SPECIAL COLLECTOR'S EDITION

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST

The Magazine of American Living

BASEBALL
THE GLORY YEARS!

Dozens of Rare Illustrations by **Norman Rockwell** and Other Great *Post* Artists

Classic Profiles: **Jackie Robinson**, **Mickey Mantle**, **Babe Ruth**, and more!

Free Poster Inside!

Bottom of the Sixth
By Norman Rockwell

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March 19, 1949
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ABOUT THE COVER

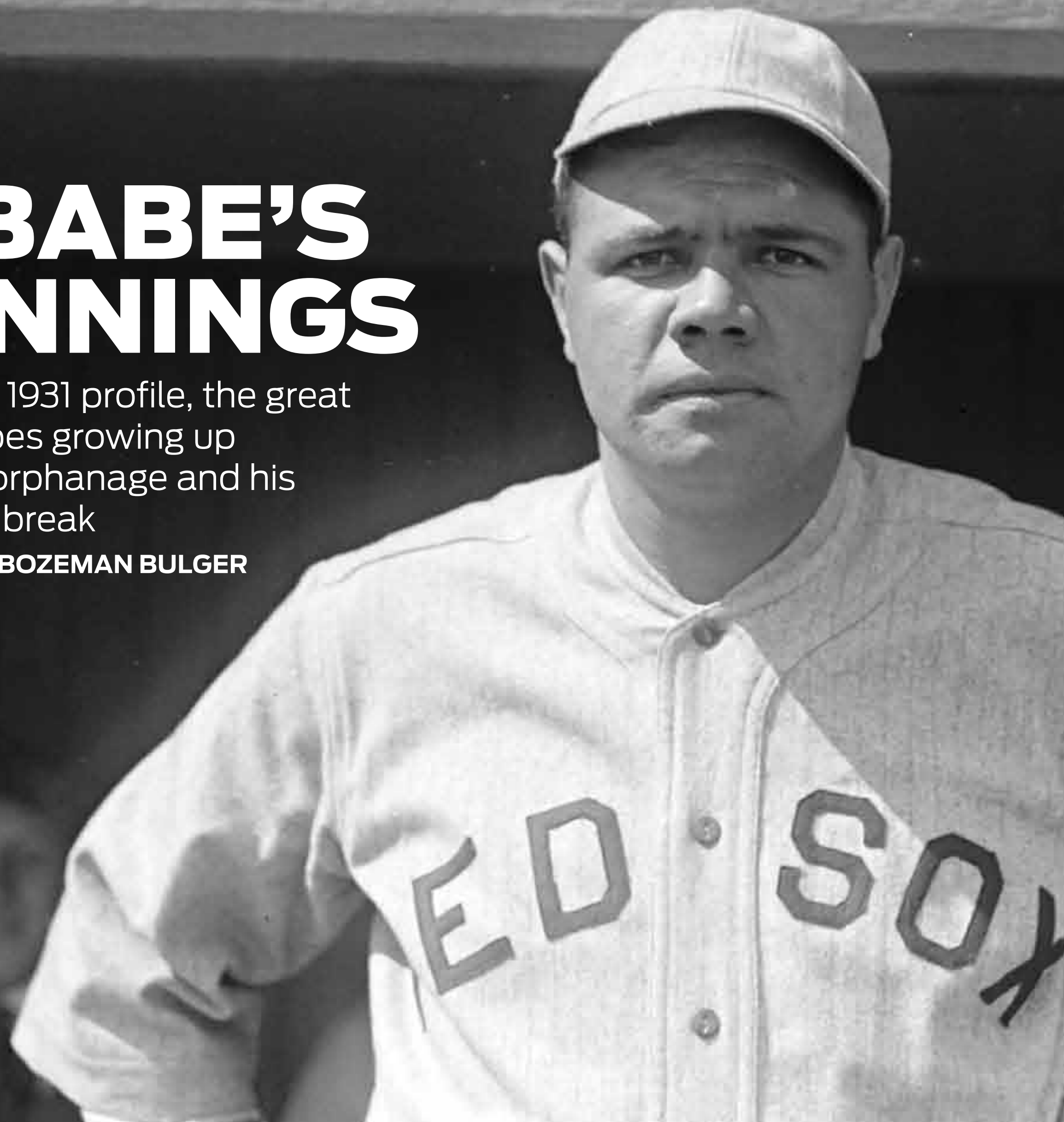
One of Norman Rockwell's truly iconic images, *Bottom of the Sixth* pays tribute to the sport's unsung heroes — the umpires. Before touching brush to canvas, Rockwell traveled to Ebbets Field — home to the Brooklyn Dodgers — with photographer in tow to capture the ballpark, the umpires, the players, and the coaches in action during the 1948 baseball season. The three umpires pictured — (left to right) Larry Goetz, John "Beans" Reardon, and Lou Jorda — are solemnly poised with eyes toward the heavens, deciding whether to call the game between the Dodgers and the Pirates. It's the bottom of the sixth, and the score is 1-0, Pittsburgh. In the background, Pirates outfielders Johnny Hopp, Ralph Kiner, and Fred "Dixie" Walker await the decision while Brooklyn coach Clyde Sukeforth and Pittsburgh manager Billy Meyer engage in a public, if irrelevant, debate. The original oil painting today hangs in The National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York. Your free copy of this poster is between pages 64 and 65.

