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LEAGUE PRESIDENT OR LEAGUE CENSOR?

Can a league president punish a newspaperman for writing uncomplimentary stories? Not many people would answer yes. One who would and did is Vincent M. McNamara, president of the New York-Pennsylvania League.

McNamara was displeased with a column written by Ed Plaisted, sports editor of the Binghamton (N. Y.) Sun-Bulletin. Plaisted criticized the operation of the NYP's Wellsville club, as described in the July 10 issue of THE SPORTING NEWS.

Plaisted, who covers the Binghamton club in the NYP, also served as official scorer at Binghamton home games—until McNamara fired him. McNamara left no doubt as to the reason for the dismissal: "It is the belief of this office that by your recent and totally unwarranted tirade unleashed against a member of this league—the fine city of Wellsville, the baseball club and its officers—you have failed utterly in conducting yourself as a member of our official family."

McNamara's concept of correct English usage is unique. He apparently considers the terms "official scorer" and "press agent" as synonymous.

We doubt that Plaisted is concerned over his "punishment." The Binghamton sports editor was paid \$3 per game to rule on hits and errors, determine winning and losing pitchers and fill out an official box score for league headquarters. This is precisely the task for which major league scorers insist they are underpaid at \$25 a game.

The implications of McNamara's act are not so harmless. He seems to think that sports writers who act as official scorers in his league owe primary allegiance to him, not to their newspapers. McNamara has been around long enough to know better.

Furthermore, the firing of one scorer for failure to follow the McNamara line creates the assumption that all the other scorers write only what the league boss approves. We don't think McNamara has any writers in his back pocket, but he acts as though he has—and for a mighty small lump of sugar, \$3 per game!

McNamara should re-examine his position. He is a league president, not a league censor. His tactics are a repetition of the Braves' abortive attempt to muzzle Milwaukee writer Lou Chapman by barring him from the clubhouse. The Braves backed down in 24 hours. Apparently McNamara prefers to ignore his mistake in the hope that others will, too. Wrong again, Vince.

PREPARE NOW FOR EXPANSION

Tommy Mercer wants a Big-Time club and he's getting impatient. The co-owner of the Dallas-Fort Worth entry in the Texas League has suggested that four cities now on the outside looking in should combine their efforts. He mentioned Milwaukee, Seattle and Oakland in addition to his own locale.

"We're all competing," Mercer said. "We're all asking for the first club available. If we went as a unit to the top baseball people and presented our case, we'd have more force behind it."

Mercer's impatience is understandable. There is a lot of talk in baseball's top echelon about the "inevitability of expansion," but precious little has been done to prepare for it.

"We're not ready for it; the talent supply is too thin." That's the ready excuse you hear most frequently and we must agree with it. But that's not a valid reason for failure to prepare for something most people in the majors agree is inevitable.

We think the majors should adopt a firm policy on expansion now, publicize it and begin moving toward fulfilling it. Otherwise, they'll never be ready. Here are steps that should be taken:

1. Set up a definite target date for expansion.
2. Begin an immediate study of possible sites. Establish definite qualifications on the seating capacities and specific dimensions of new parks. Determine a minimum acceptable amount of financial backing for prospective local owners.
3. Decide what form expansion will take—a third league or additions to the present majors.
4. Call an immediate halt to all shifts of present major league franchises until expansion has been achieved.
5. Establish a method of stocking new clubs.

MINNESOTA HAS REASON TO BE PROUD

Minnesota fans have plenty to crow about. Their Twins are a pennant contender and their Metropolitan Stadium is the site of the All-Star Game, the major leagues' glittering, midsummer production.

At the moment, the Twin Cities are the capital of baseball. Twins' Prexy Cal Griffith fought hard to bring the All-Star Game to the north country two years ago, but was sidetracked in favor of Cleveland at the last moment. Undismayed, he redoubled his efforts until he landed the 1965 show.

