



BASEBALL

Courier

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IN HOLLAND IT'S HONKBAL. by Ron Fraser.

Back in 1911, a teacher in Amsterdam, Mr. J.C.G. Grase, was looking for a sport to be played in the summer months. While travelling through the U.S.A., he saw such a summer sport being played — baseball. He introduced the game to his students the following spring and called it "honkbal". Some of the boys became quite interested in honkbal and decided to form two official teams. The first game played between these two teams was on March 16th., 1912.

During the First World War, Canadians interned in Holland played baseball against these teams, beating them by scores of 40 and 50 to nil. The Dutch players then realised that their game only resembled baseball. They had missed most of the fundamentals of the game.

The pioneers introduced the game to some of the leading soccer clubs as a summer sport. These clubs financed the necessary playing equipment. Slowly baseball grew to 200 players in 1930, but was played only in Amsterdam and Haarlem. In 1934, Holland played its first international game, playing Belgium on a soccer ground at Haarlem. This was the first of a series of games with Belgium, a tremendous interest has grown in the rivalry of these two small countries.

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At the outbreak of World War II there were 1500 players, and 30 clubs. During the war baseball was still played. Unable to import equipment, Dutch players were forced to make their own. Balls were made of cork.

In 1952, after forty years of struggling with the game, the Dutch Baseball Association, with 200 teams and a total of 3000 players, received the highest honour that can be given to a Dutch organisation. Her Majesty, Queen Juliana, allowed the addition of the word Royal to the name of the association.

The European Baseball Federation was founded by Italy, Spain, Belgium and France in 1954. Its main function was to organise European Baseball Championships. Unlike the other countries, Holland received no government funds for baseball. Therefore they were unable to play in these championships. In 1956, Holland and Germany joined the European Federation. Holland's entry into the Federation, doubled the total number of players within that organisation. Holland became European champions in 1956, and have held the title ever since.

The European Championships were held in Amsterdam in 1958. The opening ceremonies featured a relay, carrying a baseball from the place where the first game in Holland was played. The relay ended at the field, built especially for the Championships. These Championships in 1958 did much for baseball in Holland.

The first game of the Championships between Holland and Italy was to be televised over Holland's only TV station for an allotted two hours. Near the end of the two hours, with the game tied, the TV viewers began to call the station asking them to carry the game until the finish. Many of these people were seeing baseball for the first time and they liked what they saw. Holland won the game in twelve innings. More people began to come to the field to get a closer look at this strange game. Crowds of 10,000 and 12,000 came out to see their small country become baseball champions of Europe. At this time there were about 4,000 players in Holland. Now there are 7,500.

The players learn baseball from American books and, as a consequence, wrong conceptions arise through translation. The first American aid came in 1959 when Danny Litwhiler, Florida State University baseball coach who had been conducting clinics in Spain and Italy, stayed for a short time in Holland to work with the Dutch players.

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That year, Glenn Martin, baseball coach at Southern Illinois University, was also on hand to help improve baseball in Holland. Both of these trips were sponsored by the United States government.

Although there are now ten permanent diamonds in Holland most of the games are played on soccer grounds. The diamonds are located at Eindhoven, Utrecht, Amsterdam(3), Haarlem(2), Wassenaar and Rotterdam.

The Babe Ruth League programme was introduced in 1959 and has grown from five teams in its first year to seventy in 1962. Little League baseball is also played. An indication of the enthusiasm felt by the Dutch fans is the introduction of an award for "the Rookie of the Year". This award financed partly by public subscription, partly by a firm of sports-outfitters, carries with it an all-expenses paid trip to the U.S.A., with a stay of six weeks at the spring-training camp of a major-league club. Herman Beidschat, probably the best pitcher in Europe, was the first winner of this award. (This article has been reproduced from McGregor's Sportswave Publication.)

EDITORIAL

Baseball in Britain suffers acutely from a lack of publicity. A number of ideas have been put forward to overcome this problem. The National League plan of Don Smallwood and the All-Star games proposed by John Varnam are essentially attempts to secure such publicity.

The problem arises because of the relatively small number of teams. It has been suggested that the first consideration of baseball enthusiasts in Britain should be to strive to increase the number of teams playing, the publicity will automatically follow. One successful organiser actually uses the motto "quantity before quality".

An ideal method of gaining publicity would surely be to arrange a regular series of international games with Holland and Belgium. British teams have travelled to Holland to play. Why not invite Holland and Belgium to play against a national team in Britain?

There would be many difficulties to be overcome, but if the desire for such international fixtures was strong enough such difficulties could be surmounted.

