

**Officially Sanctioned Postseason  
Challenge Series**



**Mike Cantor  
Mark Pankin  
SABR 40  
August 5, 2010  
Atlanta Georgia**

Talk given by Mark because Mike was unable to get away to attend SABR

Notes provide additional information and were reminders during the presentation. They are not supposed to be anything close to a complete text of the presentation or thorough discussion of the subject.

Use Acrobat Reader's ability to enlarge what appears on the screen if you have trouble reading a graph.

## Section on retrosheet.org

⌘ From Features drop down menu:

☑ Select Special Features

☑ Link to "Regional/City Series"

⌘ Links to 32 sanctioned series

⌘ History article by Mike Cantor

⌘ Fred Ivor-Campbell "City Series" article in first *Total Baseball*

Ivor-Campbell did not appear in any of the subsequent editions. First edition was in 1989.

Section about these series on retrosheet.org has a few references to a book and web sites.

Data on retrosheet.org are most accurate and comprehensive for the officially sanctioned series.

## **32 Sanctioned Series**

- ⌘ 1905 – 1942, all after 1917 in Chicago
- ⌘ 24 between Chicago teams
- ⌘ 3 between Ohio teams (1910,1911,1917)
- ⌘ 2 Giants – Yankees (1910,1914)
- ⌘ 1 St. Louis('17,many earlier unsanctioned)
- ⌘ Giants/Red Sox('09), Pirates/Indians('13)
- ⌘ Have PBP accounts for 155 of 190 games
- ⌘ Unsanctioned as early as 1882

None in 1918-20 due to Chicago teams being in World Series and aftermath of the Black Sox scandal.

Giants and Yankees were set to play for five years 1910-14, but the Giants were in the WS, 1911-13.

Unsanctioned series in Ohio, St. Louis, Boston, and Philadelphia, 1903-16

Unlikely we will find more (nearly) complete play-by-play accounts. We will be adding the box scores for the other games. Currently, only one has been done, 1905 game 5. Also will be adding information to the PBP pages such as park where played, umpires, attendance, and time of game if known.

## **“Sanctioned” Meaning**

- ⌘ National Commission formed in 1905
  - ☒ established World Series conditions
  - ☒ authorized other interleague series
- ⌘ Played under same conditions as WS
  - ☒ Best of seven (of nine in 1921)
  - ☒ No games after winner determined
  - ☒ Player shares from first four (five in '21) games
  - ☒ Revenue to National Commission
  - ☒ Winning teams' players get more \$ than losers
  - ☒ Umpires selected by National Commission
- ⌘ Not exhibition games, were taken seriously

Same roster rules as for World Series. All players who appeared in the sanctioned series games played during the regular season.

It is possible that postseason interleague series are still authorized although it seems unlikely that any more will be played. A Montreal-Toronto Canadian championship annual series would have been a “natural.” Perhaps it would have stimulated enough interest to keep the Expos in Montreal.

## **Unsanctioned Example: 1903 Chicago**

- ⌘ Best of 15 played, Oct 1-15
- ⌘ Due to rain out on Oct 7, series was tied 7-7 after 10/15 game
- ⌘ Players' contracts expired on Oct 15
- ⌘ Cubs manager Selee refused DH on 10/15
- ⌘ Selee refused to play later because Joe Tinker was going away for his wedding

Sox won last two games, both by 2-0, to tie series

Charles Comiskey offered to play DH on 10/15, wanted to see series decided. Cubs not wanting to play without one of their best players shows how seriously they were taking it (or they wanted to avoid the embarrassment of losing to the new kids on the block White Sox.

Players would have been paid for the decisive game.

Cubs suspected that their pitcher Jack Taylor was “tanking” games (he was 1-3 and allowed 9 and 10 runs in two of his starts), so they refused to play another city series (none in 1904) until games were under the auspices of the National Commission, which made them more serious.

## **Unsanctioned Example: 1913 St. Louis**

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- ⌘ Series ended 3-3-2
- ⌘ Last 6 games as 3 DH, no second game went more than six innings
- ⌘ Fight on last day
- ⌘ Teams decided not finish series
- ⌘ Both teams finished last (.373, .340), so did not find out worst MLB team that year

Brown's first baseman Derrill Pratt was ejected in the first game (game 7) after scuffling with Cards Zinn Beck and arguing with the umpires. Umpires did not allow Pratt to play in second game (game 8), which caused an argument and Brown's manager, Branch Rickey, kept his team off the field. After a delay, game started without Pratt, but lasted only five innings due to darkness and ended in a 1-1 tie.

