

VINTAGE BALL—THEN & NOW, an editorial

The headline of this article espouses the complete philosophy of this editor for this newsletter. Each issue of The Base Ball Player's Chronicle will try to bring you news of yore and what's going on today.

This issue has a profile of a famous early enthusiast of the game—Henry Chadwick. We also have a profile of a modern day enthusiast—Bill Dieckmann, one of the new VBBA board members. There is information about leagues on both coasts. Reviews of equipment used in New England has being copied from another league's web site.

This issue of the newsletter and the first one for this year had reports of recent matches. There is a profile of a great team from the past in this issue, reprinted from a sporting journal from the past. We have some interesting comments about rules interpretation. And there is a rant from the editor about the use of the term 'cranks'.

We also have an article about the Massachusetts game, notices of upcoming events, and quick profiles of some new clubs now playing the game we love. There is another item related to Henry Chadwick, too. He edited many rule books during the early days and filled the pages with his own wisdom. In one—

or more—he has written advice on how to play a position. We have reprinted what Chadwick wrote for first basemen.

In all we have about 12 pages of content for you to enjoy. I think it satisfies the editorial philosophy mentioned above.

Future issues will depend on you the reader and this is my challenge to you. As you read this newsletter, think about what you would like to see in future issues of the VBBA newsletter. Can you provide a club profile? Do you have a favorite old time player you want profiled? If you have access to old newspapers, is there something you think others would enjoy? Do you have an opinion about how we play the game?

Most of the content of this newsletter has come from those interested in vintage base ball. It needs input from you too. Please send your ideas and articles to the editor for consideration for the next newsletter.

Thanks to all who provided content for this issue. And thanks to you who will send things for the next issue.

Dave Brooks

To contact me, send email to:

dbigdogbrooks@brecnet.com

DATE FOR 2010 VBBA CONFERENCE

A recent communication from Jim Fisher of the Welkin Base Ball Club:

Join us in Port Huron for the 2010 annual VBBA conference. Port Huron is in the heart of the Blue Water area. Located on Lake Huron, the Saint Clair River and the Black River, Port Huron is a water lover's paradise. Port Huron is also an international city, linked to Canada by the Blue Water Bridge.

The conference will be held in the Thomas Edison Inn situated at the mouth of the Saint Clair River and the foot of the Blue Water Bridge. The beautiful Tudor style inn is named for one of Port Huron's most prominent historical residents, Thomas Alva Edison.

The Welkin Base Ball Club of Port Huron is proud to be the host of the 2010 VBBA conference and we look forward to seeing you in Port Huron March 27-31, 2010.

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Henry Chadwick: Father of Base Ball, Champion of Sportsmanship

By Jim Tootle,
Ohio Village Muffins

The past year marks the centennial of the passing of Henry Chadwick, widely known in his time as "The Father of Baseball." Mr. Chadwick was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1938, before the building in Cooperstown was opened. The Hall of Fame provides this summary of his career and contributions:

A pioneer of early baseball, Henry Chadwick influenced the game by wielding a pen, not a bat. A renowned journalist, he developed the modern box score, introduced statistics such as batting average and ERA, wrote numerous instructional manuals on the game, and edited multiple baseball guides. He was an influential member of baseball's early rules committees. His tireless work and devoted love for the game greatly aided in popularizing baseball during its infancy.

Mr. Chadwick was a prolific writer and passionate advocate of the game, producing an enormous body of published work in which he endeavored to elevate base ball from a mere game to an

American institution. In addition to writing about the rules and "points of play," he consistently promoted sportsmanship, gentlemanly behavior, and the exhibition of good character and good manners by both players and spectators.

An article in the *New York Clipper* 1863 reporting on an 1863 match between the Atlantic Club of Brooklyn and the Eureka Club of Newark provides a clear example of his desire to see base ball not only as it was, but as it ought to be.

Mr. Culyer ably discharged the duties of Umpire, his decisions in every instance being correct as far as we noticed. We would suggest to the Eureka's that no matter how erroneous they may think any decision of the Umpire to be, they keep their opinion to themselves, and not give their expression in the manner some of them did in the case of the putting out of Pennington at home base. ... We are determined to stand by all Umpires.... There is but one rule to abide by in the matter and that rule is, to silently acquiesce in every decision an Umpire may make, be it right or wrong, and a first-class club

will in the future not countenance any other line of conduct by its members.

Another 1863 game, this one labeled "an exciting contest" between the Atlantics and the Mutuels brought more commentary from Mr. Chadwick in the *Clipper*. He was troubled by the growing problems of poor sportsmanship, over-emphasis on winning, and gambling. "The discreditable scenes that took place toward the close of the game lead us to sincerely hope that this will be the last season that any of these championship games are played," he wrote, urging that "matches for the championship, together with the title of champion, be entirely done away with." He then pointed out the disadvantages of over-competitive championship contests.

