

The Courier

A Publication of SABR's Negro Leagues Committee

"We are the Ship, All Else the Sea"

Editor, Larry Lester

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Malloy Conference Highlights

Another victory, this time at Victory Field! The streak is intact! For 14 consecutive years, the hometown team wins when we are in town.

America's **biggest and best black baseball conference** made a whistle stop in Indianapolis on July 21-23, at the brand-spanking new JW Marriott, and the future rest-a-while to this season's Super Bowl teams.

The conference named after one of the pre-eminent historians of early day baseball, the Jerry Malloy Conference's first pitch was the educational forum at Ball State University's downtown Indianapolis Center. The forum was led by **Dr. Leslie Heaphy** of Kent State University, doctoral candidate **Stephanie Liscio** (Case Western University in Cleveland), and **Dr. Geri Strecker** (Ball State), who discussed ideas on how to develop college or high school courses on the Negro Leagues while incorporating disciplines such as math, music, sociology, economics, civil rights and American history into their lesson plans.

That Thursday evening, the Meet & Greet, a marvelous opportunity to meet like-minded aficionados, was hosted by Executive Director **Ann Rein** at the **National Art Museum of Sport (NAMOS)**. The artwork of winners and runners-up of our national art contest were prominently displayed to rave reviews by those in attendance.

Later, conference attendees settled in to watch a documentary "**Black Baseball in Indiana**" led by Ball State English Professor Geri Strecker and 14 students, who traveled thousands of miles across eight states to interview surviving players, to speak with historians and research archival materials. The outstanding film was followed by a fantastic evening with former Indy Clown batboys **Cliff Robinson** and **Ludwig Johnson**, along with 'Jumpin' **Johnny Wilson** and his childhood buddy and former teammate of Jackie Robinson, **Carl Erskine**.

The eloquent Erskine, with humility and grace, entertained the crowd with stories of his no-hitters, racial challenges, and the days of when the "Boys of Summer" were diamond kings. Oh, what a pleasurable evening!

Also note, the **Indiana Historical Society Press** provided all attendees copies of their *Indiana Sporting Life* book. Included in the book were articles by Robert Gildea, entitled "**A Major League Friendship: Carl Erskine Remembers Jackie Robinson and the Brooklyn Dodgers**," and by **Pete Cava**, who was on the planning committee, about Indiana's Chick Stahl, "**Requiem for a Ballplayer**."



Courtesy of Rick Meister

FRIDAY

Not since the days of the powerful Homestead Grays and Kansas City Monarchs has the nation seen a more powerful lineup than presented at this year's Malloy Conference. Before a record crowd, **Bryan Stevenson** opened the conference with "All-Star Clown to Crown Prince: **Goose Tatum**". Perhaps the officials at the Basketball Hall of Fame were listening as Tatum was inducted three weeks later. Tatum, nominated by Crispus Attucks High School star **Oscar Robertson**, is the first to be inducted through the African-American Pioneers committee, formed this year by Hall of Fame

chairman **Jerry Colangelo** to include a wider range of important contributors to basketball.

Following Stevenson's outstanding presentation, former literary professor **Dr. Jeff Laing** provided new insight on integration pioneer **Bud Fowler** and his role with the Santa Fe Ancients in the 1888 New Mexico Baseball League. Next to bat was author **Dr. James Brunson, III**, who discussed the epic story of black baseball in Indiana tracing its roots to the Gilded Age from 1867 to 1899, with connections to Logansport, Indiana. Batting cleanup on Friday was another author **Todd Peterson**, who talked about the French Lick (Indiana) Plutos from

1909 to 1915. This racially mixed club provided stiff competition to the West Baden (IN) Sprudels and the Indianapolis ABC's for many years before World War I.

Our next presenter talked about "The Other Black Sox Scandal." **Dwayne Isgrig**, from St. Louis, provided commentary about **Henry Kubler**, a white gentleman, who owned the St. Louis Black Sox, and their financial woes traveling through Terre Haute and Indianapolis in 1909.

After lunch we were joined by former Chicago American Giants pitcher **Al Spearman**, outfielder for the American Giants and former Harlem Globetrotter **Johnny Wilson** and two former batboys for the Indianapolis Clowns, **Cliff Robinson** and **Ludwig Johnson**. With such engaging stories by the quartet, the hour-long player panel went by quicker than Cool Papa Bell circling around the bases. Next year we must expand this time slot to capture the shared sacrifices of these incredible history makers.

After a brief autograph session, we had a special presentation on **Washington Park**, home to the first Negro National



League game in 1920 by the local SABR Oscar Charleston Central Indiana chapter. With this new knowledge we walked to the Indianapolis Zoo to join local dignitaries to dedicate the new state historical marker honoring Washington Park as the site of the historic game. A detailed box score of the game was provided in the conference booklet.

Soon after, as we battled 100 degree temperatures, we walked across the street to a buffet and all-you-can-drink at **Victory Field**, as the conference players were joined by the 1953 NAL home run king, **Ernie Johnson** (Des Moines, Iowa). They threw out the ceremonial first pitches, as the Indians defeated the Red Wings.



SATURDAY

Conference attendees woke up to an array of media coverage by the **Indianapolis Star**, the **NUVO News Weekly** and a special 24-page insert on the Malloy conference and black baseball by the **Indianapolis Recorder**. See their masthead on this page. Note many of these articles are available online.



Saturday's lead-off hitter was **Patrick Alyea**, a communications major at Ball State University. Alyea examined the 1914 season when the four Taylor brothers, **Big Ben, C.I., Candy Jim, and Steel Arm Johnny** were on the Indianapolis ABC's. Then **Dr. Trey Strecker** added some punch with the tale of three teams, from 1914; the ABC's, the Federal League Hoofeds and the American Association Indianapolis Indians. He ended his presentation with an exciting overview of the post season five-game series between the ABC's and **Donie Bush's All-Stars**. The deciding or rubber game of the series, played on November 8th, has never been discovered.

