

BLACK SOX SCANDAL



Vol. 7, No. 1, June 2015

Research Committee Newsletter

Leading off ...

What's in this issue

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Chairman's Corner

By Jacob Pomrenke
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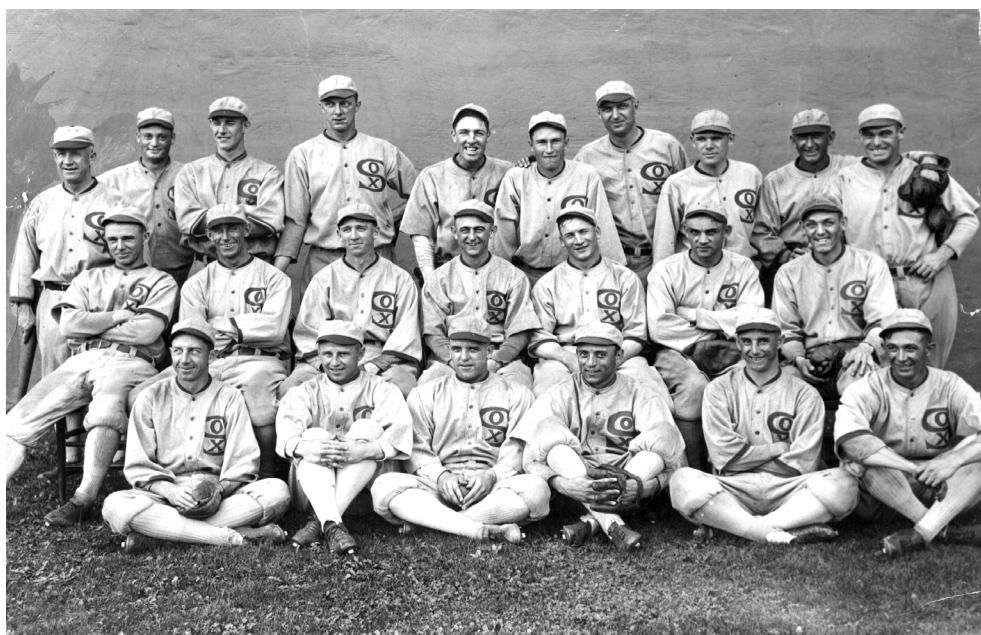
A few months ago, I was asked what I thought was the best way to "catch up" on the story of the Black Sox Scandal, in light of all the new information we've learned since *Eight Men Out* was published.

My response then was slightly different than it is today.

There have been many important and informative books written about the 1919 World Series in the 50+ years since Eliot Asinof wrote *Eight Men Out* — by the likes of Victor Luhrs, Donald Gropman, David Fleitz, Susan Dellinger, Daniel Nathan, Gene Carney, Bill Lamb, and others, all of which I recommend.

Now, thanks to the great work of 32 members of this SABR committee, I'm proud to say we can add *Scandal on the South Side* to that distinguished list. I hope readers find that what sets

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There's more to the story of the 1919 Chicago White Sox than the Black Sox Scandal. SABR's new book, *Scandal on the South Side*, includes biographies of everyone involved with the team, plus a recap of the season, the World Series, and the aftermath. Available now at SABR.org/ebooks. (Photo: National Baseball Hall of Fame Library)

Scandal on the South Side

Get your free e-book copy of new SABR publication

Just in time for SABR's [45th annual convention](#) in Chicago this month, *Scandal on the South Side: The 1919 Chicago White Sox*, featuring contributions from 32 members of this committee, is the newest publication in the [SABR Digital Library](#).

Scandal on the South Side is the first comprehensive book focused on the star-studded, dissension-riddled team that won the 1919 American League pennant and then threw the World Series — with full-life biographies of every player and official involved with that fateful team.

The new book can be ordered online at SABR.org/ebooks. All SABR mem-

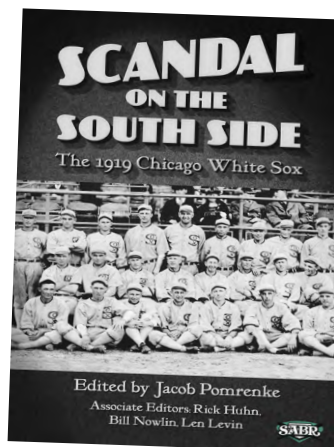
bers can download the e-book edition for free in PDF, EPUB, or Kindle formats. SABR members also get a 50% discount to purchase the paperback edition at Createspace.com/5524989. Use the discount code ZGBGZW5U when you order.

The retail price is \$19.95 for the paperback or \$9.99 for the e-book.

Contributing authors and editors include: Bruce Allardice, Russell Arent, Steve Cardullo, Brian Cooper, James E. Elfers, David Fleitz, David Fletcher, Daniel Ginsburg, Irv Goldfarb, John Heeg, Rick Huhn,

Bill Lamb, Len Levin, Dan Lindner,

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Free download available
at SABR.org/ebooks

► E-BOOK

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Adrian Marcewicz, Brian McKenna, Steven G. McPherson, Paul Mittermeyer, Jack Morris, Peter Morris, Rod Nelson, James R. Nitz, Bill Nowlin, Jacob Pomrenke, Kelly Boyer Sagert, Jim Sandoval, Richard Smiley, Lyle Spatz, Steve Steinberg, Brian Stevens, Andy Sturgill, and Gregory H. Wolf.

About the book

The Black Sox Scandal is a cold case, not a closed case.

When Eliot Asinof wrote his classic history about the fixing of the 1919 World Series, *Eight Men Out*, he told a dramatic story of undereducated and underpaid Chicago White Sox ballplayers, disgruntled by their low pay and poor treatment by team management, who fell prey to the wiles of double-crossing big-city gamblers offering them bribes to lose the World Series to the Cincinnati Reds.

Shoeless Joe Jackson, Buck Weaver, Eddie Cicotte, and the other Black Sox players were all banned from organized baseball for life. ... But the real story is a lot more complex.

We now have access to crucial information that changes what we thought we knew about “baseball’s darkest hour” — including rare film footage from that fateful fall classic, legal documents from the criminal and civil court proceedings, and accurate salary information for major-league players and teams. All of these new pieces to the Black Sox puzzle provide definitive answers to some old mysteries and raise other questions in their place. This book will integrate all of that new information about the scandal for the first time.

However, the Black Sox Scandal isn’t the only story worth telling about the 1919 Chicago White Sox. The team roster included three future Hall of Famers, a 20-year-old spitballer who would go on to win 300 games in the minor leagues, and even a batboy who later became a celebrity with the “Murderers’ Row” New York Yankees in the 1920s.

All of their stories are included in *Scandal on the South Side: The 1919 Chicago White Sox*, which has full-life biographies on each of the 31 players who made an appearance for the White Sox in 1919, plus a comprehensive recap of Chicago’s pennant-winning season, the tainted World Series, and the sordid aftermath.

We’ll also clear up some of the misconceptions about the 1919 White Sox team that have been passed down through history: such as Charles Comiskey’s reputation as a greedy miser who forced his players to play in dirty, unlaundered uniforms, the \$10,000 bonus allegedly promised to star pitcher Eddie Cicotte if he won 30 games, and the complicated Black Sox legal proceedings, their “disappearing” confessions, and the reasons behind their acquittal in a Chicago courtroom.

SABR 45 COMMITTEE MEETING

Our annual Black Sox Scandal committee meeting at the SABR 45 convention in Chicago is scheduled for **6:30-7:30 p.m., Friday, June 26, 2015** in the Salon 3 room on the third floor of the Palmer House Hilton (17 East Monroe Street in Chicago.)

You must register for the convention in order to attend, but all are welcome. Visit SABR.org/convention. Day rates (\$99) are also available for purchase on-site.

Our guest speaker is scheduled to be Peter Alter, archivist at the Chicago History Museum. He will talk about the museum’s extensive collection of Black Sox Scandal-related documents and artifacts.

A very limited number of *Scandal on the South Side* paperback editions will be available for purchase for \$20 (cash or check only) after the committee meeting. See Jacob Pomrenke for details.

This book isn’t a rewriting of *Eight Men Out*, but it is the complete story of everyone associated with the 1919 Chicago White Sox, told in full for the first time. *Scandal on the South Side* brings readers up to date on what we collectively know about the Black Sox Scandal and the infamous team at the center of it all.

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Yahoo group: <http://bit.ly/1919SoxYahoo>

Speaker: ‘Something phony about it all’

Hall of Famer’s newspaper columns during 1919 World Series didn’t pull punches about Sox’s suspicious play

By Bruce Allardice

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Accounts of the 1919 World Series often cite the expert observations of Christy Mathewson, the Hall of Fame pitcher who covered the series for the *New York Times*. Mathewson clearly was an expert and his observations rightly carry great weight. However, there was another expert who covered the Series — whose observations have been largely ignored by Black Sox historians. And that’s Tris Speaker, the Hall of Fame outfielder and manager.

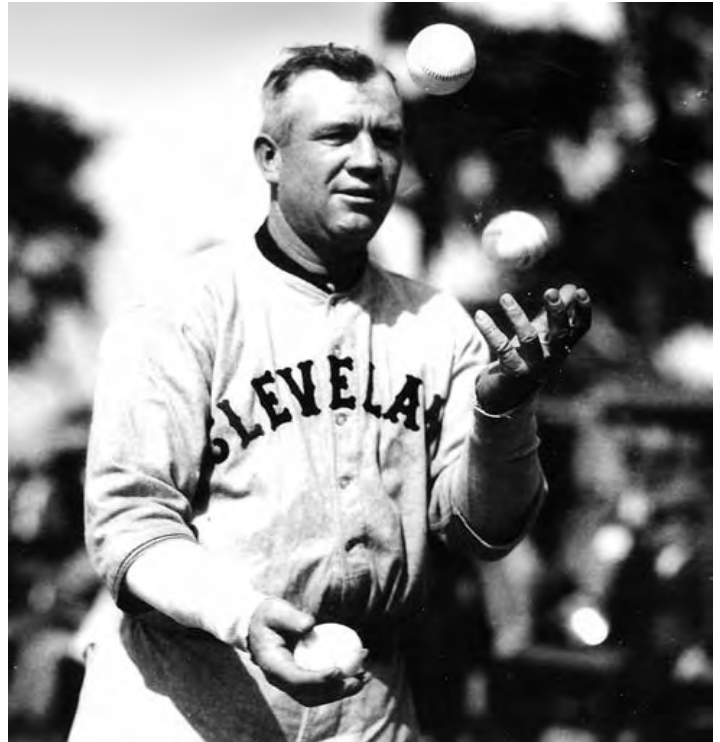
In many respects, Speaker was uniquely qualified to analyze the White Sox during the World Series. Speaker was a lifelong American Leaguer, whereas Mathewson was most familiar with the National League and the team he used to manage, the Cincinnati Reds. While a star for the Boston Red Sox, Speaker had been a teammate of several of the White Sox, notably Eddie Cicotte, and had played against the White Sox for more than a decade. Speaker had managed the Sox’s big 1919 rival, the Cleveland Indians, during a heated pennant race.