This is a plum Griffith and the Twins fans deserve, and the timing is near perfect. Cal has built an exciting, power-laden club which has surprised with the quality of its pitching. And Minnesota has provided magnificent support at the box office, not only this year, but ever since the club was moved from Washington for the 1961 season.

In fact, the Twin Cities strengthen the majors' case for tapping virgin territory. In their first four years in Minnesota, the Twins drew 5,304,005 spectators, an average of 1,326,001 per season. They have never finished worse than third in the American League attendance standings and they were A. L. gate champions in 1963.

This year promises more of the same, with even higher figures in store if the Twins remain in the race. Griffith's optimism over baseball's future in Minnesota is not founded on fantasy. Surveys of industrial activity and population trends lead him to project attendance to a goal of 2,000,000 before many more years.

The Twin Cities are getting an exciting attraction in the 1965 All-Star Game. They've earned it, too.



By C. C. JOHNSON SPINK

Editor and Publisher

Baseball Going Olympic?

ST. LOUIS, Mo.

Efforts to gain international recognition of baseball as an Olympic sport may be successful when Mexico City serves as host of the Games in 1968.

If so, a large measure of credit will go to Everett D. (Eppie) Barnes, veteran athletic director of Colgate University and president of the United States Baseball Federation, who has been carrying on a quiet, effective campaign to add baseball to the Olympic program.

At a recent meeting in Chicago, the federation was granted membership on the United States Olympic Committee and was chosen this country's representative on the International Baseball Federation, which is headed by Carlos M. Zecca of Costa Rica.

The competition rules enforced by the international federation will be in effect if baseball is accepted as an Olympic sport.

Baseball made an approach to Olympic status in 1964 when an all-star college team under Coach Rod Dedeaux of the University of Southern California played a number of exhibitions in Japan during the time of the Games at Tokyo.

Enthusiasm in Mexico

Barnes, who accompanied the team, said:

"While we were in Japan, Gen. Jose Clark-Flores, Mexico's representative on the International Olympic Committee, told us that Mexico is very anxious to have baseball included on the official Olympic program.

"Mexico is almost as enthusiastic about baseball as the United States and Japan.

"We are going to visit the general in Mexico City to go over the protocol for making an application to the International Olympic Committee. Then it will be up to me to show how good a salesman I am in behalf of baseball.

"Under Olympic rules, entries from at least 12 countries are necessary for an official sport and we can get that many from this hemisphere alone, not to mention Japan, the Philippines, South Korea, Nationalist China, Holland and Italy.

"At the very least, we expect to present baseball on an international exhibition basis. Olympic rules provide that a host country may organize a 'demonstration' of a sport that is not part of the regular Olympics. That is how Japan was able to include judo in the 1964 program."

Pan-American Program

Meanwhile, baseball will definitely be part of the Pan-American Games at Winnipeg, Canada, in 1967, with teams expected from 12 to 14 countries, Barnes said.

The U. S. players will be selected by the U. S. Baseball Federation in cooperation with the National Collegiate Athletic Association, the Amateur Athletic Union and the armed forces.

Considering that the AAU and the U. S. Track and Field Federation, with which the NCAA is affiliated, are embroiled in a fight over control of our Olympic track and field team, we are happy over the fine relationship among the baseball groups.

With their unity, we can look for a strong national team that will represent the U. S. with honors at Winnipeg in 1967 and, hopefully, at Mexico City for the Olympic Games in 1968.

Batting The Breeze



By JOE FALLS

That Sign in Ebbets Field Was Maddening

DETROIT, Mich.

Who remembers the Abe Stark sign? Boy, there was a sign that used to make me mad. It was the most absurd sign in baseball. It was maybe three feet high and ran across the bottom of the scoreboard in Ebbets Field. It was black and yellow. I remember that. I don't remember the exact words on the sign but it was something like: "Hit Sign, Win Suit."

We'd sit there in the bleachers (the best bargain in baseball: just 75 cents with backs on all the seats) and I'd look down at the Abe Stark sign and I'd get mad.

