

# The SABR(UK) Examiner

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THE JOURNAL OF THE BOBBY THOMSON CHAPTER OF THE SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN BASEBALL RESEARCH (UK)

## SABR(UK) MEETS IN LONDON; GETS INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

It was deja vu all over again...On May 7 SABR(UK) members from all over Europe once again converged at the Kings of Clerkenwell pub and enjoyed an afternoon and evening of fellowship, entertainment, and just plain baseball. It was a perfect afternoon to lock yourself inside and let your imagination wander, if not only because there was a torrential downpour pretty much all day. The meeting was well-organised and enjoyable; a well-balanced mix of business and entertainment. We've got about thirty people here who can't talk baseball anywhere else, so when you get them together you don't need to do much more.

The business matters were taken care of the first. We received apologies from members who couldn't attend due to time conflicts. One of them, David Lovely, was in Chicago. Mike Ross showed a postcard from

him showing "Comiskey and Wrigley Parks side by side". It was never stated how this miracle was achieved.

It was then noted that Patrick Morley had tendered his resignation as Secretary of SABR(UK) because of time constraints. It was voted to offer Patrick our heartiest thanks for his diligent execution of his duties as Secretary, and in fact for his founding role in SABR(UK). Thank you, Patrick.

Mike then went on to make an important announcement, but in typical Ross style, he started it out with an anecdote. He talked of meeting Norman Macht, our Chapter President, at spring training this year at the Dodger's facility at Vero Beach, Florida. Mike told Norman about the difficulties of running what is in effect a National Branch, and especially the



expenses of keeping members scattered over a large area in touch with each other. Well, Norman Macht has come up with \$500 from the main headquarters for the Bobby Thomson Chapter, to help fulfil our aims in research. Mr Macht's letter accompanying the grant is printed on page 2. We offer our thanks to Norman and HQ for what is in effect international recognition of the work we're doing here.

In other business, the Officers were elected for three-year terms; Mike Ross as Chairman and Andy Parkes as Treasurer. The post of Secretary is now vacant; we need someone to fill in the duties until we can have a formal election. Any volunteers? Your Chapter needs you!

After the election of the Officers, the Chapter in general was asked to confirm the appointment of three other positions: Patrick Carroll as Chair-

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## VIEW FROM THE CHAIR by Mike Ross

Mark Alvarez, Head of Publications of SABR, is coming to England in August and has requested a meeting with whom-ever is available from the SABR(UK) membership. I'm having an informal gathering for Mark at my home on August 11 at around 5pm for an extended visit. I'm leaving for holiday on July 25 and returning on same day Mark is in town, so I need to know soon which of you wish to attend. You'll have to phone either Andy Parkes or Martin Hoerchner (numbers below) and you'll have to do it SOON if you think you might make the date.

We have thanked Norman Macht in many ways for being somewhat of a Godfather to our little venture. I was pleased to bump into him at Dodger Town during spring training so I could thank him again, personally. His latest effort on our behalf was to appeal to the SABR

council to grant us a budget for research expenses. As has been pointed out in several items, we are a National Chapter; in fact, we are an International Chapter, not a local.

Pat Carroll has already put the

has crossed over. And he understands the obfuscation of the decades. It was easy for the school masters to discourage children from wanting to play baseball, thus turning baseball into what soon became exclusively "a girls' game", rounders.

When I met author Leonard Koppett at the World Series in 1988 I imposed on his wisdom and asked him why he thought baseball never took off in Britain. He took no time to ponder. "The class system", he said. The effect the class system has on person initiative is inarguable.

Hurrahs to Martin for continually keeping the Examiner on bubble and frequently to the boil. Any ideas for local and national meetings should be tossed to the committee. We must

also elect a new Secretary at the next meeting. Any nominations?

Don't forget to phone Andy or Martin ASAP regarding meeting Mark on August 11. It's not to be missed. Any historical finds should go to Pat Carroll way down West. Until then.



cats with the pigeons by suggesting rather firmly and amusingly that baseball (the chicken) came before rounders (the egg). Pat indeed now has the chicken crossing the road and, although conclusive proof has not been secured, he knows why the chicken

## *Text of Macht's historic letter*

April 27, 1994

At the recent SABR Board meeting I succeeded in pushing through the approval for a UK/European Research Committee of SABR, which will entitle you to a budget for expenses. Do not mix this with your regional; they are two separate entities. Here is what you have to do: at your next meeting, sign up members who will do some research on the committee; choose a chairman (subject to the approval of the SABR Board, which will meet in Arlington), write a brief statement of the mission and goals of the committee, and do a budget for the year 1995 - this should include postage, phone, research photocopying, cost of printing committee

newsletters and mailing them (basic requirement is one per year). The average committee budget is about \$500 a year.