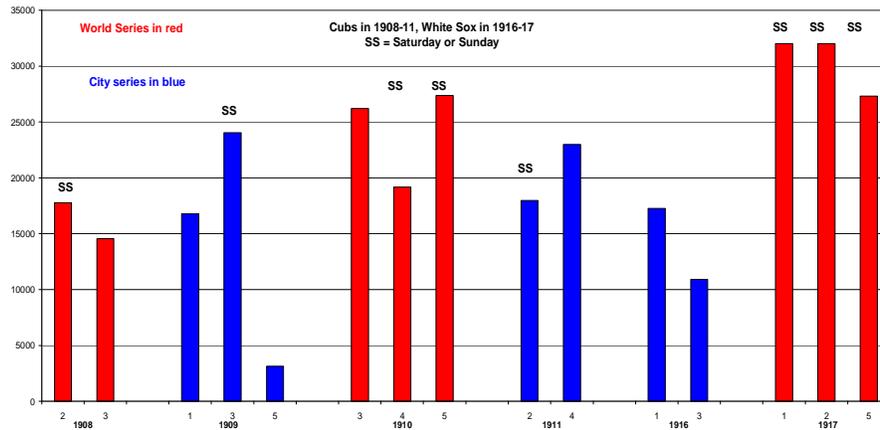
Due to bad feelings, two managers—Rickey and Miller Huggins—decided to end the series as a tie.

## **World Series, City Series Attendance in Chicago**

- ⌘ Chicago team's home games attendance in consecutive years, one of each type
- ⌘ 3 charts follow
- ⌘ See comparative level of interest
  - ☒ Virtually the same in early years
  - ☒ World Series much higher in later years
  - ☒ Newspaper stories in 1905 say crowds at Chicago games not very interested in WS

Data from box scores

## Comparative Attendance: 1908 - 1917



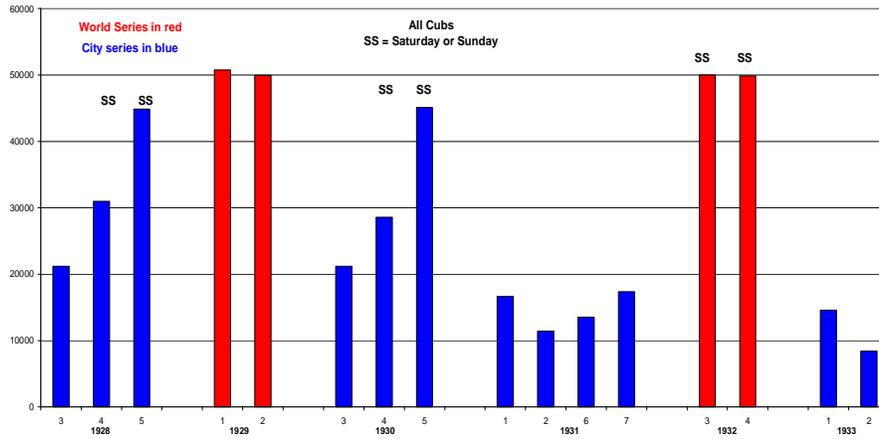
Point out use of color: red for WS, blue for city series

Game numbers at bottom

Weekend games indicated by “SS”

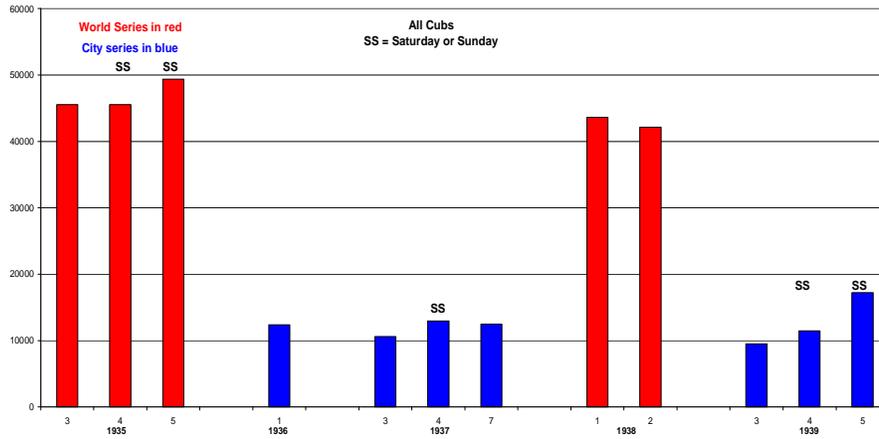
Low attendance in game 5 of 1909 city series due to cold weather and threat of rain. Tribune that morning implied that game might be postponed. Cubs were ahead in series 3-1.