"How can anyone hit it?" I'd mumble to myself but loud enough so the guy in the next seat could hear me.

"Hit what?" he'd say.

"The Abe Stark sign. Just look at it. How can anyone hit it?"

He would look at the sign and I'd say:

"Okay, if a ball is hit over Walker's head, it hits the scoreboard—right?"

"Right," he'd say.

"If it's low enough, he catches it, right?"

"Right."

"The only way anyone can hit the sign is if a ground ball goes through Walker's legs—and did you ever see a ground ball go through Dixie Walker's legs?"

A frown would cross my listener's face. "I guess you're right."
"You bet I'm right," I'd say.



DIXIE WALKER

Opportunity for Fan to Blow His Stack

Ebbets Field was a good place to watch a ball game. A guy could get mad in Ebbets Field. Up on the corner, they talked about how Babe Phelps used to break the big plate glass window in the showroom of the auto dealer on the other side of Bedford avenue. They said there'd even be a sign in the window saying: "C'mon, Babe! Break the window! We'll pay for it."

You could see the big window from the bleachers and I waited for someone to hit it. I waited for Bill Nicholson to hit it. Or Ray Sanders. But they never came close. They'd ride the ball into Bedford avenue and it would roll across the Mobil Gas station (I guess it was a Mobil Gas station) and there'd be half a dozen guys chasing it. They didn't even have a sign in the window then and I'd get mad at that, too. What's the matter, didn't they care?

Now the Dodgers play in a spectacular stadium in Los Angeles. In my opinion, it's the finest ball park in both leagues. But it's 330 to right and 330 to left. It's 380 to right-center and 380 to left-center. If you hit the ball right, it goes out. If you don't hit it right, it doesn't go out. What kind of a place is that to play ball?

Where's the screen running from the right field corner out to the exit gate in center field? Where's the Lifebuoy sign? Where's the Gem Razor sign? How do you know what's playing at the Brooklyn Albee unless there's a sign to tell you?

Every fly hit to right was an adventure in Ebbets Field. Dixie Walker was a master at playing the wall. I remember Red Barber used to call him "Fred Walker" and I liked that because it made me feel that Barber knew the players, really knew what he was talking about.

"There's a high drive to right field . . . Walker back, back, back . . ."

Dixie Knew Exactly How to Play Carom Shots

You never knew what'd happen. The ball could hit the screen on top of the wall and drop straight down. Or it could hit the wall, which was bent at a crazy angle, and bounce off any which way. Or it could hit the scoreboard—and sometimes, but not very often, the clock on top of the scoreboard.

As the ball would come down in its high arc, Walker would drift back to the wall as if to catch it. Then he'd whirl around and play it off the screen or the wall or the scoreboard. He always seemed to know where it was going to hit.

Then he'd whirl again and make that low throw of his to the infield, and the runners would hold.

The guys on the corner used to talk about Lonnie Frey's home run, the one that beat Whitlow Wyatt, 1-0, how it rolled along behind the scoreboard but never came down. I heard the story so often I could picture Walker looking up, frantically waiting for it to come down, and Frey frantically racing around the bases.

I heard the story so often I began believing I was there. I'd tell the story myself and pretend I was there the day it happened.

The drawing was impressive. It looked like a flying saucer with flags. The story on the front page of the Boston Globe said: "This new look in stadiums is slated for the South Station-Fort Point Channel area. Designed by Vincent G. Kling and Associates, it will be the world's first retractable roof stadium."

"For baseball, the seating capacity will be 45,000 and for football 53,000. Parking will be no problem since there will be room for 2,500 cars directly under the pedestrian plaza and 5,000 cars in a garage in the South Station area."

"Diameter of the structure is 780 feet. The roof opening is 360 feet wide and can be opened and closed in 20 minutes."

I bought the Globe on the way out to Fenway Park. The taxi ride, somehow, was a sad one.