I told the board that you had already begun researching the history of baseball in the UK, that you were in pursuit of evidence to show no connection between rounders and baseball, that the research would deal with the past in the UK, but mostly the future in the rest of Europe, which seems to have more future than past in this realm. You may want to get someone to keep up with what is going on in each country as part of the committee.

The guidelines say that you need to have at least 10 members on the

committee within two years, but that should be no problem. The committee is also required to publish one newsletter a year, though many do it more often. I know you have a talented group of writers and reporters over there, having read your past newsletters. I also suggest that someone submit something in the committee's purview to the publications editor for a future *The National Pastime* or *Baseball Research Journal*.

Hoist a Guinness for me at Clerkenwell and let me know if you have any questions or run into any snags.

Cheers, Norman Macht

### OFFICERS AND GENTLEMEN

**Chairman:** Mike Ross, 2 Maida Avenue, Suite B, Little Venice, London W2 1TF (Tel: 071 723 9848; Fax: 071 266 3166)  
**Treasurer:** Andy Parkes, 84 Hillingdon Road, Stretford, Manchester M32 8PJ (Tel and Fax: 061 865 2952)  
**Assistant Treasurer:** Hugh Robinson, 567 Kings Road, Stretford, Manchester M32 8JQ (Tel: 061 864 1250)  
**Chairman of British Baseball Historical Committee:** Patrick Carroll, 10 Court Barton, Crewkerne, Somerset TA18 7HP (Tel: 0460 74183) **Publications Editor:** Martin Hoerchner, 48 Mildmay Road, London N1 4NG (Tel: 071 254 3492) **European Co-ordinator:** Laurens De Jong, Carnisseweg 61, 2993 Ad Barendrecht, NETHERLANDS



# THIS SABR'D ISLE *by Martin Hoerchner*

I'm afraid I must start this column in a somber tone. My beloved mother passed away suddenly last November. She was an avid baseball fan and all-around Good Person. She used to diligently cut out clippings about the Giants from the local newspaper and send them to me - I still have a box full of them. We could talk baseball for the better part of an hour on the phone, and it's not cheap to California. People talk about baseball being a bond between fathers and sons, but that's only half the story. We could talk so easily about baseball that talking about other things became easier. She had this funny superstition. It seemed that every time I was watching a Giants game and she'd come in from watering the lawn or something, the opposition would score. So she would be afraid to watch a crucial game, lest it would hex the Giants. Well, she must be watching them from somewhere, because they ain't doing that good so far.

Luckily, I was able to see her fairly often, the last time being during the Giants' triumphant season of 1993, when they victoriously conquered second place in the National League West. I've travelled back to California twice since then, the second time half family business and half holiday. That's when I went to Opening Day at Candlestick. I became a real video nut that day. I had been given an old camcorder and was able to record most of the pre-game ceremonies before the six batteries that I carried turned out to be good for an average of 2½ minutes each. I was also taking photographs at the time, and when Willie Mays was introduced to give Barry Bonds his 1993 MVP award, I got excited and stood up to cheer and knocked the video camera to the ground. I guess I'm too clumsy to be the international photojournalist that I've always considered myself to be; maybe I'm only a technotourist.

Maybe I'm only a technotourist

All the awards from last year were given, Chris Isaak sang the national anthem, fireworks exploded and streamers went off everywhere. Meanwhile, I was frantically changing bat-

teries until all of them ran out. But I gave it my best shot. I admire the UK baseball fans who have never been to a major league baseball game and still love the game. A lot of the excitement is capturable by television, but almost none of the atmosphere. That is what I wanted to record. Here we can get into some corny stuff like the smell of hot dogs, the cries of the peanut vendors, the deep rich green of the natural grass outfield, the chill of the wind blowing in from right field. And the feeling; that's the hardest thing to capture. It's so easy to get corny about baseball; it's *too* easy.

## The State Of Baseball

We keep hearing so much about The State Of Baseball, as if baseball is in big trouble. It seems that while baseball coverage on TV is being slashed and revenues plunging, attendance at ballparks is hitting new highs. This points out how much better is baseball enjoyed live; the ballpark experience just doesn't come across on TV. U.S. football has always been popular as a TV sport; its rise coincided with the rise of color TV in the late 60's. And now the sport on the surge seems to be basketball. Is this because of the incredible career of Michael Jordan? Is he the Babe Ruth of basketball? My wife and I recently went on holiday to the Seychelles, an island group a thousand miles from Africa and two thousand miles from anywhere else. There were Chicago Bulls accoutrements everywhere, and I mean by the locals. At first I figured it was just a U.S. fixation thing, but once I was gassing up my rental jeep just before an incredible tropical sunset, and the guy at the pump, when he heard I was a Yank, engaged me in a long conversation about the NBA, particularly noting that he was a fan of Scotty Pippen. I mentioned I liked the Lakers, and he went on about how he thought Magic Johnson was a lousy coach, and mentioned a player I didn't know. This guy *knew* pro basketball. I wonder how he got all this knowledge, because news of the outside world is very hard to come by there. They have one radio station and one part-time TV station. We did see a few satellite dishes, but not many. We also saw a guy wearing a t-shirt with both "San Francisco 49ers" and "A C Milan" on it, I guess for those who like both kinds of football. I also saw a real trendy U.S.-style t-shirt with baseball images and "Pittsburgh Privates" printed on it in

bold text, as if proudly proclaiming its ignorance. It was a missed opportunity for the biggest (and almost the only) bar in town, the Pirate's Arms.