If anyone in baseball (outside Chicago) could be considered an expert on the White Sox, it would be Tris Speaker.

The *Boston Post* and *Cleveland Plain Dealer* hired Speaker as a guest correspondent to cover the Series. As veteran Cleveland sportswriter Henry Edwards (who also covered the Series) later explained, Edwards typed up Speaker’s written notes and oral observations, putting the whole in column form.¹ Many years later, Edwards claimed that he and Speaker became suspicious of the Sox’s play and did what Hugh Fullerton and Christy Mathewson more famously did: track every play that looked suspicious.²

Right from the get-go, Speaker — who had predicted a Sox series victory³ — wrote that he couldn’t believe what he was seeing.

The Chicago team that led us to the wire had Eddie Cicotte working like one of the greatest pitchers I had ever seen in action. The Sox, who showed us the way, played smart ball. If the Cicotte who pitched against Cincinnati today looked like the Cicotte who beat us so often during the American League campaign, then I better quit center-fielding and go to pitching myself.



Cleveland Indians manager Tris Speaker wrote syndicated newspaper columns during the 1919 World Series that were critical of the Chicago White Sox’s suspicious play.
(Kraffert Collection, Western Reserve Historical Society)

If the White Sox played smart ball today I am going to recruit the Indians for next season from some place over in Europe, where they never saw our national game played.⁴

Speaker became quite specific in his critique, pointing out that the Sox didn’t even attempt to execute fundamental plays:

There are a lot of things that are generally taught in the minors. For instance, we learn to protect base runners when they make attempts to steal and we so arrange the infield on base hits to the outfield as to cut off the return throw and nip the batsman in case he makes an effort to go down to second.

Did Chicago play the game in those two respects today? It did not. ...

Speaker goes on to cite the attempted steal by Eddie Collins in the first inning, with Buck Weaver failing to make a

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► SPEAKER

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good effort to swing and protect him, and another instance the next inning, where Gandil ran with Risberg at the plate. Both times the runner was thrown out. As to cutoffs on throws from the outfield:

There were several times during the game when the outfielders threw home. Not once did an infielder intercept the throw so as to catch the batter going to second, thus turning several singles into the equivalent of two-base hits.

After citing an instance in the first inning, where nobody cut off Joe Jackson's throw home on Heinie Groh's sacrifice fly, Speaker boiled over:

It looked to me as if Manager Moran [of Cincinnati] said right then: "I want every one of you fellows to keep on going after this when the ball is hit to the outfield and there is a throw to the plate."

At any rate, they did so from then on, for in three instances later on the batter who had singled never even hesitated when he got to first, but kept right on until he reached second, when the Sox outfield was making the throw to the plate.⁵

Speaker chides the Sox for failing to wear down Reds starter Dutch Ruether:

I can cite another instance in which the Sox did not play the game as they did during the American League season. Twice Ruether, the Reds' pitcher, hit for three bases. Each time he had a long run, and a long run on a hot day was equal to a marathon on an ordinary day. I expected to see the Sox wait Ruether out when he resumed pitching, but instead they helped him by hitting at the first ball pitched.⁶

Eddie Cicotte's performance was also questioned:

The Cicotte of today was not the Cicotte who faced us during the season... It is almost beyond comprehension to believe that any National League team was able to make five runs off Eddie Cicotte, the best pitcher in the American League, after two were out...

Swede Risberg's fielding raised Speaker's ire:

TRIS SPEAKER SURPRISED AT FORM CHICAGO SHOWS AS WORLD SERIES OPENS

Manager of Cleveland Indians, Writing for Plain Dealer, Says White Sox Were Different Team Than the One That Trounced Cleveland During Regular Season.

BY TRIS SPEAKER,

Manager Cleveland American League Baseball Club.

CINCINNATI, Oct. 1.—Well, the Cincinnati Reds today beat the Chicago White Sox about as badly as we generally beat a Republican candidate for office down in Texas.

Now, I am going to beat you to it. You bet it was a surprise to me, for I was betting that the Sox would grab the first game and when a man bets that way he generally thinks it.

This column by Cleveland Indians manager Tris Speaker appeared in the October 2, 1919, edition of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* after Game One of the World Series. (Newspapers.com)

With two out [in the fourth inning], Neale hit a bounder through the box that looked to me that it could have been handled by either Eddie Collins or Risberg. It should have been a force-out at second. Instead, Eddie Collins covered the bag and left it to Risberg to get the ball. Risberg, though, stopped just for a fraction of a second and then went on. Then, instead of getting the ball for the force-out, he merely knocked it down, and Cincinnati had two on. Five solid blows followed ...

Lefty Williams' pitching in Game Two puzzled Speaker. While his writing partner Henry Edwards focused on Gandil and Risberg repeatedly failing in the clutch, Speaker focused instead on Williams, who, Speaker insisted, was "wilder than I ever saw him before." Spoke also labeled Williams' Game Eight performance "ridiculously weak."

Other observers were even harsher. Damon Runyon quoted one ballplayer noting Williams' pitches in the final game were so slow they "couldn't break an egg." Hugh Fullerton thought none of Williams' three starts were "within 20 percent of his American League standard."⁷

Speaker's puzzlement continued even when the White Sox won Game Three. While he admitted that in that game, they "were right back in real Sox form" he noted that in Felsch's failed attempt to steal second, Gandil

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► SPEAKER

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missed a hit-and-run sign.⁸

Cicotte's Game Four performance earned mixed reviews. Speaker noted that, unlike Game One, Cicotte "pitched great ball," but Cicotte's fielding puzzled Speaker:

We always have regarded Eddie Cicotte as one of the best fielding hurlers in our league, and I was amazed to see him pull two bad plays in the fifth inning. I doubt if Eddie ever made two errors in the same inning before in his life....⁹

Speaker is referring to an errant throw to first on a grounder back to the mound, and Cicotte's botched cutoff of Jackson's throw to home plate. Speaker also questioned Joe Jackson's positioning that turned Greasy Neale's fifth-inning fly ball into a double.¹⁰

Game Five brought more discomfort to Speaker. While praising Reds pitcher Hod Eller for shutting out the Sox, he couldn't believe that Happy Felsch had misplayed Edd Roush's fly ball into a two-run triple in the Reds' sixth-inning rally. Speaker noted that he'd seen Felsch make a dozen more difficult catches during the season.¹¹

Dickey Kerr's gutty pitching in Game Six won Speaker's praise. Yet Speaker (in print, at least) expressed his astonishment at what he was seeing:

The White Sox are trying to cross me. I ... kept betting my money on them¹² and they kept refusing to justify my confidence in them. Because of the awful baseball they have been showing, I got off them today and pulled for the Reds.... [Kerr's] colleagues played like a bunch of bushers.¹³

Two days after the Series ended, Speaker repeated his astonishment at what happened to Edwards:

To me Speaker expressed his disgust over the showing made by the White Sox, declaring he could not see how a team that had shown such gameness and powerful attack during the regular season could make such a miserable display of strength in the series. He could not see how it was possible for so many of them to fail to play in their usual form.¹⁴

All Speaker expressed in print was "astonishment" and "disgust" over the Sox's play. However, in private, he was



After Game One of the 1919 World Series, Speaker wrote, "It is almost beyond comprehension to believe that any National League team was able to make five runs off Eddie Cicotte, the best pitcher in the American League, after two were out." (National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, New York)

more than astonished — he suspected foul play.

While this never appeared in print at the time, Speaker told Edwards after Game Four, "Did you ever see these White Sox pitchers groove the ball for us [Cleveland] the way they have in this series? Something phony about it all but I don't know what it is."¹⁵ As can be seen from his columns, Speaker's criticisms of specific players invariably named those we now know to be in on the fix.

There's more. A *Boston Post* article written after the indictment repeats Speaker's suspicions. It brings in fixer Sport Sullivan as well, shedding light on the Boston end of the fix.

After relating that there was "plenty of betting" on Game One of the 1919 Series:

And scarcely had the returns begun to come in over the wire, when the first surprise came. "Sport" Sullivan, one of the two Boston gamblers¹⁶ indicted by the Chicago grand jury, was taking the short end, was betting on Cincinnati.

It was epochal for Sullivan to take a short end bet. It was he who, to all intents and purposes, the leader of the Boston betting fraternity, usually set the odds, always making the favorite and playing that favorite.

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► SPEAKER

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Then the word went around town that Sullivan had been in touch with Eddie Cicotte, the Chicago pitcher. ... Sullivan himself did not deny this to a few of his most intimate friends, and these men immediately began “hedging” their bets, betting on Cincinnati to cover what they had previously bet on the favorite, Chicago.

Word of the fix permeated the Boston gambling fraternity.

It was not until after the first game was over that the news spread like wild fire through sporting circles in Boston that the series was “in the bag.”

Speaker suspected the fix as early as Game One. And he warned his intimate Boston gambling contacts.

The clinching argument was a telegram from Tris Speaker, manager of the Cleveland team, to a man in Boston who, while a gambler, is known all over the country for his fair dealing and his thorough honesty.

Speaker was at that time writing the world’s series for a newspaper syndicate. While his story of the game written for his papers read simply that the White Sox had played very bad baseball, the wire to his friend in Boston indicated that he was suspicious that all was not right.

With the spread of the report of the Speaker warning to his friend here, there came an almost absolute cessation of betting on the result of the series or of the games themselves.¹⁷

The article observes that the only bets in Boston after Speaker’s warning were wagers on individual plays.

Tris Speaker’s comments on the 1919 Series never gained the notoriety that the Fullerton/Mathewson comments did. Perhaps this is because Speaker’s comments never appeared in the New York or Chicago newspapers, the standard sources for both sports fans of the day, and future Black Sox historians.

That’s a shame, because Speaker, perhaps more than any other newspaper columnist, made it clear to the public that something unbelievable occurred. He never used the word “fix” — in print, at least — but reading between the lines of his columns, it’s clear to see he passed along his suspicions.

Notes

1. Henry Pierrepont Edwards (1871-1948). His lengthy obituary in *The Sporting News*, August 11, 1948, contains a photo. His recollections of working with Speaker are in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 14, 1948.

2. Timothy Gay, *Tris Speaker: The Rough-and-Tumble Life of a Baseball Legend* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 203. Fullerton’s story is well known. For an early iteration, see his article in the *El Paso Herald*, October 22, 1919. Mathewson swallowed his doubts, faced the fix rumors head-on and declared in print that “Baseball is Not Crooked.” See *New York Times*, October 16, 1919.

3. *Boston Post*, October 1, 1919. Edwards also backed the Sox to win. See the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, September 28, 1919.

4. *Boston Post*, October 2, 1920.