Following Trey was his wife, **Dr. Geri Strecker**, who provided an analysis of challenges of putting a black team on the field in Indianapolis, during the mid-twenties when the Ku Klux Klan, lead by Grand Dragon **David Curtiss Stephenson**, held most major elected offices, from city councilman to mayor, state congressman and even the governorship.

Our next batter was assistant professor of Landscape Architecture at Ball State **Chris Baas** who shared his knowledge about using the Historic American Landscape Survey (HALS) to record significant landscapes, with special emphasis on ballparks. His concentrated **HALS** presentation focused on Perry Stadium, later renamed Bush Stadium, once home to the Indianapolis Clowns and the Indianapolis Indians.

"Momma, who was that masked man?" A presentation on **Albert "Buster" Haywood** was given by associate professor of Religion and Women's Studies at Temple University, **Rabbi Rebecca Alpert**. She unmasked

Haywood's experiences with the Clowns and his brief career with the Belleville Grays, a team based in a community of Hebrew Israelites (Black Jews) in his hometown of Portsmouth, Virginia. You had to be there!

Dr. Roberta Newman from New York University talked about the slow decline of non-baseball businesses that depended, in part, on the game's continued solvency, as many teams in the late 40's took to barnstorming to meet payroll. The presentation also considered parallel businesses, most particularly the so-called "chitlin' circuit" of musical entertainers, for similar challenges.

Our next presenter from Wayne State University was **Dr. Lisa Alexander**, professor of Africana Studies. Her entertaining presentation analyzed the films *The Bingo Long Traveling All Stars and Motor Kings* (1976) and *Soul of the Game* (1996) and their represented accuracy (or lack thereof), of Negro League baseball. Knowledgeable fans of the game know the films are historically inaccurate; which encouraged a lively Q&A session discussing the merits or demerits of the films.

Author of the new book on **Alejandro Pompez**, entitled "Cuban Star: How One Negro-League Owner Changed the Face of Baseball," **Dr. Adrian Burgos, Jr.**, presented on Pompez' impact as a scout for the New York and San Francisco Giants. This presentation was highly rated by reviewers. Read the review of this new book elsewhere in the *Courier*.

Next in the lineup was the Authors' Panel, featuring **Rebecca Alpert** (*Out of Left Field*), **James Brunson** (*The Early Image of Black Baseball*), **Stephanie Liscio** (*Integrating Cleveland Baseball*) and **Todd Peterson** (*Early Black Baseball in Minnesota*). Moderated by noted bibliophile Dick Clark, the Q & A session was informative and a conference delight.

The last presentation was by **Keith Carmack**, who provided a trailer for his new film documentary "Is This Heaven?" This trailer introduced a look at the seemingly impossible task of righting the wrongs that have been done to Hall of Famer **Pete Hill** posthumously. As we have learned from the TV series the X-Files, "The truth is out there somewhere."

Many presentations are candidates for the **Black Ball Journal** published by McFarland & Company. Anyone can submit an abstract of their presentation to Leslie Heaphy at: lheaphy@kent.edu. The deadline is October 15th for the next edition.

Immediately following Carmack's presentation was the always popular Trivia contest. After two rounds of

intense battle of wit and wisdom, **Ted Knorr**, from Harrisburg, PA, emerged as the gold medalist. **Tim Bohus**, from the Czech Republic, and **Josh Salvner** tied for the silvers. We expect veteran defending champions Knorr and **Karl Lindholm** to battle next year for the crown, with strong competition from young newcomers Bohus and Salvner.

The Ninth Inning – the Awards Banquet

We kicked off the Awards Banquet with entertainment from **Brenda Williams** and **Cold Fusion**. The quartet rocked the house with some soulful songs from the heyday of black baseball. Ms. Williams, who has sung for three presidents, put Aretha Franklin in the bullpen with an a cappella rendition of the National Anthem, as we joined in a glee club shout out of "Play Ball."

After each Negro Leaguer received a special engraved Malloy conference bat, several awards were presented. These included the **Robert Peterson Recognition Award** won by Brooklyn Dodger pitcher **Carl Erskine**, **Dr. Rebecca Alpert** for her book entitled "*Out of Left Field: Jews and Black Baseball*," and **Bob Luke** for his book, "*The Most Famous Woman in Baseball: Effa*



Roger and Tweed Webb

Manley and the Negro Leagues." We recognized several winners of our **John Coates Next Generation Award**; including **Josh Salvner** and the 14 dedicated students who

produced the "*Black Baseball in Indiana*" documentary. We were blessed with the presence of **Roger Webb**, son of historian Normal "Tweed" Webb, who presented the **Tweed Webb Lifetime Achievement Award** to **Peter Gorton** for his extensive research on the prolific career of pitcher John Donaldson. After a viewing of ESPN's February broadcast of *Outside the Lines*, which featured a special on the Grave Marker project, we presented **Dr. Jeremy Krock** from Peoria, Illinois, with the highly coveted **Fay Vincent Most Valuable Partner (MVP) Award**. Previous Vincent MVP winners have been Michael Hartnagel and Joe Mitchell (both from Wilmington, DE), Gary Mitchem (Jefferson, NC), and Mike Garvey (Chicago, IL). Also note, **Roy Laughans** won the award for the first registrant, and our Executive Director, **Marc Appleman**, won the award for the person who traveled the farthest. We look forward to continued participation from the SABR headquarters.