## Is Bobby Riggs still alive?

I'm sorry to see that the Silver Bullets haven't done better - I'm sure everyone is rooting for them. They said they might scale down their opposition - have they considered playing the Padres? Bobby Riggs must be chortling, if he's still alive. Next year a Women's League will be founded, the first time such an action has been inspired by a motion picture. I'd personally like to see another action inspired by a movie, that being the reinstatement of Joe Jackson and his election to the Hall of Fame. Shoeless Joe was such an innocent character; and yet the person who probably did damaged baseball more than anyone rests securely in the Hall of Fame. I'm talking about Cap Anson, who in 1884 almost singlehandedly forced the major and later the minor leagues to expel all non-whites in their employ and not hire any more, ever. For 62 years hundreds of the game's top players were excluded from Organized Baseball, and that's a bigger crime than some gullible hayseed holding onto an envelope full of money because his boss told him to keep it and the guys said it was okay.

Almost everyone agrees that Field of Dreams is a great film, and I think that's because its poetic use of baseball as a symbol. But of what? I think the main theme of Field of Dreams is second chances. After we've made a mistake, and life is a parade of mistakes, a second chance is something we yearn for, and yet is so rarely granted. Baseball is the ideal metaphor of the Second Chance. First of all, because there is no clock, a comeback is never impossible. And if you don't come back, there is tomorrow. Baseball is played every day. If you don't succeed, you'll have a brawl in the clubhouse and a chance to do it all over again the next day. If this takes away some of the sting of defeat, I suppose it also takes away some of the sweetness of victory. Nothing lasts. Tomorrow is always another ballgame. And as a game can ebb and flow, with winning moments and losing moments, so can life. The important thing, I guess, is to have more winning moments than losing.

As I said, it's easy to get corny about baseball. It's *too* easy.

# The Historical Perspective

BRITISH BASEBALL HISTORY : Filling in the Blanks - 1.

-by Patrick Carroll

At our Manchester meeting in May of last year I tried to clarify for myself as much as for the rest of those present, what I thought might be mechanisms, strategies and medium and long term concrete research aims of the Bobby Thomson Chapter. (These remarks were reprinted in SABR Examiner 2, and are now filed by the Editor under 'Carroll, P. - incoherent ramblings of:'). Since that time there have been one or two developments which, while only beginning to fill in the blanks of British and Irish baseball history, have gone some way toward helping to identify just what and where some of the major blanks are in the overall picture.

Perhaps the most encouraging product in the past year has been the continuing work being done by Ian Smyth in Leeds. Those at the Manchester meeting heard Ian deliver an abridged version of his study focusing on baseball in the North of England during the inter-War years. This fascinating piece of scholarship has since aroused interest from several

quarters. In the autumn of last year I was contacted regarding Ian's study by Mr Jeffrey Orleans who, as well as being a fellow SABR-ite, is also Executive Director of the Ivy League, America's oldest and most enduring collegiate sports organisation. Mr Orleans' initial interest in Ian's paper was gratifying and his subsequent reactions after reading it even more so. Importantly from SABR's viewpoint, the correspondence between Ian, Mr Orleans and myself concerning this paper has also opened lines of communication which promise to be of great potential value to Ian in his present project (a thorough study of the 1938 baseball 'Test Series' between England and the American amateur national team), and to other researchers on this side of the Atlantic.

Others asking to see Ian's North of England paper include Dr Jack Williams of Liverpool John Moores University, who is preparing a social history of sport in Britain between the wars. A further result of this interest will become the first piece of research work by a Bobby Thomson Chapter member to be lodged with both the SABR Research Library and with the National Baseball Library at Cooperstown. First of many, I'm sure.

