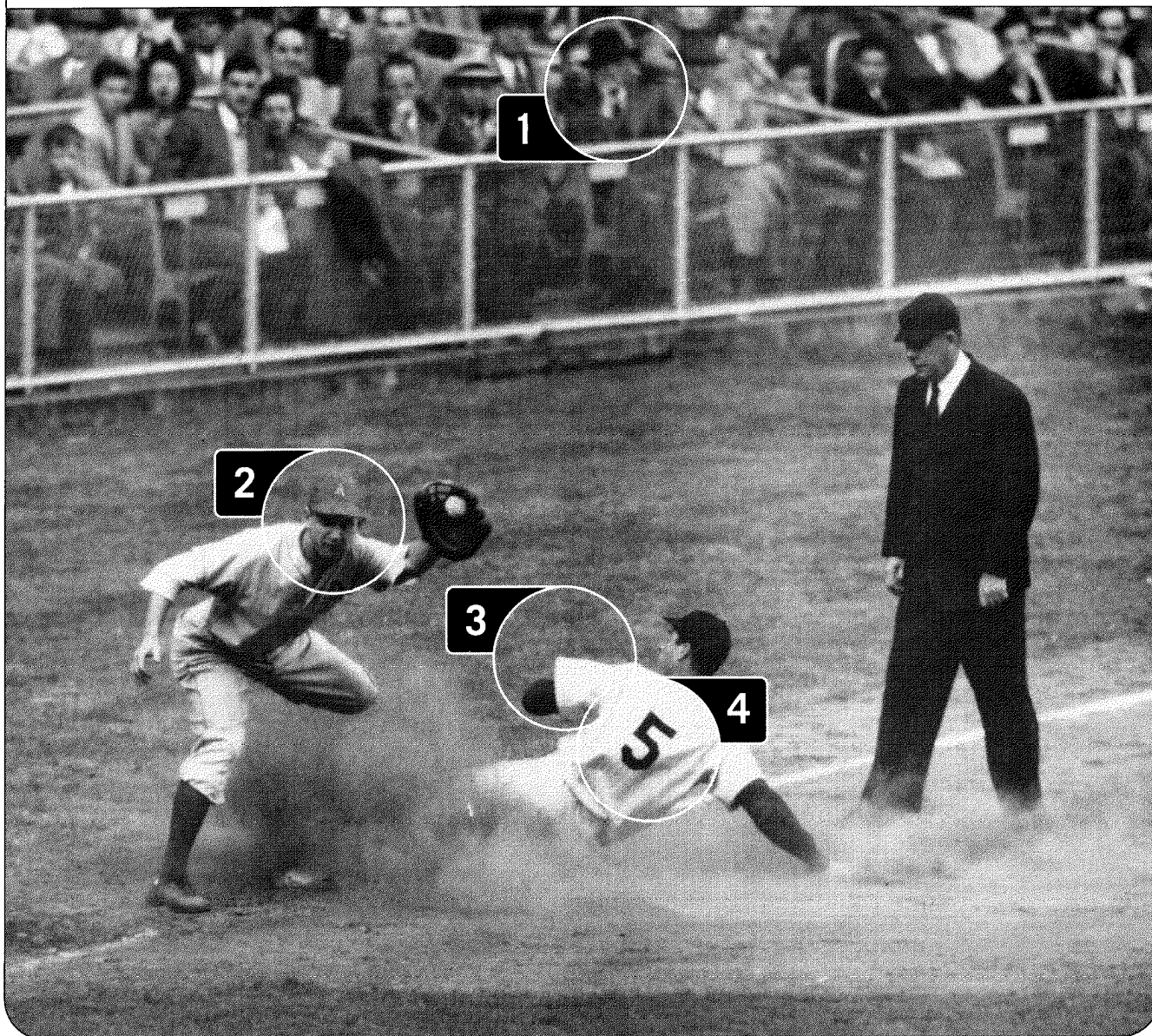
**WHAT WE DON'T KNOW**

*Who is the Cubs second baseman?*

The Cubs never wore their stockings like this between 1946 and 1950, which seems to contradict the health patch conclusion; so *what year was this photo taken?* If anyone can pinpoint the year of the photo—and the identity of the Cubs second baseman—research can then be completed.

## #6: THE DiMAGGIO MYSTERY

This is one of those photos in which a missing fact has halted the research as to when the action took place.



### WHAT WE KNOW

1. The clothing worn by the fans indicate chilly weather, so the game may have been played in Spring or Fall.
2. The Athletics third baseman is Hank Majeski.
3. Since there are no patches on the players' sleeves, this photo must have been taken between 1946 and 1950.
4. The runner sliding into third base is Joe DiMaggio; since he's wearing the home whites, the game was played in Yankee Stadium.

### WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

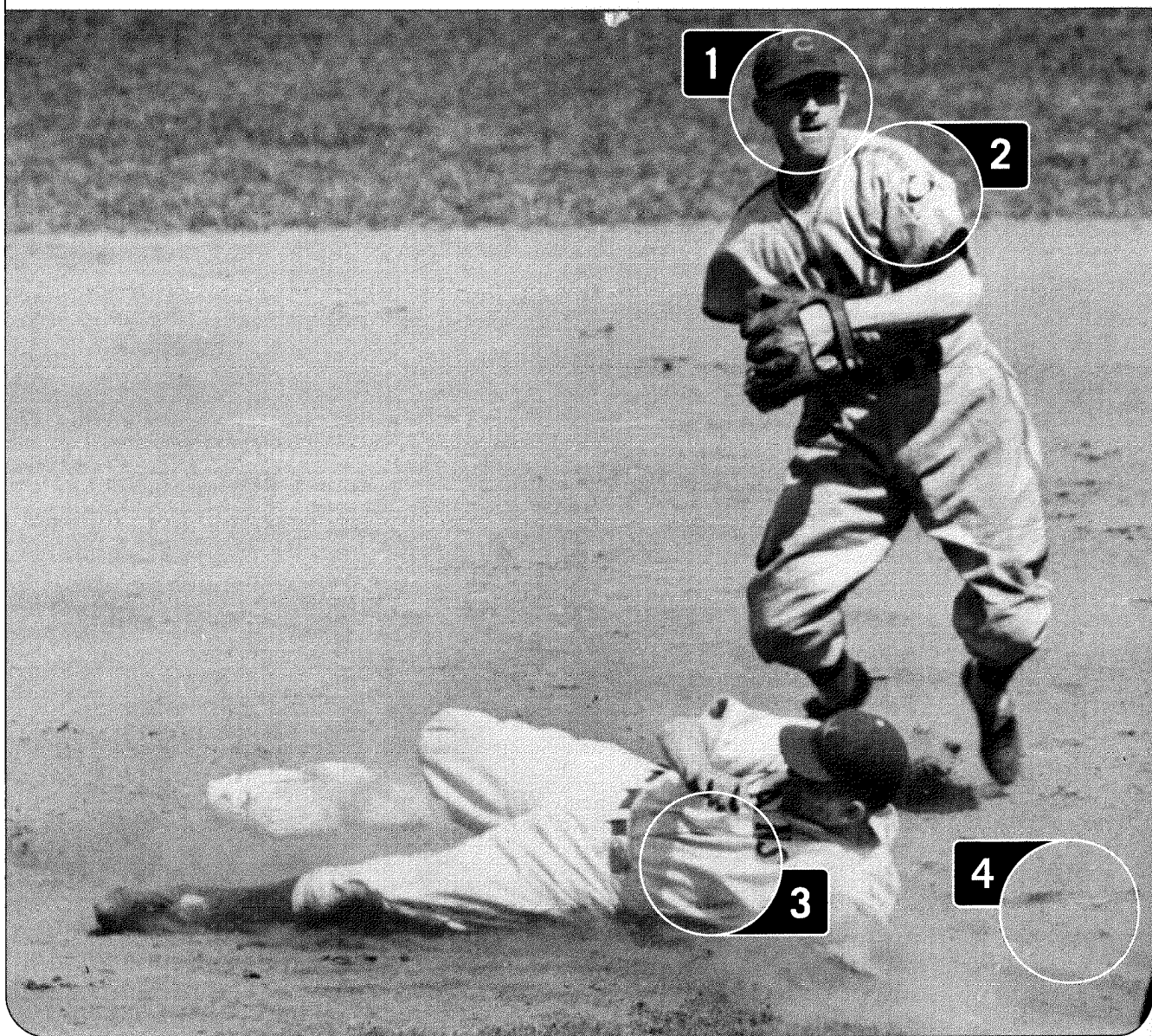
*Who is the umpire?*

Until the umpire can be positively identified, it is not possible to say with certainty when this play took place. Joe DiMaggio looks like he was safe on the play, but when it happened remains a mystery.



## #7: THE GIANTS MYSTERY

This photo requires the knowledge of someone who really knows the prewar New York Giants.



### WHAT WE KNOW

1. The Cubs infielder is Dick Bartell.
2. The patch on the Cubs uniform indicates that this photo was taken in 1939.
3. The uniforms indicate it is a home game for the Giants played at the Polo Grounds.
4. The clean dirt on the base paths indicates the play happened early in the game. The runner is obviously out on a force out.

### WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

*Who is the Giants runner?*

Once the runner has been identified, it is then possible to go through game accounts and determine when the play occurred.



## #8: THE CARDINALS MYSTERY

There are almost as many clues as there are questions in this photo. Yet after years and years of research, its identification has eluded me.



### WHAT WE KNOW

1. The uniforms indicate that the Cardinals are playing the Braves in Boston.
2. It is 1930 or 1931. The Cardinals had "St. Louis" on their uniform as opposed to "Cardinals" in 1930 and 1931.
3. The Braves started wearing numbers on their uniforms in 1932, so this photo is pre-1932.
4. The undisturbed batters-box chalk marks indicate this is early in the game 1930–1931.

### WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

*Who is the Cardinals runner? Who is the Braves catcher? Who is the umpire?*

Once we have this information, it will be possible to research the Cardinals–Braves games in 1930 and 1931 to determine how, and when, this play occurred.

## #9: THE RED SOX MYSTERY

So much about this photo is obvious, but so much about this photo is unknown.



### WHAT WE KNOW

1. The umpire is George Moriarty.
2. The uniforms indicate that the Yankees are playing the Red Sox at Fenway Park.
3. Because there are no patches on the sleeve, it is probably from 1938, 1940, or 1941.

### WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

*Who is the Red Sox runner? Who is the Yankees first baseman?*

Until the players in this photo are positively identified, the research on when this play occurred is at a standstill. If you are a detective and think you can help solve these cold-case mysteries, I need your assistance. Send any information to: George Michael, 1201 Sugarloaf Mountain Road, Comus, MD 20842 or email [George.Michael@nbc.com](mailto:George.Michael@nbc.com).