They lead to the alienation of clubs from one another that have been fast friends; they create a feeling of rivalry that leads to endless disputes;...and above all they are the means of affording hearty encouragement to that spirit of gambling that knows neither honor, truth, or justice in its efforts to obtain success.

Chadwick, continued

Calling for better sportsmanship for the long-term good of the game, Mr. Chadwick was critical of the behavior of players and spectators who placed too much value on winning by any means. He reminded his readers that "a creditable victory abides only with that party who, in winning the match, have marked their play as much by their courtesy of demeanor, liberality of action, and display of good humor, as by their [playing] skill...and this rule applies with equal force to the losing party for the nine who gracefully and honorably submit to a fair defeat, get rid of half its sting, besides meriting as much credit for their moral victory as their opponents for the physical one."

While players of various sports in modern times too often take athletic competition in the opposite direction Mr. Chadwick recommended, the sport of Vintage Base Ball, to its great credit, has maintained the gentlemanly traditions he advocated. If he could return and witness a vintage match today, he would no doubt be pleased to see the players "silently acquiesce in every decision an Umpire may

make." He would see both teams conducting themselves in the manner of a "first-class club," accepting winning and losing "gracefully and honorably." After the match, he would see the camaraderie of the game's early years on display as words of commendation, sincere handshakes, and cheers are exchanged. Perhaps joining the two teams for post-match refreshments, he would see the participants act as "fast friends," bound by their common brotherhood in the base ball fraternity, and he would be pleased to know that his legacy of good sportsmanship is being continued a century after his passing.

Member Profiles wanted for future issues of the VBBA Newsletter. Nominate someone you want to know more about.

This issue of the VBBA Newsletter features a profile of one of the new board members of the VBBA, Bill "Pic" Dieckmann, of the Cincinnati Vintage Base Ball Club. Look for this VBBA member profile in these pages.

CRANKS

Cranks. Do you know what a crank is? How many times have you seen or heard that "spectators were called 'cranks' at old time ball games". This is written on many game handouts. It appears on many web sites. And it comes out of the mouths of many a vintage ball player. But is it true? Have you seen this term used in newspapers or letters or magazines of the vintage period? If so, would you please share that information? It would be great to confirm that this is a valid term. Several long time vintage players have told me that "crank" was not really used back then. So then it becomes questionable in my mind if this is valid terminology. What do you think? If "crank" is not something that was said back then, should we use it now? Has it already fallen into such wide spread use that it has achieved validity? What is the right thing to do about talking with spectators? Should we use terms that sound good? Or should we try to be completely historically correct? Portraying the game correctly is part of playing the vintage game just as much as hitting the ball and making your second, or making that great diving catch on a foul tick, or throwing out a runner at the second base as he tries to steal.

What do you think? Please send your comments. And remember – Respect the Game!

Dave Brooks

Submit an article to the VBBA Newsletter and spread the word about the your favorite topic.

THE PROVIDENCE BASE-BALL CLUB

HARPER'S WEEKLY, pg. 621. September 30, 1882

Foremost among the League clubs is the Providence Base-ball Club of Providence, Rhode Island, the "Grays," as they generally term themselves. This club was formed in 1878, won the League championship the following year, and has run the closest kind of race with the Chicago Club for the same honor this year. During the early part of the season, and until the middle of the present month, the Providence men headed the list of League clubs, and were deemed certain winners of the pennant of 1882; but three brilliant victories scored by the Chicago team week before last placed the two clubs side by side, each having then won forty-nine of their eighty-four games. The membership of the Providence club is as follows: HENRY B. WINSHIP, President; HARRY WRIGHT, manager; CHARLES RADBOURN and J. M. WARD, pitchers and right fielders; B. GILLIGAN and A. NAVA, catchers; JOSEPH START, first-base man; JOHN FARRELL, second-base man; JEREMIAH DENNY, third-base man; THOMAS YORK, left fielder; PAUL A. HINES, center fielder; and GEORGE WRIGHT, shortstop. Of this strong team the last mentioned, GEORGE WRIGHT, is probably the best known and the most brilliant player. He is a man of thirty-five years of age, and has been a base-ball player for the past twenty years. Born in Harlem, he played with many of the amateur clubs of this city and vicinity from 1862 until 1867, when he joined the Nationals of Washington. In 1869 he played with the Cincinnati Red Stockings, and shared with them the victories of that famous season. In 1871 he joined the Boston Club, and re-