A further source of interest, mentioned in SABR Examiner 3, was the receipt from Mr Ken Marshall of Joseph Wright's scrapbook, which gives a vivid account of the Middlesborough Pioneers club of the 1890's, and through them of the state of the game in Britain in the late 19th century. This scrapbook provides many suggestive leads for further re-

If we are to posit as our ultimate aim an authoritative history of baseball in these islands, it seems to me that the first step must be to collate all the previous research done in order to put forward, as in scholarly a way as possible, a tenable account of the actual historical lines of development which lead to the game of baseball as we know it, and which relates that game as accurately as possible to the rest of its ancestors, aunts, uncles and cousins by the dozens. Baseball history scholarship has long since outgrown the Abner Doubleday fantasy, and the similar delusion popular in Britain that baseball is an offshoot of rounders. As John Montgomery Ward convincingly argued as long ago as 1888, even a cursory study of chronology, history, and development of the two games up

to that point make it much likelier that the opposite is true. However, Ward's corollary theory that baseball 'just grewed' from the native genius of the American Boy, does not really stand up to any serious criteria of historical probability. A great deal of material on this subject does, much of it unconnected and contradictory. Has an attempt been made to put all this into a full-scale, cross-discipline, historically sophisticated study which would put the whole question into a plausible perspective? If so, I am unaware



*The 1874 Boston Red Stockings of the National Association, headed by Harry Wright and featuring George Wright and Albert Spalding (standing second from left) were the first professional American baseball team to tour England. Does Spalding's trophy still survive?*

search. Hopefully, Mr Marshall (or someone else if he is disinclined) will at some point be able to produce an historically edited and annotated version of the Wright scrapbook for wider circulation.

Also printed in SABR Examiner 3 was Geraint Johnes' and Bob Thornton's brief account of the version of baseball historically played in southeast Wales and Merseyside. This piece, as I am sure the authors are aware, really does ask more questions than it answers, and, if they and the Editor will forgive me for using mention of it as a peg on which to hang some impromptu thinking in print, I would like to give an outline of what I feel ought to be the primary contribution of SABR(UK) to whole body of baseball scholarship.

of it. Surely the challenge of producing such a study, one that would be at once, authoritative in a scholarly sense and entertaining to the general reader, is one to excite any baseball research enthusiast worth his Harry M. Steven's salty peanuts. Any volunteers?

The first moves which this Committee of the Bobby Thomson Chapter will take in trying to facilitate the beginnings of the project envisioned above are the issuing of requests to the SABR Research Library, the Hall of Fame Library and the British Society of Sport History for their help in trying to assemble a preliminary bibliography of primary and secondary research sources which might be of use to anyone wishing to pursue all or part of the suggested undertaking.



# meeting, con't

## EDITOR'S NOTE

man of the Historical Committee, Martin Hoerchner as Publications Editor, and Laurens de Jong as European Co-ordinator. All three appointments were heartily endorsed by the Chapter. The Governor of the Kings of Clerkenwell Public House, John Eichler, was acknowledged for his fine hospitality and excellently eccentric premises.

If this is getting a bit dry, I have an excuse. Soon after his vote of confidence, the Editor asked the Chairman if anyone was taking the minutes for this meeting. The Chairman replied that the meeting was being taped (at least for the first two hours; we'd have to remember the rest) and that someone would have to transcribe the tape. I'm no fool; I knew I'd immediately be elected to the chore. Patrick Carroll wrote in an earlier article about the Chairman's powers of persuasion. Because I knew I'd be doing the meeting report for the Examiner, he suggested that I combine the official minutes with the Examiner lead article. So that's what this is, and that's my excuse for lapsing into the occasional accuracy.

Business aside, we got to meet some of the newer members. People came from all over to meet with us. Damian Begley returned from New York; he was at our inaugural meeting in January 1993, and flew in from New York specifically to attend. Brent Richardson came from St. Louis. Larry Potts came from Arlington, Texas, and invited us to the SABR national convention. Charles Kirkwood is in the U.K. until August on a year-long faculty exchange. From the U.K. were Harvey Sahker and Pico Brown, local ballplayers who got interested in the history of the game. Peter Marchment came in from Manchester. The three Bloyce brothers, Stephen, Daniel, and David, were here for the first time - they were immediately dubbed "the Alous" (three brothers who roamed the outfield for the Giants in the 60's). Graham Winterbone told of seeing Nolan Ryan pitch in his final year. Paul Rimmer announced himself a Blue Jays fan, and Mark Davison came in from Belfast. Of course Laurens De Jong once again came in from the Netherlands to partake of baseball fellowship. On top of this, many others had other obligations and couldn't attend; if all of us could ever get together at once, we'd need Wembley.

After a bar break, the entertainment commenced. Patrick Carroll

gave an entertaining monologue (or was it a diatribe?) called "Baseball and Rounders - the Chicken or the Egg?" Trevor Kendall talked about his involvement with *Baseball Briefing*, a weekly publication that gives day-by-day game reports, box scores, standings, and stats. Charles Kirkwood talked about his annual baseball trips; usually Charles and a contingent of baseball fanatics would spend the summer travelling to different ball games in major and minor league cities. Only teachers can do that. Pico Brown talked about the peerless quality of the Iowa baseball fan.

At the break we were treated to chili and lasagne dinner, which I always demolish. Afterward, Geoff Simkins showed an amazing short film from 1908 about a baseball fan sneaking off work to watch a game, which included actual footage from the Polo Grounds. Tony Darkin talked about fantasy baseball leagues, and Daniel Bloyce read from his paper about British baseball in the 1890's. Laurens spoke of the joys of the European baseball fan.