5. True. In the fourth inning, both Wingo and Daubert advanced to second base on throws to the plate.

6. Speaker exaggerated a bit here. After Reuther’s triple in the fourth inning, the first Sox batter (Gandil) took a strike before singling. After Reuther’s second triple, leadoff man Joe Jackson flied out on the second pitch. Speaker was not the only observer to note the Sox’s tendency during this series to swing at the first pitch. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, October 3 and 7, 1919, lambasted the Sox’s lack of plate discipline.

7. *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 10, 1919; *Cincinnati Post*, October 10, 1919.

8. *Boston Post*, October 4, 1919.

9. *Boston Post*, October 5, 1919. Henry Edwards sarcastically described this play by Cicotte as “the first time in the series a Sox player intercepted a throw from the outfield, and it was the one time the play should not have been made.” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 5, 1919.

10. Henry Edwards was more scathing: “Jackson played Neale’s fly to left like an old lady.” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 5, 1919.

11. *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 7, 1919.

12. Speaker frequently bet on horse races. His gambling was one reason American League President Ban Johnson went after him in 1926. For more on this, see Joe Posnanski, “[The Dutch Leonard Affair](#),” [JoePosnanski.com](#), March 10, 2014. See also Gay, *Tris Speaker*, 26-27.

13. *Boston Post*, October 8, 1919.

14. *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 12, 1919.

15. See Henry Edwards’ January 14, 1948, article in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*. Edwards also claimed that the night the World Series ended, a Cleveland gambler told the two of them the entire plot. Edwards couldn’t come up with proof, so the *Plain Dealer* never pursued the allegations.

16. The other Boston gambler is named in the article as “Jimmy Brown.” The article goes on to say that Brown is not his real name, and he is Italian.

17. *Boston Post*, September 30, 1920. The (unnamed) reporter’s source almost certainly was the unnamed Boston gambler who received the telegram.

‘\$5,000 IN A DIRTY ENVELOPE’

The economics of the Black Sox bribery

*“Most of economics can be summarized in four words:
‘People respond to incentives.’ The rest is commentary.”*
— Steven Landsburg, *The Armchair Economist*

By Bruce Allardice

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An Atlantic Ocean of ink has been spilled analyzing the Black Sox Scandal. Yet surprisingly little has been done to analyze the 1919 World Series fix in terms of risk and reward, in terms of return on investment, for the players and for the gamblers.

In the end, the fix was about greed, about money. And when investigating greed, a good rule of thumb is “Follow the Money.” An economic analysis of the World Series fix, relying only on what the participants reasonably should have known at the time, provides valuable insights into the motives and actions of all involved.

Of course the Black Sox didn’t think in rarefied intellectual terms such as “return on investment.” Years later, Hap- py Felsch admitted to author Eliot Asinof, “I was dumb.”¹ However, while the players may not have been Einsteins, they weren’t all dummies, either.² Star pitcher Eddie Cicotte and ringleader Chick Gandil were veterans who had been around, and Joe Jackson, for one, found Cicotte “smart” (by Jackson’s standards, at least.) Certainly the Black Sox were smart enough — or at least knew somebody smart enough — to weigh the potential costs and benefits of throwing the Series. The gamblers lived by calculating percentages, so they could be expected to behave as a rational economic man would behave.

The 1919 market rate for throwing games

“Never underestimate the effectiveness of a straight cash bribe.” — Claud Cockburn

The going rate for ballplayer bribes in regular season, individual games, during this time ranged from \$50 to \$700. One 1919 newspaper article claimed that Gandil, Risberg, and Felsch had offered to throw a regular-season game every week for \$200 apiece.³ In 1920, Fred McMullin reportedly offered Buck Weaver \$500 to throw a game (which Weaver said he refused).⁴ Martin Kohout’s book *Hal Chase: The Defiant Life and Turbulent Times of Baseball’s Biggest Crook* explores the many fixes Chase was involved in dur-

ing this era. The sums involved for a regular season game varied from \$200 to \$700. The 1919 Pacific Coast League bribes ranged from \$100 to \$500.⁵

For possible bribes during the regular season, the players didn’t risk their World Series shares, only their future earnings. And the gamblers couldn’t lay down large bets on seasonal games — it would raise too many red flags. But for the Series, the volume of wagering was so huge that large individual wagers would be little noticed. The rate charged for a World Series bribe, as well as the possible reward for a well-heeled gambler, would of necessity be much greater.

There exists some anecdotal evidence of the going rate for tossing a World Series. In the 1903 World Series, gamblers offered Red Sox catcher Lou Criger \$12,000. Black Soxer Eddie Cicotte testified that he’d heard that the 1918 Cubs had been gotten to, for a rumored \$10,000. So when the eight Sox players demanded \$100,000 (\$12,500 apiece) from the gamblers, when Cicotte demanded \$10,000 in advance, they weren’t picking these sums out of thin air — they were quoting what they understood to be the fair market value of throwing a World Series.⁶

What the players risked

*“Whoever plays deep must necessarily
lose his money or his character.”*
— Lord Chesterfield, *Letters to His Godson* (1773)

By tossing the World Series, the Black Sox knew they were — at a minimum — forfeiting a good chance at the winner’s share of the World Series receipts, and settling for the losing share. What would their reasonable expectation of the shortfall be?

The recent history of World Series shares had been as follows:

Year	# of WS games	Winner's share	Loser's share	Difference
1916	5	\$3,910	\$2,835	\$1,075
1917	6	\$3,669	\$2,442	\$1,227

In 1918, the World Series payout was managed differently, under wartime circumstances. The Black Sox would have used other years as their guide.

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► ECONOMICS

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The 1919 Series had been expanded to nine games and World War I had ended. The players could reasonably expect a much better payoff than in 1917. And that is what in fact took place⁷:

Year	# of WS games	Winner's share	Loser's share	Difference
1919	8	\$5,297	\$3,254	\$2,045

The possible player income from personal appearances and endorsements, which they would forgo if they tossed the Series, must also be factored in. This ancillary income could range anywhere from (on the low end) joyous fans buying players drinks at a bar, or fans purchasing Christmas trees from Happy Felsch⁸, to (on the high end) all the usual product endorsements familiar to today's fans. Shoeless Joe endorsed, among other items, automobiles, "Selz Shoes," Coca-Cola, "Boston Garters," Remington Rifles, and Absorbine Jr.⁹ Eddie Cicotte shilled for "Turpo ... the Turpentine Ointment" during the 1919 Series.¹⁰ This was income that a player — and not just a star — could plausibly count on increasing if his team won the series.

The Black Sox players also faced some risk of suspension, if found out — which had happened in the distant past to players caught cheating. Recent experience, however, suggested that, absent a player confessing, it was almost impossible for Organized Baseball's powers-that-be to prove that a player had cheated, which is why suspected cheaters such as the notorious Hal Chase remained in baseball so long.¹¹

All in all, the Black Sox risked (or invested, if you prefer) a minimum \$2,500 in current income and endorsements, plus future income, plus moral shaming, by participating in the fix. The players — or at least their lawyers — valued the total "future" loss higher than \$2,500. In their civil suits filed after being banned from baseball, they alleged large sums (Felsch claimed \$100,000!) in damages for loss of future earnings and reputation. More realistically, Felsch's attorney offered to settle the three player suits he was handling for \$8,000 — which perhaps gives a more prosaic view of what the players perceived those damages to be.¹²

Risk versus reward

"Wherever there is danger, there lurks opportunity; wherever there is opportunity, there lurks danger. The two are inseparable." — Earl Nightingale

According to recent research by Bob Hoie, the White Sox's 1919 player payroll was \$93,051. The Sox were (depending on how you measure the salaries) either the top paid team, or one of the top three paid teams, in the American League.¹³ Just qualifying for the World Series made the Sox by far the highest *earning* team in the American League. That's not to say that individual players on the team thought themselves underpaid and ill-used by Sox owner Charles Comiskey.

On average, a White Sox player made \$4,000 a year, with the eight "Black Sox" (mostly starters) making somewhat more. College-educated Eddie Collins was the highest paid White Sox: he had negotiated a \$15,000 deal with owner Comiskey when he was acquired in 1915. At \$7,083, catcher Ray Schalk was also highly paid.

As for the Black Sox, Eddie Cicotte made \$8,000 (including a bonus); Buck Weaver \$7,250 (three-year contract); Joe Jackson \$6,000; Chick Gandil \$4,000; Happy Felsch \$3,750; Lefty Williams \$3,500 (including bonuses); Swede Risberg \$3,350 (two-year contract); and Fred McMullin \$2,750.¹⁴ What the eight earned, and risked, is summarized in the charts below.

Player	1919 salary	% of salary lost by losing 1919 WS*
Cicotte	\$8,000	26%
Weaver	\$7,250	28%
Jackson	\$6,000	34%
Gandil	\$4,000	51%
Felsch	\$3,750	55%
Williams	\$3,500	58%
Risberg	\$3,350	61%
McMullin	\$2,750	74%
Avg.	\$4,825	42%

Player	1919 salary + winning WS share	% lost by losing 1919 WS*
Cicotte	\$13,297	15%
Weaver	\$12,547	16%
Jackson	\$11,297	18%
Gandil	\$9,297	22%
Felsch	\$9,047	23%
Williams	\$8,797	23%
Risberg	\$8,647	24%
McMullin	\$8,047	25%
Avg.	\$10,122	20%

* Loss figured at \$2,045, the difference between the winning and losing shares

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For all of these players, the World Series constituted a significant portion of their possible income. The total 1919 World Series player pool amounted to \$260,349 — higher than the combined player payrolls of *both* the White Sox and the Reds.¹⁵

Using the lowest paid Black Sox, utility man Fred McMullin, as an example, even the loser's share doubled McMullin's 1919 salary. The \$2,045 that McMullin directly sacrificed by losing the Series cost him 74% of his 1919 salary. If McMullin DIDN'T get his bribe money, he LOST money by participating in the fix.

This would also point out the obvious — if, after Game Two, the Black Sox concluded they weren't getting the money from the gamblers they'd been promised, they had a very strong financial (not just moral) incentive to play to win.

These numbers make Buck Weaver's case even more curious. Weaver strenuously — and, for the most part, successfully — claimed that he never received a dime from the gamblers, and that, while he knew of the fix, he refused to participate. Yet he knew the fixers were costing him his winner's share, a loss totaling 28% of his yearly salary. And if the fixers tossed the 1920 pennant, as many "clean Sox" players charged, Weaver's loss would be even greater. It's hard to believe Weaver would sacrifice that much money *solely* out of loyalty to his crooked mates. It lends credence to the charges that Weaver in fact tossed games in 1920.

If the players received \$10,000 each (\$80,000 total; the payoff from just one of the two deals they had with the gamblers), they would average around \$7,500 "profit." Which for all but Cicotte, would be more than their 1919 salary.

For \$100,000 (\$12,500 apiece), they'd average a \$10,000 profit. For \$20,000 apiece (the payoff if both the Sullivan/Brown and Burns/Attell deals paid as promised), they'd profit \$17,500 — the equivalent of 3+ years of their average 1919 salary.