mained with them until 1879, when he joined the Providence Club, with which he has since been identified. Mr. HARRY WRIGHT, brother of GEORGE, has devoted himself to the management of base-ball clubs rather than do active work in the field, and has met with such signal success in this department that his name is almost uniformly associated with victory and championship pennants. For ten seasons he managed the Boston Club, and before that the Cincinnati Red Stockings. Of the two pitchers, "JOHNNY" WARD is one of the most puzzling in the business, and has been with the Providence Club from their first season. RADBOURN, who is also a capital man in the place, has just finished his second season with the team. NAVA won an enviable reputation on the Pacific coast as a catcher before he was invited, at the opening of the present season, to join this club. His alternate, GILLIGAN, has shown himself to be a good man by serving for two years in his present position. In the field are three men who have retained their respective positions since the formation of the club—JOHN WARD, who acts as right fielder when not pitching, THOMAS YORK, who is a Brooklyn man, and PAUL A. HINES, who was one of the crack players of the Chicago nine from 1874 until 1878. JOSEPH START is another Brooklynite, and began playing in 1862 with the Atlantics. For twenty years he has been first-base man, and always of a crack club. He is known as "Old Reliable," and well deserves the sobriquet.

JOHN FARRELL, second-base man, is one of the best general players of the club, and has, during his comparatively short career of seven years, furnished some wonderful examples of fine play. JEREMIAH DENNY, like NAVA, is better known on the Pacific coast than in the East, but is rapidly gaining a fine reputation as a third-base man.

JOIN THE VBBA

Individuals - join for just \$10 per year!

Clubs - Full membership for only \$50 per year; Associates for \$35 per year.

**See web site for details:
www.vbba.org**

College baseball 150th
anniversary, from the Muffin
Tin, newsletter of Ohio Muffins

The 150th anniversary of college baseball was celebrated in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Williams College and Amhurst played the first college game in 1859. Alumni from each school played a vintage game (no gloves) using 1859 rules against each other. Here is a link to the game:
<http://capitalnews9.com/content/headlines/138643/pittsfield-pitches-vintage-game/Default.aspx>

This equipment review was provided through the kindness of Patrick Reilly, the administrator of the NEVBBL web site – check it out <http://www.newenglandvintagebaseball.com/>.

Catcher's glove review

By Administrator | April 19, 2009

The Olneyville Cadets tried out a new catcher's glove (new to us) on Saturday in a game against the Providence Grays. The glove is made by the [Vintage Base Ball Factory \(vbbf.com\)](http://www.vbbf.com) and costs \$65.

Right out of the box the glove seemed far too small to be effective in vintage games. The extra large size is only slightly bigger than the "Foxy Irwin" model glove that the VBBF has been making for several years. That said, the padding in this model sets it far apart from the fielder's glove. The small size of the glove combined with the thicker padding made it almost impossible to catch a ball with one hand during our initial test, but surprisingly the glove broke in quickly and by the end of the first game of catch, we were able to secure most throws with just the glove hand.

Game trial: Before warmups it became obvious that due to the size of the glove, the [GloveMate](#) that we usually use inside other models would not fit inside the VBBF glove. Unless you have extremely small hands, you probably won't be able to fit anything other than your hand in there. That said, the pad-

ding in the glove itself is sufficient enough to soften the blow of a decent fastball. During the game, our catcher, Vinnie Torilli used the glove for the first time to catch Jesse Lee, one of the harder throwers in NEVB. Jesse's fastball was consistently around 75mph and Vinnie was able to block or catch most of them cleanly. Though anyone who has caught an inning of Vintage Baseball knows, your hands are going to hurt during and after every game, the VBBF glove certainly dulled the pain and made our catcher a little more comfortable behind the plate.

The catcher's glove has always been a point of contention in Vintage Baseball. Complete accuracy in glove design would probably cause a ton of injuries, but using late 1890s style "pancake" mitts changes the entire complexion of the game. The catcher's hands may be a little safer, but the pitching speeds get a lot higher, leading to the possibility of more injuries elsewhere, not to mention the relative absence of passed balls which creates a kind of artificial version of 1880s baseball.

We think the VBBF glove satisfies most of the safety concerns while maintaining some level of historical accuracy, and that's a good thing.

Pros

- Thick padding.
- Decent price (\$65), compared to [Akadema gloves](#) and many on eBay.
- Seems to be very durable.
- Closer to being historically accurate than anything we've seen as yet.
- Saves the trouble of buying old

mitts on eBay that will deteriorate in just a few games.

Cons

- Smallish size isn't ideal if you have big hands.
- The "webbing" is historically inaccurate, silly looking and serves no obvious purpose, we just cut it out with no problem.

This posting is not meant to be an advertisement for VBBF. We just thought that since the catcher's glove is always a topic of conversation at vintage games, we'd give you our opinion on one that we've recently tried.

Rating:  (3 out of 4)

Base stuffing

Tom Hoffman, from the Providence Grays mentioned in an earlier post that stuffing your bases with Excelsior, or wood wool is a good idea because it doesn't fall out of the bags when you move them, and it's lighter and makes less of a mess than dirt. We've been using dirt for years and it's a huge pain.