Then the visual entertainment took over from the discursive. A song by Frank Sinatra, "There Once Was A Ballpark" was played over the Ballparks sequence of *When It Was A Game*, a stunning collection of color home movies from Major League ballparks in the 30's, 40's, and 50's. The effect was haunting. Then we saw some slides that were taken at the training camp of the Colorado Silver Bullets. The photos conveyed well these women's enthusiasm and exuberance to be able to play professional baseball, a goal that has always been denied them by their sex. We then saw a collection of slides from Opening Day at Candlestick Park this year, and then, if you didn't get the point, we saw some video from the same event. Then Mike Ross played a tape from *Ship of Fools* where a drunken Lee Marvin bemoans the fact that he washed out of the Majors because he couldn't hit the curveball on the outside corner.

As a finale to the evening, Tony Darkin conducted a trivia contest, which was won by one of the groups. I'm sorry we didn't get the names of everyone in the group, but SABR(UK) is currently in need of a Chapter Secretary. Even though the meeting passed into history unminuted, it is my humble opinion that this was our best one yet. - Martin Hoerchner

I offer apologies for the delay in publishing the SABR(UK) Examiner, Issue 4 (or SABREX-4 as it will become known to future collectors). Usually we would like to publish once every 2-3 months. We hope you think it was worth waiting for. We've had problems keeping a complete address list, so we've missed people. The problems of keeping track of members in the U.K. has been pointed out; we think we've got most if not all of the names. If you don't receive this issue, please contact me. Of course, you'll have to borrow a friend's copy to get the phone number! Since the publication of Examiner 3, I've bought a laser printer, and because of the better print quality, I've taken the print size down one point. Let me know how you like it. We're also trying a test printing of photographs in this issue, to see how it looks. Don't despair, we're back!

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## INCREDIBLE CAPS OFFER

Mike's managed to negotiate a deal with his old Town Ball partner, "Old Clothes" McAult from Cooperstown, who runs the Copperstown Ball Cap Co. Old Clothes makes the finest vintage baseball caps you can buy; he researches the design and seeks out the original materials, so they're as authentic as you can get. The other joy is that he's got the most extensive catalogue you've ever seen - between one and two thousand caps. And if you don't see it in the catalog, Old Clothes will make it for you special. Members of SABR(UK) can get any cap from his catalog for £20, which isn't much more than what you pay for plastic caps on Oxford Street. The catch is that we need to get an order of 24 caps to qualify for what is in effect a half price offer. So contact Mike if you're interested and want more information. We've got operators standing by to take your calls!

# LAMENT FOR

## Moanings and musings from the off-season

I am a Giants fan. Ask me to specify why, and I can't. As John Leonard said, "Our passionate identifications are arbitrary. Because they are arbitrary, they refuse to die." Okay, I am from Northern California - I spent most of my young life in Sacramento, and the Giants were the closest major league team to me when I was growing up. When I think of the Giants I think of home, but deep down I believe I would have rooted for them if they had stayed in New York, which is where they truly belong. The Giants have a fascinating history. They were probably the pre-eminent team in the first half-century of the National League and were managed by thirty years for the man I consider the best manager in history, John McGraw. Despite this, they are one of the great hard-luck teams in baseball history. They lost the pennant of 1908 because a rookie erred in base running. They lost the World Series of 1912 because an outfielder dropped a pop fly. They lost the World Series of 1917 because a runner scored from third when the plate was left unguarded. They lost the World Series of 1924 when an easy grounder took a bad hop over the head of a Hall-of-Fame third baseman not once, but twice - the second time in the bottom of the 12th inning. And they lost the World Series of 1962 when one of the leagues most feared hitters, with a runner on third in a 1-0 game, hit a pitch from the same pitcher who gave up the home run to Bill Mazeroski, straight into the glove of the shortstop, ending the game. These things can only endear you to a team.

This points up one key point in the Giant's recent history. The last time the won a World Championship in 1954, when they were at New York. I've got a video of that series - it looks so old I'm surprised it wasn't silent. Only four teams have had a longer wait to win the whole kaboodle. The Giants have played 36 seasons in San Francisco without a championship. No one has yet uttered the words "World Champion San Francisco Giants" and been telling the truth. And the wait is getting a little too long. In the sixties the Giants had one of the most powerful lineups in baseball history, with Mays and McCovey and Marichal and Perry and Cepeda and the Alous, and were rewarded with a string of second-place finishes. They were always *so close*,

but this wasn't horseshoes. And were not only talking the sixties. 1978 was the Giants' best year between Willie and Will; they were in first place most of the year, but faded in September as the Dodgers came on strong. In 1982 they lost in the final days of the season to the Braves. In 1987 they won the title but lost the pennant to the Cardinals due to a single mishap. In 1989 they won both the division and the pennant, and were hammered in one of the most lopsided World Series ever. They never even led once. They have only won a World Championship *once* in the last 60 years. So to say that the Giants are hungry is too simple a cliché. They are *famished*! They are *ravenous*! They are *starving*!