We don't know — and never will know — exactly how much money the ballplayers received from the gamblers. We know Cicotte received his \$10,000; Jackson \$5,000 ("in a dirty envelope") of a promised \$20,000¹⁶; McMullin, Williams and Felsch, another \$5,000 apiece. Ringleaders Gandil and Risberg are said to have siphoned \$35,000 and \$15,000, respectively — which, if true, amounted to over half of the gamblers' payments.¹⁷

Only a relatively small amount of bribe money can be traced — and one of the reasons the Black Sox confessed was their conviction that someone (perhaps Gandil and/or gambler Abe Attell) had cheated them out of their expected reward.

From a rational perspective, it would take a minimum bribe of \$5,000 for each to make the fix pay and make each player "profit" \$2,500 (at the risking of future earnings/reputation.) The figure of \$5,000 is what most players received, and most seem to have settled for. It's easy to see why the Black Sox hawked the fix to a number of different betting groups, and allegedly tried to place their own bets. Without multiple payoffs, their profit wouldn't be that great otherwise — not enough to justify risking their future earnings.

Looking at the larger picture, the Black Sox sacrificed even more by tossing the 1920 pennant race, losing the whole World Series payoff (\$4,168 apiece for the winners), not just the difference between the winner's and loser's share.¹⁸ By tossing both the 1919 Series and the 1920 pennant, the Black Sox cost themselves, and their "clean" teammates, up to \$6,213 — more money than five of the Black Sox players provably received in bribes.¹⁹

What incentives existed for the Black Sox to make this even greater sacrifice in 1920? Was it merely fear of exposure? Or (more likely) was additional cash the incentive, either via their own wagers or from gamblers?

As to the variance in the amount of the known bribes, Cicotte's demanding — and receiving — \$10,000 in cash and in advance reflected not just his shrewdness, but also his clout. As the ace of the White Sox staff, Cicotte was crucial to the fix's success. The other players could be fobbed off with excuses and partial payments, but not Cicotte. It made rational economic sense for the gamblers to take care of the star pitcher first.²⁰

The gamblers

"Bond ... maintained that the more effort and ingenuity you put into gambling, the more you took out."
— Ian Fleming, *Casino Royale*

In order for there to be an incentive to participate in the World Series fix, the gamblers had to recoup any money invested in bribes, plus make a profit from their betting.

We'll never know exactly how much the gamblers paid the Black Sox. Derek Zumsteg, in *The Cheaters Guide to Baseball*, puts his estimate on this point in chart form²¹:

Fixer	Backed By	Amount Promised	Amount Paid
Sullivan	Rothstein	\$80,000	\$70,000
Burns	Attell (and Rothstein?)	\$100,000	\$10,000

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► ECONOMICS

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Assume, for discussion, there were eight players to bribe, each demanding a minimum \$5,000 bribe. Assume even odds betting.²² The gamblers, having outlayed \$40,000 in bribes, would have to clear \$40,000 in betting profits just to break even. Which means they needed a minimum of \$40,000 for the players' bribes, plus another \$40,000 to bet — before they would start earning a profit! By a not-so-amazing coincidence, \$80,000 is what Arnold Rothstein allegedly staked Sport Sullivan.

If the bribes totaled \$80,000, the gamblers would need \$160,000 (\$80,000 + \$80,000) seed money just to break even. A gambler either had to have the cash, or be known to have the cash, to place bets at that \$80,000 level. Black Sox gamblers Sport Sullivan and Abe Attell dealt in cash, using reputable stakeholders such as Cubs secretary John O. Seys to hold the cash wagered.

Assuming the small-time gamblers succeeded in placing larger-than-normal bets, suspicions would be raised — as actually happened when Ben Franklin placed a \$4,000 wager with St. Louis betting commissioner Tom Kearney. This was so unlike Franklin that Kearney, an “honest” bookmaker (at least by the lights of the profession) notified baseball officials that something funny was going on.²³

Who had this kind of money? Not accused fixer David Zelcer, who operated out of a cigar store in Des Moines. Not Carl Zork, Harry Redmon or Ben Franklin, the pool hall boys from St. Louis. They dealt in tens and hundreds of dollars, occasionally thousands — nowhere near the money needed for such a fix.²⁴ Only large-scale operators like Rothstein could play at this level. More relevantly, intelligent players would only make deals with gamblers they *knew* could operate at this level.

And Rothstein simply wouldn't hand over \$80,000 to “ham and egggers” such as Bill Burns, or small-timers he barely knew such as Dave Zelcer. It was his money, and logically he would demand control, either by sending along a trusted associate (Abe Attell, if indeed Rothstein backed Attell) to monitor what Burns was doing, or by having his own man (Sport Sullivan) handle the whole operation. As with most activities in life, money means power and control. Nobody knew this better than Rothstein.

It's easy to see why the Black Sox hawked the fix to a number of different betting groups, and allegedly tried to place their own bets. Without multiple payoffs, their profit wouldn't be that great otherwise — not enough to justify risking their future earnings.

Bettors who didn't have that kind of money could make more by betting on individual games, and then trying to pyramid their game-by-game profits. But that was riskier. Smart gamblers such as Rothstein bet on the Series. Amateurs like Burns bet on individual games, and (not surprisingly) lost their shirt when the White Sox unexpectedly won Game Three behind Dickey Kerr.

The gamblers seemingly didn't factor in any risk of legal problems in the bribery. At the time, laws against bribery in sporting events were vague to nonexistent and, so far

as is known, no gambler had ever been sent to jail for bribing a ballplayer. As the Black Sox jury trial proved, baseball gamblers could easily evade prosecutions and jail time — especially gamblers connected with Rothstein who would enjoy the services of “The Great Mouthpiece,” Rothstein's attorney, William J. Fallon. Indicted fraudsters

and racketeers had a well-known slogan: “Get Fallon, and get out.”²⁵

Conclusion

*“Oh what a tangled web we weave,
When first we practise to deceive!”*

— Sir Walter Scott, *Marmion*, Canto vi. Stanza 17.

A year after the World Series, Happy Felsch lamented his own stupidity for trusting teammate Chick Gandil and the gamblers to fork over the promised bribe money. He sums up his loss in words that would apply to his “Black” teammates as well:

“I got \$5,000. I could have got just about that much by being on the level if the Sox had won the series. And now I'm out of baseball — the only profession that I knew anything about, and a lot of gamblers have gotten rich. The joke seems to be on us.”²⁶

Notes

1. Eliot Asinof, *Bleeding Between the Lines* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979), 113-118.

2. See Jacob Pomrenke, “[Following up on the Sox's education levels](#),” SABR Black Sox Scandal Research Committee newsletter, December 2012.

3. *Chicago Tribune*, December 30, 1919.

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4. See [SABR biography of Fred McMullin](#).
5. *Chicago Tribune*, December 30, 1919. Bill Veeck with Ed Linn, *The Hustler's Handbook* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1965), 284. *Chicago Daily Journal*, September 29, 1920. Martin D. Kohout, *Hal Chase: The Defiant Life and Turbulent Times of Baseball's Biggest Crook* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., 2001), 223, 238. Larry Gerlach, "The Bad News Bees; Salt Lake City and the 1919 Pacific Coast League Scandal," *Base Ball: A Journal of the Early Game* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., Spring 2012), 35-74.
6. John Thorn, *Baseball in the Garden of Eden* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 2011), 287. William F. Lamb, *Black Sox in the Courtroom: The Grand Jury, Criminal Trial, and Civil Litigation* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., 2013), 50.
7. Different sources gives slightly varying numbers for the player's shares. The 1919 payoff was based on gate receipts from only the first five games of the series. The purpose of the five-game limit was to deny the teams any incentive to stretch the series in order to increase their payoff.
8. Gene Carney, "Comiskey's Detectives," *Baseball Research Journal* #38-2 (Cleveland, Ohio: SABR, Fall 2009).
9. Kelly Boyer Sagert, *Joe Jackson. A Biography* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2004), 44.
10. *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 5, 1919.
11. For example, in 1877 four players on the Louisville Grays had been banned for throwing games. On the other hand, recent (i.e., 1910s) history indicated that the National Commission wouldn't expel crooked players, so long as the evidence was in any way doubtful. And without player confessions, the evidence would inevitably be considered doubtful. Bad play on the field could always be explained away. See Daniel Ginsburg, *The Fix is In: A History of Baseball Gambling and Game Fixing Scandals* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., 1995), for more on this point.
12. See Lamb's *Black Sox in the Courtroom*, p. 151 and on, for more on these suits. The players mainly sought lost wages on the post-1920 years of their multi-year contracts.
13. Bob Hoie, "1919 Baseball Salaries and the Mythically Underpaid Chicago White Sox," *Base Ball: A Journal of the Early Game* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., Spring 2012), 17-34.
14. Hoie, "1919 Baseball Salaries," 29-31.
15. Comiskey's withholding World Series checks from the Black Sox wreaked real hardship on the players — much more than any similar action would today. The World Series was a much bigger share of a player's earnings in 1919, than it is today.
16. In a 1922 deposition, Maharg testified that in the original \$100,000 deal, \$20,000 each was to go to Gandil, Cicotte, Williams, Felsch, and Risberg — the original group of fixers.
17. See the SABR biographies of [Gandil](#) and [Risberg](#).
18. Statements from Eddie Collins, Byrd Lynn and other "clean" Sox make it clear that their teammates were throwing games (and the pennant) in 1920 as well. See, *inter alia*, *The Sporting News*, October 7, 1920; *Washington Times*, October 5, 1920.
19. The 1920 World Series shares amounted to \$4,168 for the winners, \$2,240 for the losers. The Sox player's total loss was \$2,045 for the 1919 Series, plus \$2,240-\$4,168 for 1920. On a side note, the grand jury asked Joe Jackson whether he had heard anything of the players settling for second-place money in 1920, then cashing in on the Chicago "city series" they would then be eligible for. Jackson said he hadn't heard of that. See the Jackson testimony transcript, page 22. Due to Comiskey suspending the Black Sox, the 1920 city series was cancelled. In fact, the usual player payoff from the city series totaled only a few hundred dollars each — nowhere near enough to compensate for losing their World Series share. See the *Chicago Tribune*, October 8, 1916 and October 16, 1922, for "city series" payouts.
20. *Chicago Evening American*, September 30, 1920.
21. Adapted from Derek Zumsteg, *The Cheater's Guide to Baseball* (New York: Mariner Books, 2007), 196-197.
22. In fact, the flood of late Reds money wagered by the fix gamblers drove the odds from 7-5 White Sox to even money. After Cincinnati's Game One victory, the odds shifted to the Reds. See Gene Carney, *Burying the Black Sox* (Dulles, Virginia: Potomac Books, 2007), 29-30, 308. For purposes of this article, I'll use even money odds, averaging the pre and post-Game One odds.
23. See my article on Kearney in [the December 2014 edition](#) of the SABR Black Sox Research Committee Newsletter, p. 17.
24. A newspaper account of a 1922 gambling arrest at the Zelters' cigar store noted betting in the \$20-100 range. See the *Davenport Democrat*, September 7, 1922. Comiskey's detectives noted that Joe Pesch's pool hall had "booked" \$17-18,000 in baseball bets for the entire season. See Chicago White Sox and 1919 World Series Baseball Scandal Collection, Chicago History Museum, letter of November 15, 1919. And as trial testimony made clear, Zork and Franklin were either unable or unwilling to pony up \$5,000 after Game Two to revive the fix. For evidence that Zork, at least, may have wagered at a higher level, see Timothy Newman and Bruce Stuckman, "They Were Black Sox Long Before the 1919 World Series," *Base Ball: A Journal of the Early Game*, (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., Spring 2012), 81, and Lamb, *Black Sox in the Courtroom*, 72. These authors note Harry Redmon testifying to the grand jury that Redmon "heard of" Zork betting \$50,000 on the series. These authors admit that Redmon's (hearsay) testimony is rambling and hard to follow on this point.
25. Lamb, *Black Sox in the Courtroom*, 80-86. Donald Henderson Clarke, *In the Reign of Rothstein* (New York: Vanguard, 1929), 145.
26. *Chicago Evening American*, September 30, 1920.