# Comparative Attendance: 1928 - 1933



In 1928, 1930, Sunday games close to weekday WS games. Attendance at city series games after that was considerably less.

## Comparative Attendance: 1935 - 1939



WS games much higher attendance than city series. Depression a likely factor, but certainly not the whole story

First city series night game played in 1939 (in Comiskey Park, of course). Drew crowds in 40,000 range for the first two years, but only 27,000 in 1941 and 21,000 in 1942. Other crowds were poor, which is likely why city series did not resume after WW II.

## **First Comeback Down 3-0**

⌘ Not Red Sox in 2004

⌘ 1912 Chicago Series:

- ☒ First two games tied caused by getting dark: 0-0 (9 innings, rain delay), 3-3 (12 innings)
- ☒ Cubs win next three: 5-4(A), 4-2(H), 8-1(A)
- ☒ Sox win next four: 5-4(11,A), 7-5(H), 8-5(A, score 4 in 9<sup>th</sup>), 16-0(H, 12823000x)
- ☒ Sox Ed Walsh was pitching star

Walsh pitched four complete games, 41 innings, 2 W, 1 L, 1 tie (9 scoreless innings in first game), 2 relief appearances, one would be a save under current rules.

Some criticism for overworking him because his career went downhill in future seasons, but he had often had a heavy workload in the regular season.

Shows how seriously these games were taken, particularly in Chicago.

Cubs manager (non-playing at that point) Frank Chance supposedly so disgusted in last game that he left after five innings.

## Who is This?



- ⌘ Grover Lowdermilk
- ⌘ Pitcher 1909-20
- ⌘ Cards, Cubs, Browns (twice), Tigers, Indians, White Sox

- ⌘ 23-39, 3.58 ERA for his career

- ⌘ Not in majors 1910, 1913, 1914, most of 1917

Poor control was primary reason he was not a successful pitcher. Supposedly had stuff as good as Walter Johnson.

His brother, Lou, was with the Cardinals for two years (entire MLB career) and pitched well in the 1911 St. Louis series. Grover was on that team, but did not play in the series (not on roster?).

Picture from the Library of Congress collection.

## Lowdermilk in 1917 (1)

- ⌘ On waivers, Indians to Browns in Sept.
  - ☒ Pitched for Columbus in American Association
  - ☒ Led AA in wins (25), Ks (250), and ERA
- ⌘ 2-1, 1.42 ERA in 3 games (2 starts) in Sept.
- ⌘ City Series Game 1, October 3
  - ☒ Lost 3-2
  - ☒ 2 unearned runs in 5<sup>th</sup>, 3 Browns errors
  - ☒ 10 hits, but 5 were "rank flukes"
  - ☒ No walks, one hit batter

Post-Dispatch says he was part of a trade (with Columbus, Cleveland?) that also brought Walter Gerber and Ray Demmitt to Browns. No transaction info for those two on Retrosheet web site.

According to Baseball Reference, he led the American Association in 1917 with 25 wins and 250 Ks. Had best ERA in league according to Post-Dispatch story.

Rank flukes from Post-Dispatch story. Winning run in bottom of 9<sup>th</sup> reached on a high bouncer off the plate.

## **Lowdermilk in 1917 (2)**

⌘ Game 3, October 6 – first game

- ☒ Relieved in last of the 9<sup>th</sup>
- ☒ 4-4 score, runners on 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, no outs
- ☒ Got out of jam
- ☒ Browns scored once in top of 10<sup>th</sup>
- ☒ Lowermilk retired Cards in order in bottom

## **Lowdermilk in 1917 (3)**

⌘ Games 5 & 6, October 7, double header

- ☒ No runs in 18 innings, 7 singles each game
- ☒ Wins first game 2-0 (9 innings)
- ☒ Second game ends 0-0 due to darkness
- ☒ Ed Reulbach, 9/26/08 only other 18 scoreless

⌘ Series performance

- ☒ 29 innings, 1 ER, 2-1-1 (only Browns wins)
- ☒ No runs in last 20 innings pitched
- ☒ Would have started game 8 on Oct. 9

Pitched 29 innings over 5 days (but starts were four days apart, relief appearance was in the middle).