I really got interested in the Giants in 1976. The Giants were big news that year because Horace Stoneham, whose family had owned the team for 60 years, was selling the Giants. A deal was almost clinched to sell the team to Labatt's and move them to Toronto. Mayor Moscone of San Francisco stepped in and stonewalled into a local buyer could be found. And one was: Bob Lurie. Bob Lurie was the man who saved the Giants for San Francisco. The next year Toronto and Labatt's got their own team, and they've been very happy together. So this makes the *opera bouffe* of 1992 even more ironic. The man who saved the Giants had given up after sixteen years of financial losses and the failure four times for the area to build him a ballpark, and planned to sell the team to whoever wherever would buy it. The debate raged back and forth for months; proposals were made and rejected. The unsettled nature of the team's future didn't improve the team's play, and they sank into fifth place. When the deal to move them to St. Petersburg was announced in August, a bit of every Giant fan died inside. Deep down we all had this sickening feeling that you would lose the team you had known all your life. I understood how New York fans felt in 1958. I wondered if I could root for the A's; the answer was no. Moving our team to Florida was ludicrous. As one SF paper said, "Florida is where people go to die". The idea of the Giants playing in a dome (ironically called the Suncoast Dome) was repugnant to me; the idea of our team moving to that place was like a bad dream. It just didn't seem true; I felt that, though deep down I didn't believe it, I would wake up and it would all be a bad dream.

Well, I did awake. In December the owners of major league teams vetoed the sale and a local consortium was put together to keep the team in town. Instead of criticising Candlestick Park, they made it more comfortable. The new owners put money into improving the team, most notably by making Barry Bonds the richest man in baseball. His father was hired as a coach and Dusty Baker was hired as a new manager. With a new owner, a new manager, a new star, and a new lease on life, the San Francisco Giants came into 1993 with a new attitude and a new hope.

So, lest you British readers are getting bored, I was fascinated when I found out that the Giants actually had a monument in London. In 1924 John McGraw took his Giants on a world tour. On February 26 they played in the presence of George V. A plaque commemorates the occasion at Stamford Bridge, the Chelsea Football Grounds. That name has always intrigued me - Stamford Bridge. What has that got to do with Chelsea? It's the name of town near York - I've been there. Then it occurs to me. Stamford Bridge was the scene of a great English military victory, when the last Saxon King, Harold, defended his throne from a massed invasion by the King of Norway, who also claimed the throne. The battle isn't really well remembered, but the year is - 1066. 2½ weeks after the Battle of Stamford Bridge, King Harold fought another battle against another claimant to the throne - this time the place was Hastings.

Towards sundown the Saxons were slowly gaining control of the battle. However, a ninth-inning rally by the Normans seized victory from the English, and the course of history was changed. As for King Harold, an amazing effort went for nought. He never made Manager of the Year; he ended up with an arrow in his eye, and the memory of the Saxons faded. Meanwhile the victor, William, became the Conqueror. King Harold missed it by *that much*, and it's the defeat we remember, not the triumph. History works that way. Stamford Bridge is a perfect symbol of futility.

Like the 1066 Saxons, the 1993 Giants started the season full of hope. They didn't have a roaring start, but they soon took off. They finished April 10 games over .500, and on May 11 took over first place in the NL West. The Phillies were playing the best baseball in the majors, and were the talk of the town. The Braves, despite a team

# FALLEN HEROES

ERA of less than 1.00, had no offense and languished toward the bottom. In May the team that had been sitting in second place, the Astros, came to Candlestick for a four-game series and they were swept. About that time Giants fans were beginning to get excited. The Giants just got stronger and stronger. They played .625 in April, .667 in May, .672 in June. Road, home, day, night - they made the game their own. People starting comparing them with the 1962 team, heretofore the best San Francisco team. The Phillies faltered and the Giants edged toward them for the best record in the Majors. In July the Giants came into Philadelphia, and the results were decisive. They won the first game 15-7, the second 13-2. They took 3 of 4, averaging more than ten runs a game for the series. The Giants seemed like an unstoppable juggernaut, and I started making my plans to fly to San Francisco for the World Series. I visited California shortly after the Philadelphia series, and the excitement was electric in the air. We were seeing amazing heroics - veterans were regenerated, bench jockeys were surprising, rookies were phenoms; it seemed that whenever a player was injured, someone would step in and be perfect. A team that wasn't supposed to have any pitching suddenly had two Cy Young candidates, a perfect setup man, and a near-invincible stopper. It was just that rare combination of occurrences that make a surprise champion. Nearly every one of the starting eight was having a career year or near it. They were winning games in the late innings, they were scoring lots of runs with two out. And we seem to have the constant image of Barry Bonds winning it with a home run in the ninth. Even by July Giant fans were talking about the championship season - by July 18 they were ten games ahead of the second-place team.