Bottom of the Sixth
April 23, 1949
Norman Rockwell

THE BABE'S BEGINNINGS

In this 1931 profile, the great slugger describes growing up in an orphanage and his lucky early break

BY BOZEMAN BULGER



In talking about himself, the Babe wishes to make it clear that he has been both bad and good, and that his real name is George Herman Ruth, and not Ehrhardt, as has been often stated in the question-and-answer departments of newspapers. The late Jack Dunn, owner and manager of the Baltimore ball club, called him George until the players had unanimously decided on "Babe," and made it stick.

"In those days," Ruth explains, "Dunn was always digging up youngsters for tryouts with his ball club. When Brother Gilbert and myself came out of Jack's office after they had signed me to a baseball contract 18 years ago, the players saw me from a distance. 'There's another one of Dunn's babies,' one of them remarked. The minute I put on a uniform they called me Babe and, in baseball, I have never known any other name. I'm not kicking, though. I rather like it. I was such a big fellow that the nickname of Babe struck the other boys as funny. I guess it would still be funny if we hadn't all got used to it."

"How long do you expect to play ball?" he was asked.

"I figure that about two more years ought to do me, but you can't tell about that. You know how it is. Clark Griffith may have been right when he said that no ballplayer ever voluntarily quits the game until they cut the uniform off him. Anyway, I won't be in there until I trip on my whiskers and the boys begin feeling sorry for me. I won't have to do that."

"What's the most money you ever made in one year, Babe?"

He rubbed his freshly shaven face in an effort to remember. "About $130,000 – that is, counting baseball salary, exhibition work, stage appearances, syndicate writing, and so on. And, boy," he chuckled, "you ought to see how I managed to scatter that chunk."

"Did you ever try to figure how much you have earned altogether since you began playing professional baseball 18 years ago?"

"Oh, my average has been better than $50,000 a year. I've made at least a million dollars. Threw away more than half of it too. Had a lot of fun, though."

"Did you have any aim in life, or any particular thought to the future, when you started out as a ballplayer?"

"No, of course I didn't. I just wanted to play ball. I still like to play, even if it's just for the fun of it. When I got my first job it seemed funny to me that anybody would pay me money to play ball."

"Which do you get the most thrill out of – your pitching or your hitting?"