Editor.

John Varnen takes TIME OUT.

The Smallwood Plan. Everybody interested in baseball in England must have one great ambition, to see a National League in operation here. None more so than Don Smallwood of the East Hull Aces, who next year, without financial backing, will attempt to launch a "national" league. I wish Don the best of luck, he will certainly need it.

Ignoring the sorest point of all, finances, has he the right to call the league "National" when he excludes from it the largest baseballing area in England. Don may be taking a parallel from the all-American "World Series".

From strictly a publicity angle this must be rated as "very dodgy". What national publicity can the league expect? Because let's face it, national publicity is a tremendous weapon that must be won over by the game, and Fleet Street has a job seeing further than the end of its nose sportswise.

Mr. Smallwood in my estimation is ahead of his time. It is too early to take such a gigantic step.

Firstly the prefix "American" must be erased. We must get the game accepted as a game, not as an "American" game. I applaud loudly the proposed National League's ruling excluding American servicemen from participation.

You may say the prefix is an advantage and cite the success of American bowling etc., as prime examples. But always remember anything with the "American" tag, that catches on here has always huge finances behind it.... we haven't.

Let us probe alternative routes to our "goal" that can include all areas. What about a three cornered "All-Star" competition, North, Midlands, South, run on the lines of our international football competition. This idea will take up just four Sundays on a home and away basis. If this becomes problematic why not make it just one fixture between each area. Who could complain about this set-up?

Stage these few games on prominent grounds, make these games a showpiece for our game. Advertise them, invite the press, have brass bands, celebrities, raffles, prizes, put absolutely everything into them.

Are the areas mentioned too vast to be condensed into one team? If so, why not let a different club side represent its area on each occasion. As long as a reasonable show is put on it shouldn't matter. Make these All-Star games as important

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as All-Star games in the majors. Then progress from there.

In conclusion, I salute Don Smallwood who has backed his pipe-dreams with action. Although I don't fully agree with his actions, I hope Don proves me wrong, because nobody would be more pleased than I would to see the Smallwood Plan National League become a raging success. For me the magic formula is "money", which in turn would be bound to promote the much needed publicity.

THE GLOBAL SERIES

The 4th. Global Series will be held in Kansas City in September. Eight nations will compete, namely the U.S.A., Japan, Mexico, Canada, Australia, The Philippines, Holland, and one South American country. This non-professional series will be played on the double elimination system.

UNDER THE BIG TOP

Stanley Musial has signed his 22nd. contract with the Cardinals. Only three other players have played for 22 seasons with one major league club. They were Cap. Anson (Chicago N.L. 1876-97), Ty Cobb (Detroit 1905-26), and Mel Ott (N.Y. N.L. 1926-47). Musial will receive 65,000 dollars, which although far below his 1959 peak of 100,000 is more than any other Cardinal player has ever been paid. Rogers Hornsby the greatest of all righthanded batters died on January 5th. His lifetime batting average of .358 was second only to Ty Cobb's .367 mark. In his first full-time season as a manager, 1926; he led the Cardinals to their first pennant win, and then beat the Yankees in the World Series. He played for the Cardinals, Giants, Braves, Cubs, and Browns. He managed the Cardinals, Braves, Cubs, Browns (twice) and Reds.

The Official Playing Rules Committee, on January 26th. voted to restore the strike zone to its pre-1950 dimensions, "the area over the plate between the top of the batter's shoulders and his knees when he assumes his natural stance".

The Los Angeles Dodgers last year set up an all-time attendance record in their first year in their new park, total attendance was 2,755,184.

The Yankees also set up a new attendance record. They drew more than 2,200,000 on the road.

HONKBAL...PALLA BASE... BEISBOL

Baseball has been played in Italy since 1946. Last season the Italian Baseball Federation had 89 affiliated clubs with a total of 135 teams. About 2,000 players were registered in 1962.

Youth baseball programmes operated in Italy are Little League, Babe Ruth League, and Pony League. The senior competition is a national league divided into three divisions, A, B and C. The winner of division A is recognised as Italian Champion.

Italy is a founder member of the European Baseball Federation, and won the first of the European Championships, held in 1954 at Antwerp.

The Spanish Baseball Federation was organised in 1944, although the game had been played in the Barcelona area since 1929. The federation now has 48 clubs in membership, with some 700 senior players registered. There is also a flourishing youth programme, a number of the youth clubs being junior sections of the famous senior clubs. An interesting development in Spain is the introduction of Probeisbol, this is a simplified form of baseball aimed at familiarising boys of 11 with the basic rules of baseball. Probeisbol can be played if necessary with a minimum of equipment, a hat and a rubber or plastic ball. It can also be played on any type of fairly level surface. Is there a lesson here for baseball in Britain?