A grandfather's tale: Interviewing Eddie Murphy III

By Paul Browne

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On July 22, 1968, a boy went to the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown with his grandfather. The grandfather ran into an old friend. "If those guys didn't fix the World Series, we would have been the Yankees," Ray Schalk said to his former Chicago White Sox teammate Eddie Murphy. "Ruth and them were second to us." Eddie Murphy III remembers the moment vividly, more than 40 years later.

"Honest Eddie" Murphy and Schalk both still had hard feelings about the 1919 Black Sox Scandal that ruined a great White Sox team. In a 1959 interview with Chic Feldman of *The Scrantonian* newspaper in Pennsylvania, Murphy was quoted as saying, "We might have started the dynasty that was the Yankees' good fortune. But our best players sold out their honor and souls to gamblers and a pennant purgatory came upon the White Sox."

Eddie Murphy III was 11 years old when his grandfather died in 1969. But he was old enough to be interested in baseball by that time and learned a lot about Murphy's major-league career in conversations with his father, Eddie Jr., and by spending time with his grandfather (and some of his old baseball friends) at the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown.

I interviewed Eddie III in March 2015 in the clubrooms of a fraternal organization in northeastern Pennsylvania, where Murphy grew up and lived most of his life. Eddie III says his grandfather was not much of a talker, but sat his father, Eddie Jr., down one day and talked about the Black Sox Scandal all afternoon. He rarely mentioned it before or afterward.

The following observations about "Honest Eddie" Murphy are drawn from my recent conversation with Eddie III:

Murphy, who had a reputation for integrity even before he earned his famous nickname following the 1919 World Series, was never approached by gamblers to help fix the fall classic. Murphy understood why Ray Schalk and Eddie Collins weren't approached, either; he considered them to be "untouchables" who were 100 percent dedicated to baseball and the team. Murphy was surprised, however, by Lefty Williams' involvement. Williams was a family man, he said.

Murphy was heartbroken when he learned that Shoeless Joe Jackson was in on the fix, but the gamblers knew they needed the best player on the team. Even on his deathbed, Murphy felt that Jackson was better all-around than Babe Ruth, who he also liked and admired. In the 1959 interview, Murphy gave more credit to Ruth than Judge Landis for sav-



According to his grandson, White Sox outfielder Eddie Murphy wasn't enamored of owner Charles Comiskey despite receiving a belated World Series check after the Black Sox Scandal came to light. (Michael Aronstein / TCMA Ltd.)

ing baseball after the scandal.

Murphy valued a good education above all else and instilled the same value in his family — Eddie Jr. and Eddie III both became teachers, while Eddie III's son is pursuing a degree in education. Murphy felt that the gamblers took advantage of Shoeless Joe because of his lack of education and illiteracy. Murphy related a story of how Jackson would order the same meal at a restaurant as someone else at the table because he could not read the menu.

Murphy felt bad about the fate of Buck Weaver, who he said never took a dime from gamblers but knew about the conspiracy and said nothing. Murphy was sympathetic, but agreed with Judge Landis that this was enough to ban him from organized baseball. But he didn't feel sorry for the other six Black Sox players.

Murphy thought Chick Gandil, a one-time professional boxer, was a shady character and got the gamblers involved. Most players, he said, saw Gandil as a wise guy. His opinion was that another ex-boxer, Abe Attell, put the fix together and Arnold Rothstein was the big gambler who made it happen.

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► MURPHY

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Fred McMullin, a utility player, was also involved. There were “cliques within cliques” on the team in 1919, Murphy told Lee Allen of *The Sporting News* in 1968, and McMullin was one of the guys always hanging out at the batting cages with the principals in the fix. Being “one of the guys” gave him an opportunity at money that his status on the team wouldn’t have offered otherwise. It also provided a temptation he gave in to that destroyed his career.

Eddie III believes Murphy never thought the 1919 World Series games were fixed while he was playing in them. In an important play in one of the games, Happy Felsch made a big error. Felsch was in on the fix but always swore this play was only an error. Murphy believed him.

In the 1959 *Scrantonian* interview, however, Murphy reportedly said the other White Sox players and manager Kid Gleason “suspected a foul plot almost from the first pitch ... (but) nobody believed it could happen.” Murphy also talked about Gleason calling a team meeting after Game Three and openly predicting that “\$100,000 is to change hands if we lose,” a story he believed the manager told to “Comiskey and almost anyone who would listen.”

Around this time, Ray Schalk said he thought the Sox might have won if Gleason had used future Hall of Fame pitcher Red Faber in the World Series. Faber had been hampered by injuries and a lingering flu virus throughout the year. Murphy also felt that Gleason had stuck with Williams because “we thought that maybe the bad boys had a change of heart and wanted to make amends.”

Murphy said that during the 1920 season, “Our club was divided into two groups. ... Those fellows (the Black Sox) kept pretty much to themselves and so it was the guilty on one side and the innocent on the other. There was all kinds of dissension and everybody knew it.” Murphy suspected that the gamblers still held sway over the Black Sox as the team “lost often enough, suspiciously, to cost us the flag.”

If there was any doubt of hard feelings between the two factions, the honest Sox held a dinner celebration on September 28, 1920, when the Cook County grand jury voted indictments against the eight Black Sox players. Murphy attended the dinner along with Eddie Collins, Amos Strunk, Nemo Leibold and Shano Collins. Faber and Schalk were unable to attend, but phoned to share in the festivities during the dinner.

Murphy said in the 1959 interview that “one writer started a campaign to get the difference, in reward for our faithfulness, between the 1919 loser’s share of \$3,669 and the winner’s share of \$5,200. Mr. Comiskey was quick

to respond and gave each of the loyal players a check for \$1,500.”

Murphy acknowledged that Comiskey did make up the difference between the winner’s and loser’s share of the 1919 World Series bonus to him and the other honest Sox players, but he attributed that to pressure from a sports writer. Murphy also complained of petty things the owner did that annoyed his players.

According to Eddie III, Murphy believed the story that Comiskey had Eddie Cicotte pulled from the pitching rotation to keep him from earning a promised bonus for winning 30 games (either in 1917 or 1919). This assertion has been challenged by modern baseball historians. Murphy did not mention this in either the Feldman or Allen interviews. If he did believe this, I found no evidence as to why.

In those interviews, Murphy was deferential to Judge Landis and Charles Comiskey. But in his private discussions with family, his opinion toward the White Sox owner was less positive. Murphy believed that Comiskey underpaid his players and was rotten to them in other ways. When Eddie III was young, his grandfather was a Yankees fan. He liked them because “they paid their players.”

In the Spring 2012 edition of *Base Ball: A Journal of the Early Game*, Bob Hoie makes a convincing argument that the White Sox of 1919 were not underpaid in comparison to other players around the American League. But that doesn’t necessarily mean they didn’t *feel* underpaid.

Murphy made his debut with the Philadelphia Athletics in 1912, just prior to the Federal League’s rise and challenge of baseball’s two-league system, which had the effect of raising player salaries across the board and perhaps making them more aware of their free market value. While many can be philosophical about the impact of the economy on others, few of us are as sanguine when it comes to our own paychecks. After the Federal League folded in 1915, and after the onset of World War I interrupted play in the major leagues and shortened the season in 1919, salaries had generally dropped and many players may have felt a sense of diminished earning power. While we do not have complete salary information for Murphy’s entire career, we know he was making \$3,500 as a part-time outfielder by 1920, a far cry from team leader Eddie Collins’ \$15,000 annual paycheck.

But Honest Eddie Murphy would not, and did not, believe that any miserliness on Comiskey’s part would justify throwing ballgames, let alone the World Series. He believed that his former teammates who threw the Series brought shame and dishonor to themselves. Murphy’s values, and his reputation for integrity, would not allow him to be a part of that.

Not quite ready to overturn Comiskey's reputation

**Turning the Black Sox White:
The Misunderstood Legacy
of Charles Comiskey,**
by Tim Hornbaker

Sports Publishing, 2014

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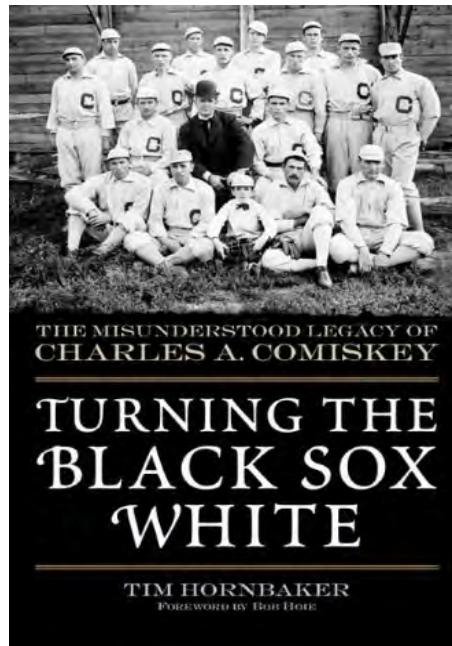
What did I know about Charles A. Comiskey before I read Tim Hornbaker's biography?

I knew that Comiskey had been an excellent first baseman and then a successful manager before he owned the Chicago White Sox. I knew that he — along with fellow owners Jacob Rupert and Harry Frazee — was involved in a complicated sequence of events that eventually resulted in the establishment of Kenesaw Mountain Landis as commissioner of baseball. I knew he had an ongoing feud with American League President Ban Johnson.

I knew that some of his Chicago White Sox players threw the 1919 World Series to the Cincinnati Reds. I knew — from Eliot Asinof in *Eight Men Out* and others — that he was as responsible as any of the others involved for this Black Sox Scandal.