More information about this topic at <http://www.newenglandvintagebaseball.com/>

WHAT SHOES DO YOU WEAR?

We try to portray a historical period when we dress for a vintage match. But footwear can be a problem. Some wear modern baseball shoes when on the field. Off field (for parades or other non-game events) some of us wear high top lace-up leather shoes. Do you find this satisfactory? Would you rather have shoes that look right? How can we get footwear that looks period appropriate? Please let me know what you think about our footwear and looking like we come from way back then. Dave Brooks

PLAYING YOUR POSITION – advice from days of yore.

From The Base-Ball Guide for 1869 (The Revised Rules of the Game, with an Explanatory Appendix to Each Rule, Together with Instructions for Young Players and Hints to Professionals)

Edited by Henry Chadwick

Published by Robert M. De Witt, Publisher, New York, page 40. The text is as follows:

THE FIRST BASEMAN should be a good general fielder, a sure judge and catcher of balls batted high or on a line; posted on the points of the game, and not afraid of the ball when thrown swiftly, high or low. He should play about ten or twelve feet back of his base, and near the “foul” line, so that he could readily field the ball when knocked “foul,” or take possession of the base when the ball is forced to any other portion of the field. In the last-mentioned case he should post himself with one foot on the base, and be in readiness to receive the ball if thrown to him, for the purpose of putting out the striker. He should not hold the ball longer than was necessary to do so, but should immediately pass it to the pitcher or to the player at any of the bases where it could be of service in disposing of his adversaries. The first baseman should never “hug” the base, as playing continually on the base is expressively termed, but should play the base so that if the ball is thrown to him should happen to be “wild” or “wide,” he could place himself so as to recover it before it had gone too far to prove damaging to his

side. The player at first base should study the style of his opponents’s playing, especially as to batting and running. If a long batter be at the bat, the first baseman ought not play so close to his base as if the batter were one who batted always to the in-field; but he should be on the lookout for mishaps, as long batters sometimes make short hits, and he should move around so that he could assist the fielding of the ball in from the long field. If the ball from the outfield be thrown in on a long throw to the second baseman, the first baseman should play so as to “back up” the second baseman in case the ball should pass or be missed by the latter.

This description of what the first baseman is supposed to do seems much like what I would do when playing first. I may not back up second unless the runner is definitely going to second, otherwise my base would be unprotected. And as a 1869 description of how to play, Chadwick suggests moving “ten to twelve feet back of his base” before the ball is struck. Many teams in my area generally allow the basemen to play no more than two steps from the base. Is this common ground rule out of line with how the game was really played back then? Does your team allow the fielder to move freely on the field? Should there be any restriction on where the fielders position themselves? **Your comments are appreciated.**

Dave Brooks

NATIONAL LEAGUE FORMED

February 2, 1876, New York – At a meeting at the Grand Central Hotel...the results is a new league – the National League of Professional Baseball Clubs. The eight-team circuit will consist of the Boston Red Stockings managed by Harry Wright, the Chicago White Stockings managed by Albert G. Spalding, the Cincinnati Redlegs managed by Charles H. Gould, the Hartford Dark Blues managed by Robert V. Ferguson, the Louisville Grays managed by John C. Chapman, the Philadelphia Athletics managed by Alfred H. Wright, the Brooklyn Mutuals of New York managed by William H. Cammeyer, and the St. Louis Brown Stockings, or Browns managed by S. Mason Graffen. Morgan Bulkeley of Hartford is elected President and Nicholas E. Young, secretary.

The Owners agree to play a 70 game schedule between April 22 and October 21 of this year; a pennant worth at least \$100 will be awarded. Tickets will be 50 cents. Rules include a pitcher’s mound must be 45 feet from home plate; a pitcher’s arm must not go above his waist; a runner may return to base safely on a foul and run on a foul caught on the fly; a ball that is hit fair and rolls foul will be foul. There is to be no liquor at games, no betting by players, and written contracts with no raiding of other teams rosters.

Burt Solomon, THE BASEBALL TIMELINE, pg. 35

VINTAGE BASE BALL COAST TO COAST

GOLD COUNTRY VINTAGE BASE BALL

"The way the game was meant to be played!" has special meaning when teams of Gold Country Vintage Base Ball get together. It's more than the old-fashioned uniforms that players wear from the 1880s; it's the spirit, sportsmanship, etiquette -and, yes, some of the outlandishness that characterized the country and the game at that time. Gold Country Vintage base ball players (or ballists, as they were called in the 1880s) will again play a game at the Stockton Ports Minor League Ball Park in June.

