



the Base Ball Player's Chronicle

April 2008

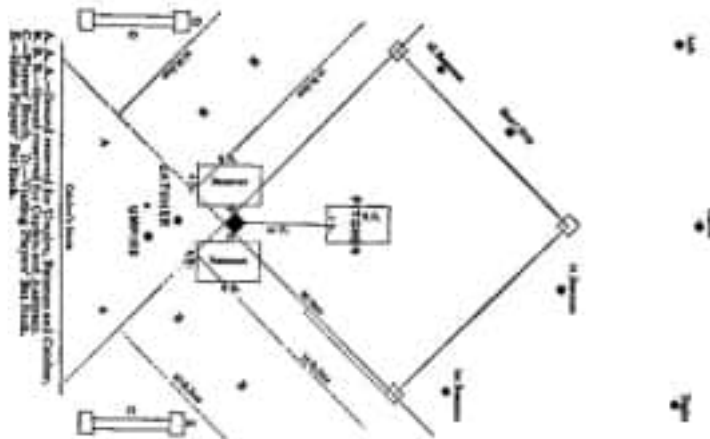
Newsletter of the Vintage Base Ball Association

Vol 08 No 2

FIELD EXAM

The following questions are selected from the quiz on correct field set-up presented by Eric Miklich of Bethpage Village at the VBBA convention held at Baltimore in January. Top score in the 31-item test was 13 (!), so good luck! Answers appear on page 3.

1. Prior to the first baseball convention in 1857, what was the "accepted" distance from Home Base to First Base?
2. What year did the rules first require Home Base to be 12 inches by 12 inches?
3. What was the first year that the rules required the Striker's Line to be marked by chalk?
4. How many times did the pitching distance change in the 1860's?
5. How many times did the pitching distance change in the 1870's?
6. What year's set of rules standardized the distance between all four corners of the infield to 30 yards?
7. According to the NABBP rules of 1857, where was Home Base was to be placed on the playing field?
8. Beginning with which year did the rules specify that First Base, Second Base and Third Bases to be 12 inches x 12 inches and how were the bases to be placed on the playing field?
9. What size did the NABBP rules require the size of the Pitcher's point(s) to be in 1857?
10. Which set of yearly rules initially required the first and third base Foul Ball Lines to be marked on the playing field and where were they marked to and from?
11. Which year's set of rules initially specified that the Foul Ball Lines were to be marked from the fence or wall behind Home Base to the "limits of the grounds?"



Field diagram from Spalding's Official Base Ball Guide 1886



Erik Miklich of Old Bethpage, NY

12. Which yearly rules first specified that Home Base was required to be placed entirely in foul ground and how was it positioned on the field?
13. What year did the rules first require the Batter's Box to be 6'x 4' and six inches from Home Base?
14. According to which set of rules were First and Third Bases required to be entirely in fair ground and how were they placed on the playing field?
15. What was the distance from the front Pitcher's Line to Home Base according to the 1857 NABBP rules?
16. Which years set of rules changed the distance from the front line of the Pitcher's Box to the center of Home Base to 50 feet?

SPOTLIGHT:

Jason Kladiva's podcast, *Vintage Base Ball This Week*, on 1859America.com, his website, began in February and is growing by leaps and bounds. In this issue's Spotlight Jason tells how it started and where it's going.

HOW DID YOU START IN VINTAGE BASE BALL?

I have always had an interest in history and baseball. I had been interpreting Civil War history at libraries, museums and historical villages since 1991 but but never really thought to put the two interests together until I was working as a historical interpreter at Fort Mackinac (MI) in 2001. Our Director of Interpretation came in with a reproduction uniform made by Paula Weaver. We were encouraged to read up on the 1880s Fort club and begin using it in our tours and presentations. After tossing the ball around a few times with visitors I knew I wanted to get on a club. Years later I was living in Rochester Hills, Michigan and saw a couple of Rochester Grangers matches and became addicted, but really didn't have the time to commit as a member of the club. In 2005, I relocated to northwest Indiana and joined up with the Deep River Grinders. I ended up playing with them and the Chicago Salmon that season. By the end of the 2006 season I began starting my own club--the South Shore Beacons—but wasn't able to get up enough interest to get the club afloat in 2007.

My former Grinder teammate, Dennis "The Younger" Duncan, was doing the same thing in Portage, Indiana and facing many of the same problems. Instead of having two weak clubs, we combined to form the Iron Diamonds BBC. I took the moniker "Gypsy" originally because of my Bohemian family history, but I have it now because I am willing to play for any club who will let me put on a jersey I just love this game and can't get enough.

WHERE DID THE IDEA FOR A PODCAST COME FROM?

I had dabbled in radio over the years as an occasional guest on a few shows, but nothing serious. My background is actually in television and film. I have worked as a consultant and actor on shows for the History Channel, A&E, PBS, the National Park Service and TNT. In the film realm I've worked for Paramount, Turner Pictures, and, most recently, Prairie Star Productions. I demonstrated wet-plate photography on the History Channel Investigating History series, starred as Agent Winslow in the award-winning Civil War film "Prairie Rose", and participated in last year's filming of "Steal From The Devil: The Billy Sunday Story" as Cap Anson.