And we can see from Hornbaker's title and subtitle that the Black Sox Scandal will be for him the most important event in Comiskey's life. The subtitle is clear: Comiskey's legacy — presumably something resembling my own understanding of him — has been misunderstood, and Hornbaker's biography will clear that up.

But the title? Surely it establishes the Black Sox Scandal as the most important event of Comiskey's life, with the implication that it, too, has been misunderstood. The image of the title made me think of the title of Gene Carney's odd and heroic *Burying the Black Sox: How Baseball's Cover-*



Up of the 1919 World Series Almost Succeeded (2006). Like Hornbaker's, Carney's subtitle tends to clarify the meaning of his title. Carney means to re-understand the event, Hornbaker to clarify the actions of one of its principal actors.

For Carney, burying the Black Sox means shifting the focus from the players who conspired to lose the Series to the cover-up by baseball officials that ensued. For Hornbaker, turning the Black Sox white means reassessing the role their owner, Charles Comiskey, played in the scandal. For Carney, Comiskey, his fellow owners, and league officials are the chief villains; for Hornbaker, far from being villainous, Comiskey must be considered the fairest of owners, and the scandal and many of its interpreters an insult to him. Because the titles of the two books seemed so closely connected, I re-read Carney right after reading Hornbaker for the first time.

In Bob Hoie's Foreword to Hornbaker's biography, he speaks of the need for "a clear, accurate, and coherent biography" of Comiskey. For Hoie,

Hornbaker's book fills that need. For too long, Comiskey has been regarded as "a man of small mind, tight fist, and a nasty temperament," the result, it would seem, of evaluating him using only his role in the Black Sox scandal. As Hornbaker says, "writers have ... labeled [Comiskey] a scoundrel on par with the 'Black Sox' conspirators themselves." And Hornbaker's book, unlike much that is written about Comiskey, does present a more balanced portrait of the ball-playing youth and the career in management and ownership of an important figure in baseball's early years. It is about time we had a full-length biography of Comiskey.

Hornbaker largely ignores writing about Comiskey over the past century and goes back to contemporary accounts in developing his picture of him. For instance, in establishing Comiskey the ballplayer, there's a wonderful quotation from Comiskey himself in an 1889 *Sporting News*, describing the "tricky" baseball he wants his St. Louis Browns to play (50-51, n.59). Hornbaker relies mainly on contemporary newspaper and magazine articles from Ed Burns, Hugh C. Weir, Jimmy Isaminger, among many others for assessing Comiskey's character.

Articles about Comiskey by John B. Sheridan seem to articulate Hornbaker's own attitude toward his subject. For Hornbaker, "no sportswriter ... managed to tackle Comiskey's complicated evolution like St. Louis scribe, John B. Sheridan" (290). Hornbaker writes that "when Comiskey was at his finest, he was socially adept for any occasion; full of life and always thoughtful." According to Sheridan, Comiskey possessed "a personal magnetism and charm that is given to few

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► COMISKEY

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men” and was “loved for himself as much as any man ever has been loved for himself.” “But now [in 1919],” Hornbaker continues, “Comiskey was displaying an outward hatred. Sheridan wrote, ‘If so gentle and generous a nature as that of Charley Comiskey can hate, his hatred will hurt not the objects of it, but himself’” (290-291).

Hornbaker quotes more from Sheridan in a footnote. “Sheridan wrote a second telling column a week later. He added comments about the special atmosphere he naturally created at his home stadium by ‘simply being Comiskey,’ and, as of late, had become ‘impatient, even irascible” (298, n.36).

Hornbaker’s book fills out this portrait of a former ballplayer and manager who as a club owner became a beloved civic leader and businessman, troubled through his life by family and health problems, for whom the Black Sox Scandal was the last blow. Toward the end of the book, Hornbaker summarizes, citing Comiskey’s “contributions to the advancement of the sport. His innovations as a player and manager were lauded [at his funeral]. His accomplishments revered, and the people of Chicago were ever loyal for his dedication to the prosperity of the White Sox. As a civic leader, he was always willing to lend a hand; from aid to military soldiers and the Red Cross during World War I to supporting the women’s suffrage movement” (342).

Then Hornbaker turns to Comiskey’s “transformation.” “Between 1917 and 1920, Comiskey became one of the most polarizing individuals in professional sports. In a way, he transitioned from a man who had a ‘reputation of bringing sunshine wherever he went’ and ‘by long odds, the most popular and best known man in baseball’ to overbearingly controversial. It was a stunning metamorphosis brought on by four factors: the devastating illness of his beloved wife, his own nagging health problems, his unrelenting stubbornness, and the ‘Black Sox’ scandal” (342).

The first three form the substance of Hornbaker’s biography; not only was Comiskey’s wife ill, but his whole family and Comiskey himself struggled with various illnesses. His main quarrel — with American League President Ban Johnson — began in the first years of the twentieth century and went on until Johnson’s death in 1930. Hornbaker concludes “it was almost impossible for them to be both friends and business associates” (164). All this is assembled for the first time in Hornbaker’s biography and serves to bring into question previous interpretations of Comiskey’s behavior during the Black Sox Scandal.

In treating Comiskey’s role in the Black Sox Scandal,

Hornbaker is interested in clearing up what he considers “misunderstandings” about Comiskey. They amount to a “movement to demonize Comiskey” (347). Gene Carney’s *Burying the Black Sox* might be considered part of this movement. Hornbaker doesn’t use much from Carney’s book. So far as I’ve been able to discover, Carney’s name appears just twice, once as *Burying the Black Sox* is listed in the sources and once in a footnote acknowledging the Carney “cover up” thesis in that book (314, n.16).

Hornbaker doesn’t think a cover-up has occurred. He speaks of “a major controversy in the way Comiskey was seen in handling the aftermath of the 1919 season. His perceived inaction and the way his team would nearly mirror that of the fateful season in 1920 turned into the illusion of a cover-up, more distasteful to some pundits than the shameful players themselves” (289). Again, as the notion of a cover-up “became the popular trend, Comiskey’s actions were considered to be part of a shrewd ‘cover up.’” Ironically, Comiskey was a man who in 1920 was warned to stay away from baseball games entirely because his health couldn’t weather the stress, but, according to these believers, he was seemingly plotting and planning a huge scale cover up to protect his high profile club” (302-303).

Hornbaker can’t believe that Comiskey was involved in any conspiracy. Comiskey’s health wouldn’t permit it. In addition, he wonders “how a single man, or a single franchise, could effectively pull the wool over the eyes of the entire base ball community to obscure genuine facts was impossible” (303). Comiskey’s history of generosity, poor health, and the enormity of the task combine to make a cover-up unthinkable for Hornbaker.

It is instructive to note what Carney says about Comiskey. He is certainly a part of Comiskey’s “misunderstood legacy.” “Asinof,” Carney concludes, “got most things right” in *Eight Men Out* (271). Carney thinks it “unfortunate that, in the end, the story he [Asinof] tells so well distracts from the story he only sketches — the cover-up” (269).

“Charles Comiskey has been painted as an evil monster,” continues Carney. He “maximized his own profits and spent little on his players. Yet he could be generous with them, too, rewarding good results or helping veterans in financial trouble” (150). He wonders: “Was Comiskey such a Scrooge? Some researchers think not, and argue that the 1919 White Sox — while underpaid — may have had the highest payroll in baseball. Several of the banned players expressed remorse for having wronged an owner who had treated them if not well, then at least better than they had been treated in baseball” (153).

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The witness who never testified: Val O'Farrell

By Bruce Allardice

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Nationally famous private detective Val O'Farrell made newspaper headlines when he told various newspapers that he had been present at the original Black Sox "fix" meetings between Bill Burns and Arnold Rothstein, and that Rothstein had spurned the proposition.

Specifically, O'Farrell claimed he was present at the Hotel Astor the first time that Bill Burns approached

Rothstein to pitch [pun intended] the 1919 World Series fix.

O'Farrell said he was present, at Rothstein's request, to be both witness and bodyguard. Accompanying Burns were New York Giants outfielder Benny Kauff (no stranger to game-fixing allegations) and a "well-known Long Island gambler" nicknamed "Arbie" or "Orbie."¹

O'Farrell said Rothstein turned the proposition down cold, telling



Val O'Farrell

O'Farrell, "Can you beat it? Trying to put over a deal like this with Bennie Kauff in it. They are the kind of fellows that are killing baseball. I could never listen to any such proposition as that."²

It was "some time" after this, according to O'Farrell, that Burns (now accompanied by Billy Maharg) met Rothstein again. O'Farrell was present once more,

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► COMISKEY

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In general, Carney seems willing to acknowledge the possibility that Comiskey acted honorably throughout the scandal. But Hornbaker, I'm guessing, would object to Carney's conclusion, delivered in a footnote, "Comiskey was simply a businessman who only suspended his suspicious players when he absolutely had to — not a day sooner, and not eleven months sooner when he could have — and should have, if he was truly courageous and fair" (341, n. 18)

Finally, Hornbaker's extensive use of sources contemporary to Comiskey's life may also be a limitation. There are very few secondary sources listed. Carney is there, as is Bob Hoie's excellent article on White Sox salaries, but I miss many of the authors who have written about not so much the scandal as the era itself. For instance, Steven A. Riess's analysis of baseball's relation to American culture in *Touching Base: Professional Baseball and American Culture in the Progressive Era* (1980, 1999) would surely have been useful for its portrait of club owners, and treatment of baseball in Chicago, as might Robert F. Burk's *Never Just a Game: Players, Owners, and American Baseball to 1920* (1994) for its study of labor relations, or Daniel Ginsburg's *The Fix Is In: A History of Baseball Gambling and Game Fixing Scandals* (1995), for its study of the culture of gambling.

Studies such as these and others might have provided a broader basis than overturning the "movement to demonize Comiskey." Nevertheless, Hornbaker has produced an important book. Because of his research, I know a lot more than I did about Comiskey — his ancestry, his prominence

in Chicago, his and his family's health difficulties, and his peculiar relationship with Ban Johnson — but I still find Carney's conclusions about Comiskey more convincing.

Perhaps it's best to conclude with another contemporary observer of Comiskey, Ring Lardner. Comiskey is one of the "real life" characters in Lardner's 1916 *You Know Me Al*, and Lardner draws his portrait vividly in just a few scenes. Of course, Lardner is mainly interested in portraying the self-absorbed knucklehead Jack Keefe, but a shrewd, sarcastic, fun-loving, glad-handing Comiskey is clearly visible. According to Keefe, "he is a great old fellow Al and no wonder everybody likes him" (39). (This and subsequent references are to *The Annotated Baseball Stories of Ring Lardner*, edited by George Hilton.)

Comiskey in negotiating Keefe's salary teases him about wanting so much money. Though Comiskey's offer is only half what Keefe has asked for, he is easily satisfied. Again, after a relatively successful rookie year, Keefe signed up for a salary still a little below what he originally wanted, confident he would also be cashing a World Series check. "Comiskey slapped me on the back ... and told me I would be a star next year if I took good care of myself," he tells Al (99).