The field is 'regulation' baseball, 90-foot bases, but with a pitcher's box a few feet in front of where today's mound is found. The gloves are little more than leather garden gloves, with no webbing, the ball looks like today's sphere but a little lighter and softer (and softens up as the game goes on) and bats are thick, wooden timbers that can weigh over 40 ounces. The catcher's equipment does not include shin guards and the glove for this position (known as the 'behind') is webless and small. Pitching speed is dictated typically by how much pain the 'behind' can absorb behind the plate. However, most hurlers rely on quick pitches, breaking stuff and pitching from inside the box, one side to the other.

Because there is no infield fly rule, because runners can be called out for not hustling to or back to a base even after a walk or foul ball, because the hidden ball trick is an important strat-

egy and because the pitcher can balk to first, at will, the game is fast-paced and exciting. It is also a game where the umpire - although the sole arbitrator of the game - can also involve the players and even the fans (called 'cranks' in this period) in helping with the calls, under 'the gentlemen's rule'. Still, this did not stop cranks from shooting guns off in the air to distract fielders during the game; this is one part of 1880s baseball not 'relived'.

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Mid Atlantic Vintage Base Ball League's Inaugural Season

Seven clubs from the Mid Atlantic region of the east coast formed over the Winter what is now called the Mid Atlantic Vintage Base Ball League. In just 4 short seasons, the region has exploded with many clubs popping up from Southern Virginia to New Jersey. The league grew out of the current Maryland State Championship Series. As more clubs outside of Maryland wanted to play in a semi competitive format, there was a necessity for a league.

Starting small with 7 clubs in the first year helps with scheduling especially for new clubs that are just getting their feet off the ground. Each club gets to make up their own schedule with the only requirements being that you have to play each of the league members at least once and no more than 4 times. The club with the best winning percentage at the end of the season is declared the champion. Going along with the tradition that crowned champions in the 19th century, there is no league playoffs for

the championship (each match during the season is considered a "championship match". If you listen to the opening of MLB games, they will still say "Welcome to the National League Championship Season Match between the x and the x"

The charter clubs on the MAVBBL include: the Flemington Neshanock from NJ, the Elkton Eclipse, the Talbot Fair Plays, the Havre de Grace Dauntless, and the Chesapeake and Potomac BBC from Maryland, the Diamondstate BBC of Delaware, and the Williamsburg Pastimes from Virginia. To track the progress of the League you can go to <http://midatlanticvintagebaseballleague.wordpress.com> for schedules, results, standings, club websites, directions, and more.

The Maryland State Championship Series is still going strong now in its 3rd season. Each club plays the other clubs in home and home double headers. On August 30th all 4 clubs will meet at the Maryland State Fair for the State Championship Tournament. The four clubs play each other all season for seeding. On the 30th, the #1 seed will play the #4 seed and the #2 will play the #2. In 2007, the Talbot Fair Plays hosted the first tournament by virtue of winning the regular season crown. Elkton downed Chesapeake & Potomac and then went on to defeat the Fair Plays for the first title. In 2008, Elkton hosted the championship after it won the regular season crown and then successfully defended its crown in the tournament. Havre de Grace joins the trio this year in state play.

RULES FORUM

(Editor's note: The paragraph below was in the last issue:

Some clubs play by the rules of 1860. Others use the rules of 1888 to play. My club uses 1869 rules. As a frequent visitor to the home grounds of other clubs, I am subjected to many rules, and some of them confuse me. How did the rule changes evolve? Is there a good history of why the rules changed?

Where can an interested person go to learn the reasons? If you have any suggestions about how to clear the air about a rule, please share. Dave Brooks

Bob Tholkes responded with this comment:

You inquired about sources for the reasons for rules, and for changes in the rules. Peter Morris's A Game of Inches isn't devoted to the topic, but often discusses why particular practices started. I think you would find some answers there. A good project for someone would be to take an existing list of year-to-year changes (Total Baseball or the list in Eric Miklich's site), and put together commentary for each.

As it happens, on June 27th I met a fellow from the St. Louis Unions, Dave "Beans" Heim. He has already done the first part of what Bob suggests, and printed a list of year to year changes. He has some copies he is willing to share. Contact him at dheim1@charter.net.

Ed Elmore also responded to the item in the previous newsletter. Ed writes:

You're question about the changing of rules caught my interest. Of course, there is no publication that addresses that question directly. Jim Dragon-

Send your comments about the "Ball in Tree" article and how this rule should be used when we play vintage matches

etti and I have spent thousands of hours doing research on the rules, reading through all the rules from 1845 to 1900 (a number of times), and all the notes and side comments and whatnot that go with the rules. We have followed the rules through their development, so I guess we know most of the reasoning behind the changes along the way. The answer to "why" for many of those questions would just be, "to keep the balance between the pitcher and batter", much like they have done in modern times, with changing the height of the mound, or changing the size of the strike zone, etc. I am sure we don't know all the reasons for rules being changed or modified, but we probably know most of them. If questions come up, give us a shot.