And then the oddest thing happened. I was on some Los Angeles beach listening to the radio, when the news came over that Fulton County Stadium, where the Atlanta Braves played, had caught fire and the game was delayed while the fire was raging. This was to be the debut of Fred McGriff, recently acquired from the San Diego fire sale. It turned out to be not as bad as it sounded; the game was resumed after a short delay. But something had happened. The Atlanta Braves had caught fire. They had started winning like nobody's business, and soon the Giants had

started to look back, which Satchel Paige told us was a bad idea. The Braves were 6.5 games out when they came into Candlestick on August 23 for a four-game series. They swept the Giants, the first time that season that it had happened. The Giants seemed to fall apart - from that day until their 8-game losing streak that ended on September 15, they played with a 6-15 record, while the Braves continued to play at an incredible clip.

I don't know how many games back they were from the Braves, because I had stopped following it. It just hurt too much. I finally couldn't bear the suspense any longer and bought USA Today. I fully expected to find the Giants five games back. But no, they were only 1.5 games. They had actually started *winning* again. After that horrible losing streak ended, they won four in a row. They lost one, and then they won seven in a row. Atlanta continued to play at its torrid second-half pace, but now the Giants had started creeping up on the Braves, and with more than a week to go, they were dead even. Like two armies locked in mortal combat, they paced each other game for game in one of the greatest finishes to a pennant race in history. If the Braves gained a game one day, they lost it the second day. But mostly both of them just won. After the slide the Giants posted a 14-3 record and played some of the most focused baseball this year. The two teams were tied when they began their final series: the Giants came to Dodger Stadium with Atlanta was hosting the Rockies. The Giants had had trouble with the Dodgers all year, but they took the first three games. The Giants and Braves were tied at 103-58 as play resumed on that last day.

After all is written, the only thing that will matter is that the Giants lost the title in 1993 by one game. Only twice have teams won more games and finished second - the 1909 Cubs, the year after the Merkle affair, ended up at 104-49, 6.5 games behind the Pirates, and the 1942 Dodgers, the year after their first pennant in 21 years, were 104-50 and ended up 2 games behind the Cardinals. Only six times has a team won more than 100 and lost, including the 1954 Yanks (103), the 1962 Dodgers (102), and the 1961 Tigers (101). When you play so well and lose by only one game, analyses and recriminations multiply like bacteria. Each loss is put under the microscope; every player that has

made a mistake feels like he lost the season. Certain games leap out at you, like the one vs. the Phillies where they were leading 8-0 and ended up losing 10-8. Or another one against the Phillies, lost in the 14th inning after a their main setup man was injured in a miscue. Questions...like what would happen if the Giant's hadn't slumped. Take out the three weeks, and they played at a 97-44 clip; extending that to a full season would have won them 111 games. But as some wit once said, if you lose at beginning of the season, it's a bad start, if you lose in the middle, it's a slump, and if you lose toward the end, it's a choke. Except the Giants didn't choke, and the Giants didn't fold. They had one of the most amazing revivals in baseball history, and came within a day of thwarting an amazing revival of its own.

I suppose 1993 will go down into history like 1964, 1969, 1978 - Years of the Choke. But Giant fans know what year 1993 is most like. In 1914 the Giants were breezing through the year in first place. In mid-July, before they had All-Star breaks, the Braves were mired in the cellar. Then they started to move, slowly at first with increasing momentum. They ended up beating the Giants by 10 games, and earned for themselves the legendary title "Miracle Braves". The shell-shocked Giants finished in the cellar next year, but they had the last laugh. They won five of the next ten pennants; it took the Braves 34 years to win their next.

This kind of emotional overhang could ruin the fan of a more privileged team. But Giant fans are strong. They won't be down for long. If you could find one nearing 100, life for him would have been a long series of disappointments, when winning teams didn't win, when Hall of Famers failed at key moments, when all the cards were in your favor but you didn't come through when the chips were down. What can you do? You wait for the next deal. When the daffodils blossom and the geese start to fly north, the pain will have eased. The promise of new players, new experience, a new start will dim the memory of what happened in 1993. The first pitch will be thrown and it will be a whole new ball game. The past will be forgotten; only thoughts of day, and tomorrow, and the day after... For me, it can't come soon enough.

- Martin Hoerchner



# SABR ALL-STARS CONTINUE UNDEFEATED STREAK!

- by Grantland Rice

The Roving Reporter finds that the old adage still applies - "The bigger they are the harder they fall"...

Following an impressive victory over the Stretford Saints last year up Manchester way, as an adjunct to the May 7th National Meeting III, held at John Eichler's "Three Kings" pub, the SABR(UK) nine took on HyPisco (Hyde Park International Softball and Canoeing Organization) with some trepidation.