Alas, Keefe doesn't take care of himself and Comiskey sells him to Milwaukee, jokingly telling him that in Milwaukee he will be closer to the source of beer. Keefe threatens to sign with the Federal League and eventually wins a three-year contract from Comiskey, but at the same \$2,800 salary. Keefe concludes "he fixed me up good" and decides that "I guess Comiskey must be all O.K. and good hearted after all" (125, 126). It is perhaps unfair to say that Tim Hornbaker's biography challenges us to agree with Keefe about Comiskey, but we should also be alert to Lardner's irony.

► O'FARRELL

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along with Des Moines-based gambler David Zelcer and another (unnamed) person.³ O'Farrell also claimed to have proof that the infamous "AR" telegram Abe Attell flashed to his co-conspirators in Cincinnati — the one that supposedly convinced them that Rothstein backed Attell — was actually sent by Attell's friend, Rothstein associate Curley Bennett, presumably at Attell's behest. Allegedly, O'Farrell provided evidence to State's Attorney Maclay Hoyne when the latter was in New York.⁴

In his 2006 book *Burying the Black Sox*, author Gene Carney asked a question that has never been answered: "If this detective O'Farrell knew so much [about the fix], why didn't the grand jury call him to testify?"⁵

Valerian J. "Val" O'Farrell had a long and distinguished law enforcement career. Born in Boston on April 26, 1876, his father, an inventor, died when Val was only 5 years old. His mother relocated the family to New York City, where Val grew up. He was a boyhood chum of future New York Governor Al Smith.

After graduating from Manhattan College, O'Farrell joined the police department, and quickly became the department's expert investigator of the hoodlum gangs of New York. Among the cases he investigated was the 1912 Charles Becker-Herman "Beansy" Rosenthal murder, in which Arnold Rothstein was a suspect. O'Farrell, who loved to bet on the horses, became yet another Rothstein intimate — in Rothstein's own words, "a very loyal friend."⁶

After 20 years on the force, O'Farrell resigned and founded his own private detective agency. The O'Farrell agency investigated a number of headline-making cases, including the disappearance of the Reynolds tobacco heir and the Charles Lindbergh kidnapping. His clients included the British and German governments, and the Vanderbilt family.⁷

Writer Damon Runyon was an intimate friend. Runyon remembered O'Farrell as "well dressed, suave and a Broadwayian who laid-to-the-rail. His great pals were Alfred Henry Lewis, the author, and Bat Masterson, the old-time western peace officer, then writing a sports column for the Morning Telegram." O'Farrell was known up and down Broadway, and (according to Runyon), gangsters often hired him as a bodyguard.⁸

Val O'Farrell died in New York City on October 7, 1934, and is buried in Calvary Cemetery, Queens.

We can only speculate why the Cook County grand jury never called O'Farrell to testify back in 1920. O'Farrell's deservedly high reputation in law enforcement would

have made him, in many respects, an ideal witness. And O'Farrell, who loved the limelight, appeared eager to tell his story — why else would he have told it to the newspapers?

Perhaps the State's Attorney's Office thought O'Farrell's evidence would only exculpate Rothstein. Or that, whatever the evidence, O'Farrell's friendship with Rothstein made him a less-than-credible witness.

Notes



Benny Kauff

1. The identity of "Arbie/Orbie" is another of those unanswered questions. Sounded out, it could be the initials "R. B.," the same initials as Rothstein/Attell associate Rachie Brown. Brown was a small-time gambler and well known in Manhattan. The phrase "well-known Long Island gambler" could also apply to John Shaughnessy (1873-1936), owner of the Lynnbrook Casino on Long Island, a close friend of Rothstein associate Nat Evans. In October 1920, Shaughnessy faced indictment for bribing public officials. See the *New York Tribune*, October 1, 1920, and *New York Times*, September 5, 1920, for more on Shaughnessy's indictment, which might have prompted O'Farrell to withhold naming him to the newspapers. For more on Shaughnessy, see Damon Runyon's column in the *Springfield Republican*, September 11, 1936. Rothstein later told Ban Johnson that a gambler named Henderson, from Rhode Island, accompanied Kauff. "Henderson" promised to put up \$50,000 if Rothstein would do the same. See Gene Carney, *Burying the Black Sox: How Baseball's Cover-Up of the 1919 World Series Fix Almost Succeeded* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2006), 257; *Seattle Daily Times*, March 29, 1929.

2. *New York Tribune*, September 30, 1920. The article makes clear that Rothstein "wouldn't listen to anything in which [Kauff] was concerned." For more on Kauff's checkered career, see Craig Burley, "Free Benny Kauff," *The Hardball Times*, April 12, 2004.

3. David Pietrusza, *Rothstein: The Life, Times and Murder of the Criminal Genius Who Fixed the 1919 World Series* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2003), 153-154.

4. *New York Tribune*, September 30, 1920. See also *Washington Times*, October 6, 1920; *New York Tribune*, October 6, 1920, October 8, 1920; *Seattle Daily Times*, October 4, 1920; *New York Evening Telegram*, September 30, 1920.

5. Carney, *Burying the Black Sox*, 257. William F. Lamb, *Black Sox in the Courtroom: The Grand Jury, Criminal Trial, and Civil Litigation* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., 2013), 44.

6. *Chicago Tribune*, April 28, 1940.

7. The best source on his life is his obituary in the *New York Times*, October 8, 1934, which is also the source of the headshot photo that appears on page 16 of this newsletter.

8. Damon Runyon, "The Brighter Side," *Idaho Statesman*, May 24, 1946.

Did Steel City gamblers instigate the 1919 fix?

Pittsburgh connection to Black Sox Scandal was early focus of the Chicago grand jury's investigation

By Bruce Allardice

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On September 28, 1920, Cook County Assistant State's Attorney Hartley Replogle announced, "We are going after the gamblers now. There will be indictments in a few days against men in Philadelphia, Indianapolis, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and other cities."

The principals of the Philadelphia (Billy Maharg), Indianapolis (the Levi brothers), and Cincinnati (Phil Hahn, Fred Mowbray) gambling rings are easily identified, as they were eventually investigated and/or indicted by the grand jury. But the Pittsburgh connection, so much the focus in the early days of the Black Sox investigation, seemingly petered out. There was a lot of Pittsburgh smoke visible in 1919 and 1920. This article will examine what fire produced that smoke — and why no indictments resulted.

Early reports of the fix pointed to gamblers in Pittsburgh being as responsible as those of any other city. Only one month after the 1919 World Series ended, the racing tabloid *Collyer's Eye* alleged that St. Louis, New York, Chicago and Pittsburgh gamblers had cleaned up \$500,000 on the Series.¹ *Collyer's* had already charged that the Series was fixed, and clearly implied that gamblers in these four cities participated in on the fix.

The St. Louis (Carl Zork), New York (Abe Attell, Arnold Rothstein) and Chicago (the players) angles have been exhaustively examined, by baseball officials at the time, and by historians ever since. But not the Pittsburgh angle. This may in part be due to the decidedly non-curious attitude of the Pittsburgh media. Pittsburgh newspaper reporting on the 1919 Series emphasized that most local wagering favored the White Sox, up to the opening of the Series, when the betting suddenly swung toward the Reds. The (pollyannaish) *Pittsburgh Gazette-Times* attributed this "strange thing", this sudden surge of Cincinnati betting, to "spirit" and National League solidarity.²

Immediately after the Series, the city's leading sports columnist, Harry Keck of the *Gazette-Times*, dismissed the notion of a fix:

There has been a lot of loose talk throughout the series, mainly among those who bet and lost on the



World Series fixer Abe Attell's connection to Pittsburgh helped local gamblers reportedly win hundreds of thousands of dollars in bets against the Chicago White Sox during the 1919 World Series. (BlackBetsy.com)

Sox, to the effect that Eddie Cicotte, the star pitcher of the Sox, had been "fixed" by a gambling syndicate to throw games, and even that the series in its entirety had been cooked up. ... Clear-thinking people will give little credence to these rumors.³

With this head-in-the-sand attitude, common for the non-Pittsburgh press as well, investigations were unlikely.

The most credible, detailed story of Pittsburgh's involvement appeared in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* on September 26, 1920. Datelined Pittsburgh, it claimed that local gamblers admitted to winning "several hundred thousand dollars" on the series. The gamblers wouldn't give their names, fearing they would be subpoenaed by the grand jury if they did.

The gamblers said that Abe Attell had placed the bribe money with Chick Gandil. They claimed that Chick Gandil, Happy Felsch, Lefty Williams, and Eddie Cicotte, four players known now as guilty, had been fixed. The gamblers held off on betting each game until they got the green light

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from Attell. The ebb and flow of the betting, especially the plunging whenever Cicotte pitched, made it evident to all that “something crooked” was going on.

While no names were given in the story, the story gave details clearly referring to actual people. “One prominent gambler,” who was broke a week prior to the Series, suddenly appeared two days prior to the Series with a \$25,000 certified check, which he bet on the Reds. He cleaned up \$60,000. A “prominent 5th Avenue gambler” noted that Attell was well known in Pittsburgh. He noted that the ex-manager of Monte Attell, Abe’s boxing brother, owned a café in Pittsburgh, and was said to be “well-known in sporting [gambling] circles.”⁴

It seems probable that Abe Attell worked through trusted buddies in Pittsburgh. The café owner and ex-manager named in the *Inquirer* article can be identified as David L. Gorback, a café and hotel owner whose café had been closed due to gambling. Another local with strong connections to the Attells was Isaac “Ike” Simon. Former city councilman and gambler Simon ran the National Athletic Club, and had promoted several of Abe and Monte Attell’s fights.

While there is no direct evidence Gorback and Simon were Attell’s Pittsburgh “point men” for the city’s gambling community, they are the two most likely candidates.⁵

The “Pittsburgh connection” had surfaced several days prior to the *Inquirer* article. On September 23, 1920, New York Giants pitcher Rube Benton testified to the Black Sox grand jury that his close friend, Cincinnati “betting commissioner” Phil Hahn, told him the World Series had been fixed.

He said that the deal to fix players to throw the series had been engineered by a syndicate of gamblers from Pittsburgh, for whom he worked in Cincinnati as betting commissioner.

He said certain players on the White Sox had visited Pittsburgh before the series was played and made arrangements to throw the games for a price. He said that the players demanded \$100,000 ...

According to Benton, Hahn named four of the players — Eddie Cicotte, Claude Williams, Chick Gandil and Happy Felsch — the same four as the Pittsburgh gambler identified. Benton added that he was “sure” Eddie Cicotte could name the head of this Pittsburgh syndicate.⁶

Benton’s information included the exact amount



**Dave
Gorback**



**Ike
Simon**



**Tommy
Gilchrist**



**Harry
Rowand**

(\$100,000) and the names of four of the known Black Sox-ers. It is clear he had accurate “insider” information. Thus, his mention of Pittsburgh must be given credence.