Ed 'Pigtail' Elmore

Bob Tholkes also sent an excerpt from a New York paper from 1859. Here is what Bob sent:

I'm sending this item from the *New York Sunday Mercury* for the newsletter, since it gives an informed contemporary judgment on a matter that is common for some clubs. The *Mercury* regularly answered correspondence from readers. ...The editor writing the responses likely is William Cauldwell, a prominent former player.

BALLS IN TREES

September 4, 1859 p. 5 col. 7 – correspondence

"CAZENOVIA, (N. Y.), Aug 29, 1859

To the Editors of the Sunday Mercury:

GENTLEMEN: Having noticed, in the Base Ball columns of your excellent paper, that you occasionally answer letters from those requesting in-

formation concerning this manly game, I take this opportunity to have you settle a little question that has arisen in our club (Cazenovia B. B. C.)—which, by the way, without any spirit of egotism or boasting, I can safely say to be a crack club, and can well compete with some of your city clubs. We are unfortunate in having a ground on which are a few trees, and which occasion us a great deal of trouble.

A ball was once batted, and it landed in a crotch of the tree. A number of the outside party climbed the tree, secured the ball, and throwing it down, it was also caught by one of the outside party.

Query, is the striker out?

The umpire decided it not out, because he considered it a dead ball, while the majority of players were of opinion that it was out according to Rule 23.

By giving us an answer, you would confer a great favor on your obedient servant,

R. N. E."

"The case presented by our correspondent is rather a peculiar one, and not one provided for in the Rules—in which 'trees' are not spoken of. At the Elysian Fields, Hoboken, balls are frequently knocked into the trees ; but they always come down of their own accord, and if caught before touching the ground, are considered 'fly catches', because, we presume, the trees 'have no business to be there'. If a ball should be lodged in the crotch of a tree, it would, if we were umpire, be decided a foul ball, or no ball ; and we think that, in the justice of the decision, all would coincide. It is true that Section 23 expressly states, that if the ball from the stroke of the bat is held 'under any other circumstances' than as enumerated in Section 22 (which refers to taking the ball from the hands of a party not in the game), and 'without having touched the ground more than once', the striker is out. Still, taking the ball from the crotch of a tree ought not to be considered very different from receiving the ball from the hands of a party not in the game ; the only difference being, that one is a 'nominated in the bond' and the other is not. It certainly was not a fair catch ; and our opinion is, that the umpire did right, in not deciding the striker out ; but he did wrong, if he did not make him strike over again."

THE MASSACHUSETTS GAME

Long before championship banners flew above Fenway Park, base ball had captured the hearts of sport minded Bostonians. 151 years ago, ten of the regions most popular teams gathered in Dedham to codify a set of rules to govern their matches. The Rules of the Massachusetts Game were adopted on May 13th, 1858 by the Massachusetts Association of Base Ball Players, and before the month was over, the first game employing the new rules was played.

In that game, the Winthrop Club of Holliston defeated the mighty Boston Olympics 100-27 before over 2000 people on Boston Common. The Boston Bee reported "The playing by the Holliston Club was by far the best ever seen in our city." Weekly games featuring the new rules became standard fare for the Common and other fields across the state. Yet, even at that early date, rumblings suggested the game would be short lived.

Reports of dissatisfaction with the new rules had appeared as early as at the Dedham convention. Mr. B.F. Guild, President of the

Boston TriMountain Club, stated that his team was obliged to withdraw from the Association as they preferred to play the New York game. The start of the Civil War caused most local sports activity to end. Players turned soldiers often played New York Rules in camp, and by the war's conclusion, the Massachusetts rules faded from view.

Today however, the game lives on. The Leatherstocking Club of Cooperstown, New York, and the Mudville Base Ball Club of Holliston continue to play the game. This past May, the 150th anniversary of the rules and their first playing was celebrated in a match on Boston Common. Teams from Holliston and Boston faced off, with the Mudville Base Ball Club defeating the Boston Colonials 46-40. Once again, the ancient field echoed with the sounds of its native game. Wooden posts were driven into the sacred ground forming a sixty foot square. The thrower readied himself thirty-five feet from the striker, who standing

equally distanced between first and home base, had but thirty feet to run to the first stake. With no foul territory, and no established baselines, a struck ball initiated a myriad of defensive possibilities, not the least of which was the rule allowing for the "soaking" of runners. Confusion and hilarity reigned.

As a concession to modern schedules, this year's game ended well before the scoring of one hundred tallies (as the rules required). But it did not end before the players and fans experienced the true joy that lay the foundation for Boston's love affair with the contemporary game.