Had arm and medical problems in 1918 limiting his appearances and effectiveness for the Browns. Was expected to be a key part of their starting rotation that year.

In 1919, pitched well for Browns, 12 innings in 7 relief appearances (0.75 ERA) before being sold to White Sox in May, but had control problems. Went 5-5, 2.79 starting and relieving. Appeared only in game 1 of 1919 WS, pitching bottom of 8<sup>th</sup> and giving up one run in 8-1 loss at Cincinnati. Not connected with the Black Sox scandal.

Pitched 3 games in May 1920 for Sox for last MLB appearances at age 35.

Reulbach beat Brooklyn 5-0, 3-0; only time in regular season play pitcher had shutouts in two nine inning games on the same day.

## **Cubs Futility (1)**

- ⌘ Long before "Billy Goat"
- ⌘ Won city series 4-2 in 1930
- ⌘ 1931: Sox (.366, 8<sup>th</sup>) 4, Cubs (.545, 3<sup>rd</sup>) 3
- ⌘ 1932: Lose World Series 4-0 to Yankees
- ⌘ 1933: Sox (.447, 6<sup>th</sup>) 4, Cubs (.558, 3<sup>rd</sup>) 0
- ⌘ 1934: Cubs (.570, 3<sup>rd</sup>) refuse to challenge last place White Sox (.349)

1930 was the last time the Cubs won a seven-game postseason series. (Last World Series win was in 1908.)

Tradition called for loser of prior series to challenge the winner. Cubs decided not to do that in 1934, possibly to avoid further embarrassment and possibly because they were down after not doing better during the regular season.

## **Cubs Futility (2)**

- ⌘ 1935: Lose World Series 4-2 to Tigers
- ⌘ 1936: Sox (.536,3<sup>rd</sup>) 4, Cubs (.565,2<sup>nd</sup>) 0
- ⌘ 1937: Sox (.558,3<sup>rd</sup>) 4, Cubs (.604,2<sup>nd</sup>) 3
- ⌘ 1938: Lose World Series 4-0 to Yankees
- ⌘ 1939: Sox (.552,4<sup>th</sup>) 4, Cubs (.545,4<sup>th</sup>) 3
- ⌘ 1940: Sox (.532,5<sup>th</sup>) 4, Cubs (.487,5<sup>th</sup>) 2

## **Cubs Futility (3)**

- ⌘ 1941: Sox (.500,3<sup>rd</sup>) 4, Cubs (.455,6<sup>th</sup>) 0
- ⌘ 1942: Sox (.446,6<sup>th</sup>) 4, Cubs (.442,6<sup>th</sup>) 2
- ⌘ 1945: Lose World Series 4-3 to Tigers
- ⌘ 1984: Lose NLCS to Padres 3-2
- ⌘ 1989: Lose NLCS to Giants 4-1
- ⌘ 2003: Win Division Series 3-2 from Braves
- ⌘ 2003: Lose NLCS to Marlins 4-3
- ⌘ 6-18 vs. Sox in city series + lost 1906 WS

Cubs were 6-18 in 24 sanctioned city series (and tie in unsanctioned 1903 series) although they did better than the White Sox in the regular season most of those years. Plus they lost 1906 World Series to the White Sox, 4-2.

Lost 7 city series in a row during 1911-21. Lost last eight played, 1931-42.

## Wrap Up



- ⌘ Serious games, not exhibitions
  - ☒ Some had attendance over 40,000
  - ☒ Newspapers had extensive coverage
  - ☒ Players took seriously, sometimes getting into fights
  - ☒ Players' records are valid and meaningful
- ⌘ Often overlooked part of baseball history
- ⌘ Explore at [www.retrosheet.org](http://www.retrosheet.org)

Players' stats, etc. are as meaningful as those in other post-season play (World Series, Playoffs). Obviously would be dominated by Chicago teams, similar to how Yankees dominate World Series career and other records.

Unfortunately, there does not appear to be any preserved "official" data for the sanctioned series games, and the boxes and other accounts of the games are often inconsistent. We have assembled the most complete and authoritative on-field data about these series and are working to improve what we have and fill in some of the missing pieces.