Belgian baseball is centred on Antwerp, where the game has been played since 1923. In 1962 the Belgian Federation had 20 adult teams, 6 Babe Ruth League teams, and 5 teams playing in a Little League. A total of 500 players are registered.

The game lost ground in the period 1956 to 1960, but since 1961 has been supported by the National Institute for Sport and Physical Education. As a result of this support the game is making slow but certain progress, and Belgian officials forecast that they will have a very strong national team for the 1964 European championships. The most recent international game played by Belgium, that against Holland at Brasschaet in September, saw a win for Holland by a score of 3 to nil, but only magnificent pitching by Beidschat accounted for the margin.

HAARLEM BASEBALL FESTIVAL

The Royal Dutch Baseball Association has arranged for the Grand Rapids Sullivans, U.S. Non-pro. champions of 1960, to appear at this festival which will be held in July. The American team will bring seventeen players, whose travelling expenses will be more than £3,000. The city of Haarlem put up a guarantee of £4,000 to cover the Sullivans' expenses. The city of Haarlem is also spending £45,000 on a stadium with stands holding 5,700 spectators, and having the most powerful floodlighting system in the Netherlands. It is hoped that with the construction of this stadium, it will be possible to arrange a series of exhibition games by major league teams in October 1964.

Other teams competing at the festival will be Holland, and U.S. Army All-Stars, and U.S.A.F. All-Stars. South Africa may also play.

MERSEYSIDE NATIONAL BASEBALL LEAGUE.

The Merseyside League had four clubs in membership last season, Liverpool Tigers, Liverpool Cubs, Liverpool Aces, and Stretford Saints. The league championship was won by Tigers, who also won the British Baseball Federation Cup. The Lancashire Cup was won by Stretford Saints.

The U.S.A.F. base at Burtonwood, and a Mormon group are considering entering teams for the coming season. Burtonwood Boes (U.S.A.F.) were a great attraction in the league in the early '50s.

If equipment problems can be overcome it is hoped that a six team boys' league will function this year. Mr. David Price, chairman of the league and also of the B.B.F., has been working on this boys' league project in co-operation with the Liverpool Boys' Association. Little League Baseball of Williamsport, Penn., has promised to send a supply of coaching manuals.

A new trophy, that for the player who had done most for baseball during the year, was presented to Allan Williams of Tigers. He had pitched the Tigers to victory over Hull Aces in the final of the B.B.F. Cup. This, despite just coming out of hospital, and suffering from a black-out during the game.

NATIONAL BASEBALL LEAGUE NEWS.

The N.L. has been organised, the Hon. Secretary is Don Smallwood, 88, Westerdale Grove, Hull; the Hon. Treasurer and Registration Sec. is George Livesly, 84, Humphrey Road, Manchester. Clubs competing this season will be Hull, London, Nottingham (2), Birmingham, Coventry, Bromsgrove, and Manchester. Interest in the League is growing and plans for a second division may be prepared. At the next meeting of the league, the appointment of a publicity officer will be discussed. The National League has already been featured in an article in the "Daily Mirror".

The N.L. is affiliating to the National Baseball Congress, Wichita, Kansas.

HULL BASEBALL NEWS by Don Smallwood.

Efforts are being made to persuade football clubs in the city to form baseball teams as a means of keeping their players together during the summer. Two former stalwarts of the league, Priestman Panthers, and Hull Sizars, may be revived in time for the coming season. There is also the possibility of the revival of competition for the very handsome Schools Trophy.

East Hull Aces will be very active in the new season, being engaged in the National League, and also attempting to retain the championship of the Hull League. One honour that up to now has eluded the Aces is the B.B.F. National Cup. Aces have reached the final twice, finishing as runners-up to first Thames Board Mills, and last season to Liverpool Tigers. Aces are hoping "third time lucky", and will be all out to win Britain's premier baseball trophy. Helping Aces in this hectic campaign will be Red Holmes, who played for Hull pre-war. Red remembers Craven Park in 1937, when over 10,000 fans cheered the Hull team to a National Cup win over Romford Wasps. It's Red's hope that he will be playing for Aces to crowds of that size now the National League is launched.

Aces hope to travel to Holland next year to avenge three defeats inflicted on them by three very strong teams when they visited Holland in 1961. This 1961 visit did show the tremendous room for improvement in Britain as regards presentation of the game.