The Ball once struck off,
Away flies the Boy
To the next destin'd Post
And then Home with Joy

Written by John
Shanahan of the Mudville
Nine

LETTERS:

Note from the editor: Readers, your comments and concerns will make this a better newsletter. Please send me yours.

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VBBA Member Profile— Bill Dieckmann

Bill Dieckmann, current President of the Cincinnati Base Ball Club (Red Stockings & Buckeyes), joined the Vintage Base Ball Association in 2002 and has attended all of the Association's conventions since. Many of you may know Bill by his nickname of "Pic". Bill is one of three new board members for the VBBA.

Bill Grew up in Cincinnati with his brother, Al. Al had always been a baseball researcher, and was especially fascinated with the early evolution of the game. He moved to Long Island, and one day went to Old Bethpage and saw 1860's base ball being played. Al had to get involved, and with his extensive knowledge he helped develop and improve the program.

In 1997 Al and his team, the Atlantics, went to Toledo area for the Sylvania Cup, but at the last moment came up short on players. Bill and his son, along with Al's good friend Larry Phillips and his son, made the trip to Toledo and were fitted with uniforms. Bill and the other boys from Cincinnati helped the Atlantics to a sweep of the tournament.

Bill joined the East Coast boys in 1998 for an unsuccessful defense their title in the Sylvania Cup. A month later he traveled to Old Bethpage for their first Vintage Base Ball Festival, and as a "sub", played 6 games with 6 different clubs in 2 days.

"By then I understood what Al had known all along - what a great recreational and social activity base ball was in its early years, and the character and camaraderie of the men who enjoy re-creating it today".

When Greg Rhodes formed the

Red Stockings in 2000, Bill was one of the first to "sign up" to play vintage base ball in Cincinnati.

Although not the researcher Al was, Bill is fascinated by the evolution of base ball from 1845 through the 1860's. Bill is proud to be a member of the VBBA rules and customs committee, whose goal is to provide information to members for the

REVOLVERS REPLACE HIGH SCHOOLERS, SIZZLE QUICKSTEPS.

Expecting to face the same youngsters who they entertained at the Dome on May 9, The SABR Nine traveled to windy Waconia on May 16 and instead found themselves facing current members of the town's adult baseball clubs, who administered the predictable sizzling, by a final tally of 30 aces to 7. Waconia organizer Mr. Gammell explained that the youngsters were at a school base ball event.

Messrs. Andregg, Arpi, Bengtssen, Buckland, Ernst, Lindsay, Luloff, Roether, Smith, and Tholkes represented the club, with Mr. Thornley as umpire and Mrs. Tholkes as scorer. The entire roster is to be congratulated for their plucky perseverance in the face of superior opposition; their unflagging efforts and good spirits earned them the applause of the hardy spectators, perhaps 10 in all, who braved the chilly, windy conditions, and the respect of their Waconian adversaries.

The visitors actually got off to a lead of five aces to three after the first two innings, but the Waconians thereafter got the hang of the 1860 game.

Mr. Roether tallied twice, struck

preservation of the integrity of the presentation of the vintage game.

"Vintage Base is truly a special activity. It is good exercise, and I have made many great friends and acquaintances; it is so much more than just playing the game. My family has been able to be involved and enjoy it also. The best thing Al ever did for me was introduce me to Vintage Base Ball".

loud line drives, and played commendably in the field. Messrs. Andregg, Arpi, Bengtssen, Buckland, and Smith made their ace one time each. Messr. Andregg and Arpi made their base four times to lead the club. The score:

WACONIA.

	R	O
Bonds, rf	3	5
Aaron, rf	4	3
Ruth, rf	4	3
Mays, rf	5	2
Griffey, rf	4	3
Sosa, rf	6	0
Robinson, rf	1	4
McGwire, rf	1	2
Killebrew, rf	2	5

QUICKSTEPS BBC.

	R	O
Smith, cf	1	3
Lindsay, lf	0	2
Tholkes, p	0	1
Roether, 2b	2	2
Buckland, 1b	1	4
Andregg, ss	1	1
Ernst, c	0	4
Arpi, p	1	3
Luloff, 3b	0	4
Bengtssen, rf	1	3

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Qsteps	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	0 - 7
Wac	1	2	4	5	4	0	10	3	1 - 30

Look! Upcoming events.

AUGUST, 2009

The 3rd Annual Washington DC 19th Century Base Ball Classic will take place August 1 and 2, 2009 on the Elipse in Washington DC. The fields are surrounded by the Washington Monument, the Jefferson Memorial, and the Lincoln Memorial. The Classic is the same time as the National SABR Convention which will be taking place in Washington that weekend. This no frills event brings in clubs from all over the country that typically would not play each other. Each club plays 4 matches over 2 days and has to umpire 2 other matches. Each club has to bring its own water and bases. The format of the tournament and schedule is determined by the number of participants and fields assigned by the DC Department of Recreation. Clubs already signed up for 2009 include: The Potomac BBC of Washington, The Elkton Eclipse, the Chesapeake Nine of Baltimore, the Havre de Grace Dauntless, the Talbot Fair Plays, the Diamond-state BBC of Delaware, the Flemington Neshanock, the Akron Black Stockings, the Clodbuster BBC, St Croix BBC, and the Williamsburg Pastimes.