Over this past winter I was approached by a member of a our local community radio station about doing a history radio show and got to thinking that it would be cool to have a strictly vintage base ball show—kind of a "SportsCenter" for the early game. I wasn't sure who would want



Dennis "The Younger" Duncan (left) and Jason "Gypsy" Kladiva broadcasting Vintage Base Ball This Week from WVLP studios in Valparaiso, Indiana.

to listen to it or if a radio station would even be interested. To test the waters I began podcasting "Vintage Base Ball This Week" nine weeks ago. Frankly, I was looking for an outlet to be able to do something relating to vintage base ball in the long off-season. As we go out and play each season, we play against the clubs in our area but didn't have a way to find out how the other clubs did throughout their season. News from clubs outside our area was unheard of.

WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT DOING IT?

I would have to say the best part of doing the show is hearing from clubs all over the United States. I had no clue there were clubs in California or Arizona before doing the show. Now I correspond with them every week. Whether they are correcting the way I pronounce their names, commenting on a particular segment, or sending in information on their club's events or scores, I just enjoy hearing from folks. It's nice being able to correspond with folks all over the country and to be their voice to the rest of the community.

WHAT WAS THE TOUGHEST START-UP PROBLEM?

When the podcast was just an idea I put a posting on a couple of the vbb message boards and sent out a few emails just to see if there would be any interest in such a project. The problems began when I received almost 1,000 emails in a 6 hour span - none of them being spam. It crashed Outlook and then my computer. It took me almost a full day to get it back running normally again. After that it was all systems go and trying to figure out the most cost effective way of putting up a weekly podcast. I had to find a podcast-specific host or the cost of the space and bandwidth would kill me before it got up and running. Then it was a matter of figuring out the software, getting a format together and doing a few practice runs.

Spotlight continued on page 3.

Spotlight continued from page 2.

The content of the show isn't real tough to get. The show is generally fed by emails from listeners all over the country who write in each week to share what is going on with their club. Eric Miklich at 19cbaseball.com has been a gem in supplying many of the "Do You Know the Rules?" segments. Dennis "The Younger" Duncan of the Iron Diamonds helped me come up with the "Who'll Have the Balls Contest" with his passion to get our club singing a club song. Ron "Irish" O'Laughlin of the Bay City Independents was one of the inspirations for the "25 Cent Fine of the Week". I am just the voice that puts it all together. It really is the entire vintage base ball community that makes "Vintage Base Ball This Week" tick.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT?

19cBaseBall.com, Davis Instruments and WVLP-Valparaiso have really supported "Vintage Base Ball This Week" in their own ways. Some days it might be technical support, others it might be getting information on a particular subject matter or helping the show to run more effectively. WVLP helped me to acquire software that would allow me to add music and sound effects to the broadcast and is now supplying air time for "Yesterday's News" - my weekly history show that will also include "Vintage Base Ball This Week".

Generally, the money end has been coming out of my pocket. I would love to get a few sponsors to help defray some of the costs in putting this together. I have a few new segments that will be available as more clubs begin their season, the broadcasts become longer, and the webspace used goes up for instance, "This week's scores have been brought to you by"

IT SEEMS TO BE GROWING IN PARTICIPATION. HOW MUCH, EXACTLY?

The listening audience has been growing each week. During the first month of the broadcast we grew to 254 regular downloaders or subscribers across the country. Last month we had 502. Plus there are those that download, but because of firewalls and other areas of security cannot be tracked. 1859america.com, the website for the podcast, had over 1600 hits last month.

GOALS FOR THE PODCAST?

My goals for the broadcast include getting another voice on (which should happen shortly) and going out to do interviews with clubs at their matches during the season. I will be doing phone interviews with clubs I can't get to in person. I will also be getting video up on the website for those clubs that can supply it.

Basically I would like to have a place where folks can come to visit and be able to keep up with our beloved game, learn something new and have a real connection to vintage base ball at any time--day or night--or during any season of the year. We

all know how lonely the off-season can be. Now we know there isn't an off season. If the snow states aren't playing, we always have the Arizona clubs to follow--and vice versa.

I would also like to organize temporary barnstorming clubs to go and play other clubs during their club's off season. Southern clubs can come north, play a few games, and see the sites up north. Northern clubs can go down south and do the same. We had a group of Colorado folks come to play in Indiana last year and it was really exciting for not only our club but also our community.

I believe the broadcast and the website have already brought us closer together. Now it's just a matter of working together to show the country and the world what the early game was like and that there is an alternative high-priced, chemically altered, baseball with a family setting.