Formed in 1963, HyPisco is the oldest established softball club in England. To make the SABR(UK) victory sweeter, one is at pains to mention that Hypisco has had an illustrious history and that the whole of the now burgeoning softball craze in Great Britain stemmed from the seeds they planted.

It should also be mentioned that HyPisco started as a 'show biz' game with famed members participating, such as their founders Norman Panama and Mel Frank (Hope & Crosby 'Road' movies), Larry Gelbart

(creator of M\*A\*S\*H), Paul Maslansky (Police Academy), Johnathan Demme (Lamb & Philly), John Cassavetes, and numerous figures of the silver screen including Phil Silvers, Tony Curtis, Charles Bronson and Jim Brown who hit the biggest ever homer; to this day no-one has hit a ball "over the trees".

All this is mentioned only to give pleasure to the minds and hearts of those who have a certain sweet spot for the underdog.

The game ended in a 3-0 shut-out after three innings when a now pathetic contingent of HyPiscans literally quit rather than face the indignity of a full-blown loss.

While the losers take pride in their bloodlines, still with a nearly 100% American squad, SABR boasted only three Yanks: Chairman Mike Ross(3B), Damien Begley(2B), and Scott Cousino (SS) who was given a pre-game on-field commission following an honorary membership to SABR(UK). Martin Dodd, who came down from Birmingham replacing last

year's mound hero, Hugh Robinson; the Dutchman Laurens De Jong completed the battery at catcher.

The outfield handled chances flawlessly, around from left to right was Dave Halliwell, Andy Parkes and Peter Marchment. Coming all the way from New York was Damian Begley, who held down the keystone as good as a member of the Yankees could have done. First baseman Pat Carroll was unable to make the game due to commitments as Commissioner of Baseball for the Southwest England "outlaw league", and played Wally Pipp to Geoff Phillip's Lou Gehrig.

It was sad to see the once noble HyPisco go down in such ignominious fashion. Their captain Robert Kihlstrum was unable to comment, except to say "Some of the guys had to get home because their wives had lunch waiting." Or had to wash their hair. So SABR(UK) will move up a notch in terms of universal respect. And if this isn't enough, the SABR(UK) All-Stars are unscored upon in the first three innings.

## The European Connection

- by Guus Mater

August 29, 1993 was an important day in the history of Dutch baseball. At Joe Robbie Stadium, Miami, a young Dutch baseball player stepped up to the plate for the San Francisco Giants. A crowd of 45,278 saw Rikkert Faneyte become only the second Dutchman ever to make the Majors. In his first major league game he went one for five, but he earned his place on the roster a few weeks later when first baseman Will Clark was sidelined by an injury.

Faneyte, in a telephone interview with the Dutch press agency ANP, said that he was a little nervous to roam the outfield between big money makers Barry Bonds and Willie McGee. Although he has been judged as a prospect, the quick center fielder played only a few games with the Giants before he was sent down. That's the way it goes.

Faneyte, 24, had a good season with the Phoenix Firebirds, the AAA affiliate of the Giants in the Pacific Coast League. In 120 games he batted .312 with 11 HR and 71 RBI. A

Dutch TV crew was there when he made his first steps in the Majors. Faneyte, always a happy go lucky guy, is now a serious ball player.

His Major League debut wasn't his first visit to Miami. Four years ago, he was a student at Miami Dade Community College. "I tried to show the scouts that I could play". He succeeded. Faneyte, son of a baseball player from the Dutch Antilles and an Amsterdam softball player, has been seen as a gifted player since he was a teenager. At sixteen, he was chosen in the Dutch National Squad. In 1987, at eighteen, Faneyte was MVP during the European championship in Barcelona. Pat Murphy, an American who then was the national team coach, is now a coach at Notre Dame. He was impressed by his fast wrists "given by nature. No coach can teach you that".

A few days after Faneyte's debut, Dutch baseball fans were surprised to see their National League standings printed in USA Today. A few days later, the paper printed the standings from the Italian League.

Finally the world is being told that there is baseball on the continent - of course, you in Britain already know.

The first Dutchman to play Major League Baseball was Wilhelmus "Win" Remmerswall. In 1979 he pitched 55 innings for the Boston Red Sox. In the early days of baseball, players nicknamed "Dutchman", like Honus Wagner, were invariably German.

Baseball has been played in the Netherlands since 1910. The KNBSB (Royal Dutch Baseball and Softball Association) has about 30,000 members. J.C.G. Grasse, a businessman who learned the game in the United States, founded the association in Amsterdam on March 16, 1912.

For more than three decades the Netherlands and Italy (where baseball was only founded after World War II) dominated European baseball. Netherlands grabbed the continental title fourteen times, and Italy seven times. The British National side had its best showing in 1967 in Antwerp, when the British finished second after Belgium.