OCTOBER, 2009

Huzzah Hoosier Pennant held Saturday, October 3, is hosted by the Village of Winona Blue Laws. This will be the fifth year for the festival. Nine clubs participated in 2005, ten clubs in 2006, twelve clubs in 2007, nine in 2008. There will be 16 clubs maximum. All clubs play three seven-inning matches in one day under 1858 rules with an entry fee of \$100 per club. No overnight stay required. With this semi-competitive format, a club must win at least 2 matches to qualify, then Tournament Champion is determined by an all-clubs vote from the pool of all qualified candidates (one vote cast per club). Club Awards are Huzzah Hoosier Pennant Tournament Champion Club and Crank's Choice Club. Individual competitions include: Billy Sunday Home to Home Speed Contest, Golden Arm Longest Throw, Heavy Lum-

ber Longest Strike, Dead-Eye Accuracy Throw, Chalk the Line Best Tally Keeper, and Square Deal Best Umpire.

FEBRUARY/MARCH, 2010

The Vintage Baseball World Series will be contested among many teams traveling to the Phoenix area. Surprise, Arizona will host this event at the same time as the Major League players begin their spring training games. The Arizona Territorial Vintage teams will work with local organizations to provide fields, lodging and special deals to teams willing to travel to Surprise for this early season event. Base ball teams traveled many miles in the early days of base ball. This event will give many teams a chance to emulate their early heritage.

2010 VBBA CONFERENCE

The Welkin Base Ball Club of Port Huron, Michigan is proud to be the host of the 2010 VBBA conference and they look forward to seeing you in Port Huron March 27-31, 2010 at the Thomas Edison Inn situated at the mouth of the Saint Clair River and the foot of the Blue Water Bridge.

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BOARD MEETING

The Board of Directors of the Vintage Base Ball Association meets four times a year. A report of the next meeting will be printed in the next issue of the newsletter.

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CLUB PROFILE

The next issue of the newsletter could contain profile of your club. Send your club information, history, and experiences to Dave Brooks and spread the word about your club. Is your club named for a team from the past? Are your players young, old or a mix? Where do you play your home matches? What rule set do you play? Why did your club choose that rule set?

NEW CLUBS

Vintage base ball has grown because men and women go through the effort of forming clubs and putting teams onto fields across North America. Thanks to all of you who have done this is the past. This year more new teams are forming. Please support the new teams in your area. Here are some more that are new:

Diamond State BBC

The Diamond State Base Ball Club is Delaware's first amateur base ball club. The club name, uniforms are base on those of the original Diamond State Base Ball Club, the pre-eminent club in Delaware, during its inaugural year of 1866. Their home matches are played at Fort Dupont State Park near Delaware City.

Havre de Grace Dauntless

The Dauntless Base Ball Club is inspired by two actual clubs that existed in Havre de Grace during the 1860s and 1870s; 'The Havres' and 'The Dauntless.' This will be the first vintage club in Harford County, Maryland and will join competitors who are already in existence along the East Coast. Their uniform is inspired by how firemen dressed, but instead of red, it is maroon

The Blue Ashlars

2008 marked the 200th anniversary of the establishment of the Grand Lodge of the Free and Accepted Masons of Ohio. To celebrate the bicentennial of the Masons a base ball team was formed named the Blue Ashlars and they played their first vintage match in 2008. This year they decided to continue playing and have scheduled matches with the Oxford Blues, the Champion City Reapers of Springfield and the Ohio Village Muffins. The Ashlars play their matches in the shadow of the Masonic Lodge in the Ohio Village, Columbus, Ohio.

Note: a definition from Wikipedia: "the smooth ashlar represents the dressed stone as used by the experienced stonemason, and is an allegory of the Freemason who, through education and diligence, has achieved enlightenment and who lives an up-standing life."

Please let me know of other clubs starting this year and how they are doing.
Dave Brooks

The Base Ball Player's Chronicle

The newsletter of the Vintage Base Ball Association

Edited by Dave Brooks

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Rules Forum

The Massachusetts Game

Old time teams: Providence Grays

VBBA Conference in 2010—date announced

New Clubs now playing

How to play first base, advice from Henry Chadwick

Upcoming events, 2009 & 2010

Equipment review: Catcher's glove; Stuffing for bases

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Terminology: "Cranks"

And more

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