FIELD EXAM ANSWERS

1. 30 paces. Probably closer to 75.25 feet between all bases.
2. 1868 NABBP.
3. 1870 NABBP.
4. None, it remained at 15 yards, measured from the front Pitcher's Line to Home Base.
5. None, it remained at 45 feet.
6. 1857 National Association of Base Ball Players.
7. Centered on the mark where the First and Third Base foul ball lines met. All bases were to be placed "on the four corners of a square."
8. 1857 NABBP. There was no specific position of the bases listed. It is accepted that First and Third Base were centered on the 30 yard mark of their respective Foul Ball Lines with one corner on the foul ball line. Second base was centered on the 30 yard mark, measured from First and Third, with one corner facing both First and Third Base.
9. Technically there was no specific dimensions given in the playing rules but the narrative that followed listed that they should be "not less than 9 inches in diameter. (Circumference is 28.26 inches)
10. 1861 NABBP; from Home Base to the First and Third Base corners, thirty yards.
11. 1878 NLPBBC
12. 1875 NAPBBP; The Pitcher's Point rested on the mark where the First and Third Base foul ball lines met.
13. 1885 NLPBBC, 1886 American Association of Base Ball Clubs.
14. 1887 NLPPBC and AABBC; One corner on the 30 yard mark of their respective Foul Ball Lines with one corner facing the pitcher.
**Distance from the mark of Home Base to the front of first base is 88 feet, 9 inches.
15. 15 yards.
16. This change was made for the 1881 NLPBBC season.

PETER MORRIS' LATEST REVIEWED

Award-winning author Peter Morris' latest work *But Didn't We Have Fun*, is here reviewed by Society for American Baseball Research member Tom Simpson.

When Alexander Cartwright presented his 20 rules of play to his ball-playing friends, he did not intend to initiate a new game to the fields of New York or young America. Instead, Cartwright sought only to bring more order and organization to a ball-playing group of young men soon to be known as the Knickerbockers. For them, playing rounders or one old cat was sufficient. Cartwright's rules were not readily accepted, for the young men assembled purely for the task of fun and outdoor exercise. However, in time, Cartwright prevailed and so began the origins of modern baseball.

Peter Morris, in an excellent, thoroughly researched and documented history, leads us into and through the infancy of baseball and then into and past the adolescent days of baseball's pioneer era. The 1843-1870 amateur period was initially accented with fun

and entertainment. But then, during this period, the game slowly, but surely, became contaminated by the encroaching elements of serious competition and professionalism. The paying and recruitment of ballplayers brought a serious side to the national game that stunted the earlier elements of leisure and pleasure. Baseball had now grown up. The pioneer era was over.

But Didn't We Have Fun contrasts itself with previous historical renderings on the origin of baseball. Peter Morris imbues the reader with the feeling of personal experience with this pioneer era. Who has not played with makeshift bats and bases? Or played with balls re-sewn or taped and softened through countless strikes of the bat? Or dealt with having to alter rules to adjust to limited playing space and, perhaps, having only six or seven participants? For the men and women of 1843-1870, baseball was synonymous with fun, friendship, and enjoyment. They did "have fun." But then, at picnics, on school grounds, in parks, or on vacant fields, don't we as well?

ACTIONS OF THE BOARD

Using the Internet location set up for the purpose by the Association's Information Technology Specialist Billy Pollifrone, the VBBA board held its first 2008 quarterly meeting on Sunday, April 13. Eight board members signed in: President Glenn Drinkwater, Vice President Ed Shuman, Treasurer Rich Arpi, Historian Bob Tholkes, and Trustees Dave Brooks, Ed Elmore, Drew Frady, and Scott Westgate. Trustees Helen DeGeatano and Billy Pollifrone and Secretary Erik Sjogren were absent.

Arpi reported a treasury balance of \$10,688.27, and reported that 2008 membership stands at 55 full members, 8 associate members, and 29 individual members. Membership was discussed, and a membership committee was created to initiate efforts to attract more members.

Historian Tholkes was allotted \$100 for scanning of materials into the association archive to be built on the website.

2010 CONFERENCE HOST CALL

The VBBA Board of Directors invites member clubs to submit offers to host the 2010 VBBA annual conference. Offers will be reviewed by the board at its July board meeting and a selected club or clubs requested to submit a full proposal by the board's meeting date in October. Clubs not able to submit offers by the July date may submit proposals, as long as they are received by the October deadline. The conference is held between January and March and in recent years has drawn from 50 to 75 registrants.

If your club is interested in hosting the conference, please send any questions to VBBA President Glenn Drinkwater at vbbapresident@vbba.org.

Trustee Brooks, planner for the 2009 annual conference in Cincinnati, announced that the convention committee selected March 28-29 as the dates for the conference. The board approved.

On other annual conference business, the board voted to solicit offers from member clubs to host the 2010 conference, with final site selection scheduled for the October board meeting.

Plans to amend the procedures adopted at the 2008 conference in Baltimore for the election of officers are proceeding. Those procedures, as inserted into the new constitution adopted at Baltimore, now call for elections via mail vote prior to the annual conference. The board voted at a special meeting in February to revert to electing officers at the annual conference, with the addition of a mail ballot to the procedure. Because membership approval is required for any constitutional amendments, President Drinkwater announced will form a task force to draft a proposal to send by email to the membership.

*The 2009 VBBA Convention will held on
March 28-29 in Cincinnati, Ohio.*

*At time of publication, membership stands
at 55 full and 8 associate clubs plus 29
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