Although Phil Hahn vociferously denied Benton’s charges, Hahn made an obvious candidate for arranging a Cincinnati-Pittsburgh fix. He was a former minor-league ballplayer, a close friend of Benton and other major leaguers, a known bookmaker. A Pittsburgh native, he had close ties to the gambling community there.⁷

However, Benton’s testimony was, at best, secondhand — and from a source of doubtful credibility. None of the fix leaders ever mentioned a visit to Pittsburgh, and there’s no other evidence that any Pittsburgh gambler wagered — or even possessed — the “hundred thousand dollars” needed to pull off such a fix. The suggestion is that Benton (or Hahn, or both) conflated the actual New York fix deal, with Pittsburgh gamblers participating in this New York-based fix.

Benton’s testimony, however, ignited a nationwide firestorm. For several days — until the Billy Maharg revelations about Arnold Rothstein — the focus was as much on Pittsburgh gamblers as it was on New York gamblers. And that focus made some sense, to those “in the know.”

Pittsburgh “enjoyed” a nationwide reputation as a center of baseball bookmaking, with the local police and courts looking the other way. In 1921 the Methodist Church declared the Steel City “the greatest center of baseball pool gambling in the United States.” That same year, just prior to the Black Sox trial, baseball Commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis flayed the Pittsburgh police and courts for not enforcing the laws on baseball gambling. Famed sportswriter (and Black Sox exposé) Hugh Fullerton called Pittsburgh “a hotbed of gamblers ... which goes almost unmolested.” The biographers of Hal Chase asserted that “rumors all season [1919] pointed to a Pittsburgh syndicate ... as being the main engine for almost daily corruption in both leagues.”⁸

Eddie Cicotte’s grand jury confession verified this Pittsburgh connection. According to the *New York Tribune* of September 29, 1920, Cicotte testified that in early talks about the fix, “Abe Attell and three Pittsburgh gamblers agreed to back [Gandil].”⁹ Sleepy Bill Burns’ corroborated

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Cicotte's testimony at the Black Sox trial. Burns related how, in the Sinton Hotel the day of the Game Two, in a meeting with Attell, Bennett, and Maharg, "someone said Pittsburgh gamblers were in on the deal ..." and that those gamblers were having "a hard time getting the money down."¹⁰

Chicago businessman Harry Long, who had placed bets for Sport Sullivan, further corroborated the Pittsburgh connection, telling the *Chicago Tribune* that during their dealings Sullivan had made phone calls to "Pittsburgh, Boston, New York, and Cincinnati."¹¹

Picking up the news from Chicago, Allegheny County (Pittsburgh) District Attorney Harry H. Rowand vowed to call a grand jury in that city if evidence was developed by the Chicago grand jury. "If there is any evidence that Pittsburgh gamblers were implicated in the plot to have the games thrown ... I will leave no stone unturned in having the guilty parties brought to justice." As in other cities, these stirring vows never resulted in any indictments.¹²

A later report out of Pittsburgh suggested a lesser role in the fix. The *New York Times*, on September 30, 1920, published an interview with a "prominent gambler" from Pittsburgh, who claimed:

The first intimation that we had last year that there was any suspicion in regard to the games between the White Sox and the Reds was a visit here of two Philadelphia men, one by the name of Gilchrist, I believe, who placed bets amounting to \$5,000 for the first two games, taking Cincinnati for their end. As the White Sox at that time were the favorites in the betting this aroused suspicion here, and a great many of the betting fraternity placed their money the same way, and of course won out handsomely. However, I am sure that no one here did any fixing of players or knew anything about it.¹³

Much of this story can be verified. There WAS a Philadelphia gambler named Gilchrist, who IS known to have backed the Reds. Dr. Thomas "English Tommy" Gilchrist worked in the Philadelphia city coroner's office by day. But at night he bossed many of that city's casinos. He was a known associate of Arnold Rothstein, and was, according to the Philadelphia newspapers, one of only two gamblers in that city who bet on the Reds.¹⁴

Obviously, the quoted "gambler" might have denied knowledge of the fix because he wanted to cover up his

knowledge of the fix. Alternatively, he wasn't a member of the Pittsburgh fix ring.

Yet another Pittsburgh fix candidate surfaced in Harry Redmon's October 26, 1920 grand jury testimony. Redmon claimed that after Game Three, he and other gamblers tried to raise a fund to re-bribe the Black Sox, and that one of the gamblers they approached was "Stacey from Pittsburgh" (who declined).¹⁵

It is unclear whether the gambler declined due to honesty, or — more probable, as Redmon thought "Stacey" corrupt enough to join in — because he was already in on the fix and made his profit. The grand jury never explored the identity of this "Stacey;" understandably, as "Stacey" had turned Redmon down.¹⁶

The Pittsburgh newspapers never pursued this local angle.

Conclusion

There is no credible evidence that Pittsburgh gamblers instigated the fix, or that they had the resources to instigate such a fix. But there IS credible evidence, via the *Philadelphia Inquirer* article, that Pittsburgh gamblers joined in on the fix.

As the indicted St. Louis gamblers Carl Zork and Ben Franklin did, they heard a tip about a "sure thing," and jumped on it. The Rube Benton testimony reflects a garbled version of this reality. Unlike Carl Zork, the Pittsburgh gamblers were smart enough (or sober enough) not to have bragged about the fix in public. The fix proved so widespread, involving gamblers in Boston, New York, Des Moines, Chicago, Detroit, New Orleans, St. Louis, and Philadelphia (among other places), as to overwhelm the resources of the Cook County prosecutors. In that context, and in the absence of better evidence, it's easy to see why the prosecutors never actively pursued the Pittsburgh angle.

Photo credits

Dave Gorback: *Pittsburgh Gazette-Times*, August 1, 1923.

Ike Simon: *Pittsburgh Press*, January 21, 1909.

Tommy Gilchrist: 1919 U.S. Passport application.

Harry Rowand: *The Book of Prominent Pennsylvanians* (1913), p. 94.

Notes

1. *Collyer's Eye*, November 15, 1919 (emphasis added).

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2. *Pittsburgh Gazette-Times*, October 2, 1919. The day before, the *Gazette-Times* ran a wire service article on how the national odds had suddenly shifted from the Sox to the Reds. It attributed the shift to rumors about the health of Ed die Cicotte's arm.

3. *Pittsburgh Gazette-Times*, October 10, 1919. This is one of the first times (if not THE first time) Cicotte's name was mentioned in a newspaper article as a possible fixer.

4. *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 26, 1920. "5th Avenue" was Pittsburgh's swankiest street to live on.

5. For Gorback, see: *Pittsburgh Gazette-Times*, July 5, 1919, August 1, 1923; *Jewish Criterion*, August 3, 1923; Pennsylvania Death Certificate. For Simon, see: *Pittsburgh Press*, January 21, 1909, May 27, 1912, July 26, 1914; *Denver Post*, January 25, 1912; *Duluth News-Tribune*, February 25, 1912; *Pittsburgh Gazette-Times*, March 4, 1912, July 5, 1919; *Jewish Criterion*, October 16, 1942; World War I draft registration; Pennsylvania Death Certificate. In 1921 Simon was arrested for bribing Prohibition agents.

6. *Altoona Mirror*, September 24, 1920; *Kansas City Star*, September 24, 1920.

7. For Hahn, see my article in the [December 2014 edition](#) of the Black Sox Research Committee Newsletter.

8. *Richmond Times Dispatch*, June 12, 1921. *Duluth News-Tribune*, June 21, 1921. *Chicago Eagle*, August 25, 1917. Dewey and Acocella, *The Black Prince of Baseball*, cited in Gene Carney, *Burying the Black Sox: How Baseball's Cover-Up of the 1919 World Series Fix Almost Succeeded* (Washington, D.C., Potomac Books, 2006), 238. Art Rooney, owner of the Pittsburgh Steelers, co-owned a Pittsburgh casino in the late 1920s. Biographies of Rooney

(cf. Arthur J. Rooney, *Ruanaidh: The Story of Art Rooney and His Clan* (2008)) contain a rich overview of the widespread gambling in that city, and the public's acceptance of that gambling.

9. *New York Tribune*, September 29, 1920.

10. *Miami News*, July 9, 1921.

11. *Chicago Tribune*, October 22, 1920 (emphasis added). Sullivan's contacts in New York, Boston, and Cincinnati are well known.

12. *Washington Evening Star*, September 26, 1920.

13. *New York Times*, September 30, 1920.

14. For Gilchrist, who was later jailed for narcotics peddling, see the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 31, 1916; *New York Times*, December 29, 1928; *Brooklyn Standard Union*, July 6, 1931; *Harrisburg Telegraph*, September 4, 1930; World War I Draft Registration; 1919 Passport Application. The *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 1, 1920 reported that Gilchrist and "Red" McGoldrick were the only two prominent Philadelphia sportsmen to wager on the Reds. Gilchrist claimed that he bet the Reds "on form." The article also notes that agents of Attell and Sullivan mulcted local Philadelphia bettors of \$60,000. One prominent Philadelphia gambler, pool hall owner Charles Mosconi, heard the fix rumors and passed that information along to White Sox manager Kid Gleason. An aside: Mosconi (1868-1942) was the uncle of billiards legend Willie Mosconi.

15. Redmon testimony, Chicago History Museum Black Sox collection, Box 2.

16. This author thinks there was a transcript error here, and that the gambler referred to might be John A. Staley (1861-1928), a well-known Pittsburgh drug firm owner and high-roller "sportsman." Alternately, this "Stacey" might be of Cincinnati family of company owner James E. Stacey (1856-1931).

► CHAIRMAN

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this book apart is how it puts together more of the new and old pieces of the puzzle than ever before, advancing our knowledge of the 1919 White Sox and everyone involved with that infamous team using the best and most up-to-date research from the last 50 years.

If you want a good starting point to learn about the Black Sox Scandal and the fixing of the 1919 World Series, *Scandal on the South Side* is the book I'd pick up first.

It's a tremendous accomplishment for this committee and everyone who contributed to the book played a crucial role in its publication. A very special thanks must go out to associate editors Rick Huhn, Bill Nowlin, and Len Levin, who spent countless hours reading, editing, and fact-checking every single chapter and making the book better in every way.

This certainly doesn't mean we're finished learning anything new about the Black Sox Scandal — not by a long shot. You can find a half-dozen more original discoveries just by reading the rest of this newsletter, including a fascinating story by Bruce Allardice on Tris Speaker's little-known syndicated columns.

And there's still more new information to be mined from the groundbreaking Chicago History Museum collection and other sources that haven't been fully explored ... or that have yet to be found. After all, who knew a year ago that we would soon be able to [watch new film footage](#) from Game One of the 1919 World Series on YouTube?

It's discoveries like this that make a book like *Scandal on the South Side* possible — and that keep us searching for more.

For more information about SABR's Black Sox Scandal Research Committee, contact chairman Jacob Pomrenke at buckweaver@gmail.com.