"That's hard to say," he replied after some thought. "I don't believe I could ever get any more thrill than I did in pitching those scoreless innings in the 1918 World Series back in Boston. Still, anybody gets a big kick out of taking a cut at that ball and hitting it on the nose. Anyway, I know the public gets a bigger kick out of seeing a fellow hit 'em than in seeing him pitch 'em. Why, take a 60-year-old golfer, for instance. Nothing in the world gives him such a thrill as clipping that golf ball on the button with a full swing. They'll tell you the science of the fine shots is what counts, but that's all baloney. What counts in their lives is socking that ball and giving it a ride.

"Now, the records will show that I was a pretty good pitcher. You never hear much about that, though ... The kids know me as a home-run slugger."

During the past World Series in 1931 Ruth sat beside the writer in the grandstand at St. Louis, experting on the big games. "Mr. Ruth," interrupted a pleasant-voiced young lady, "will you please autograph this program for me? My uncle was a ballplayer and – "

"OK," said the Babe, scrawling his familiar signature and passing it back over his shoulder. "Now I'm in for it," he confided out of the corner of his mouth; "they'll keep this up for an hour."

And they did. Protesting ushers were swept aside in the rush. The autograph seekers were in attacking formation. They brought programs, rain checks, toy bats, notebooks, hatbands – everything – to be decorated with the Ruth signature. After a half hour his hand was so badly cramped that he demanded a rest.

"First thing you know," he said, " some bird will be asking me to sign his socks."

"Listen," Ruth finally warned his increasing admirers, "I'm going to stop when play starts. You know, I want to see some of this ball game myself." That merely served to accelerate the rush.

The amplifiers finally announced the first batter.

"No, that's all," the Babe resolutely denied the next applicant. "No more till tomorrow. None after the game either."

"Can't you sign this baseball, Mr. Ruth?" a rather weary voice spoke behind him.

"No, no. I turned down the others. Come out before the game tomorrow. I've been doing this for an hour now. Got to see the ball game."

"I'm sorry," explained the voice. "I had to come up on crutches and just got here."

"What's that – crutches? Well, that's different." His big hand reached back for the ball and he carefully inscribed his name. "Sorry you had so much trouble. You're welcome. That'll get me in trouble sure," came in an undertone from the corner of his mouth.

"Won't you please sign this score card?" immediately spoke a feminine voice. "My father owns a baseball club out West. Won the pennant."

"All right. Hand it over." And down went the signature, with the added comment: "Good luck to the Indians."

With these two exceptions he stuck to his refusal and called it a day.

Today Ruth looks back on St. Mary's, the orphanage where he was raised, as the real home of his early boyhood. The memories of it are very dear to him. "You know," he said, during a later lull in the ball game, "I was not an orphan when I went to St. Mary's. My parents were living, but they were very poor. I went to that school the first time when I was only 6 years old. The second time they sent me I stayed there. Oh, yes, I guess I was a truant, all right, and needed to be taken there, but many boys who went there were not bad boys or truants. They were sent by their parents to St. Mary's just to learn a trade. It's a great school."

"What trade did they select for you?" I asked him.

"Oh, I was a shirt maker – darn good one too. That's why they can't fool me about shirts to this day. I know how they are cut and how the parts are put together. I worked at an electrical machine which stitches the parts of a shirt together. I was the best one in the school," he added, with a touch of pride.

The boys at St. Mary's were not long in discovering that George Ruth, as they knew him then, could throw a baseball harder and hit one farther than any other kid in school. Ruth is very much in doubt as to what position he played at first. "Oh, I just played ball and played in any position they'd let me. I've been outfielder, infielder, catcher, and pitcher. It made no difference to me. You know how it is with boys."

In time Ruth developed so much prowess as a pitcher that he was assigned to that job regularly. It was his remarkable showing as a left-handed pitcher that influenced Brother Gilbert to speak to Jack Dunn, owner and manager of the Baltimore club, about him. "You can bet I will never forget that day," says Ruth. "Boy, that was a thrill! After Jack Dunn had talked to me for a few minutes they gave me a sort of tryout in the yard. I guess Jack decided that I had something."

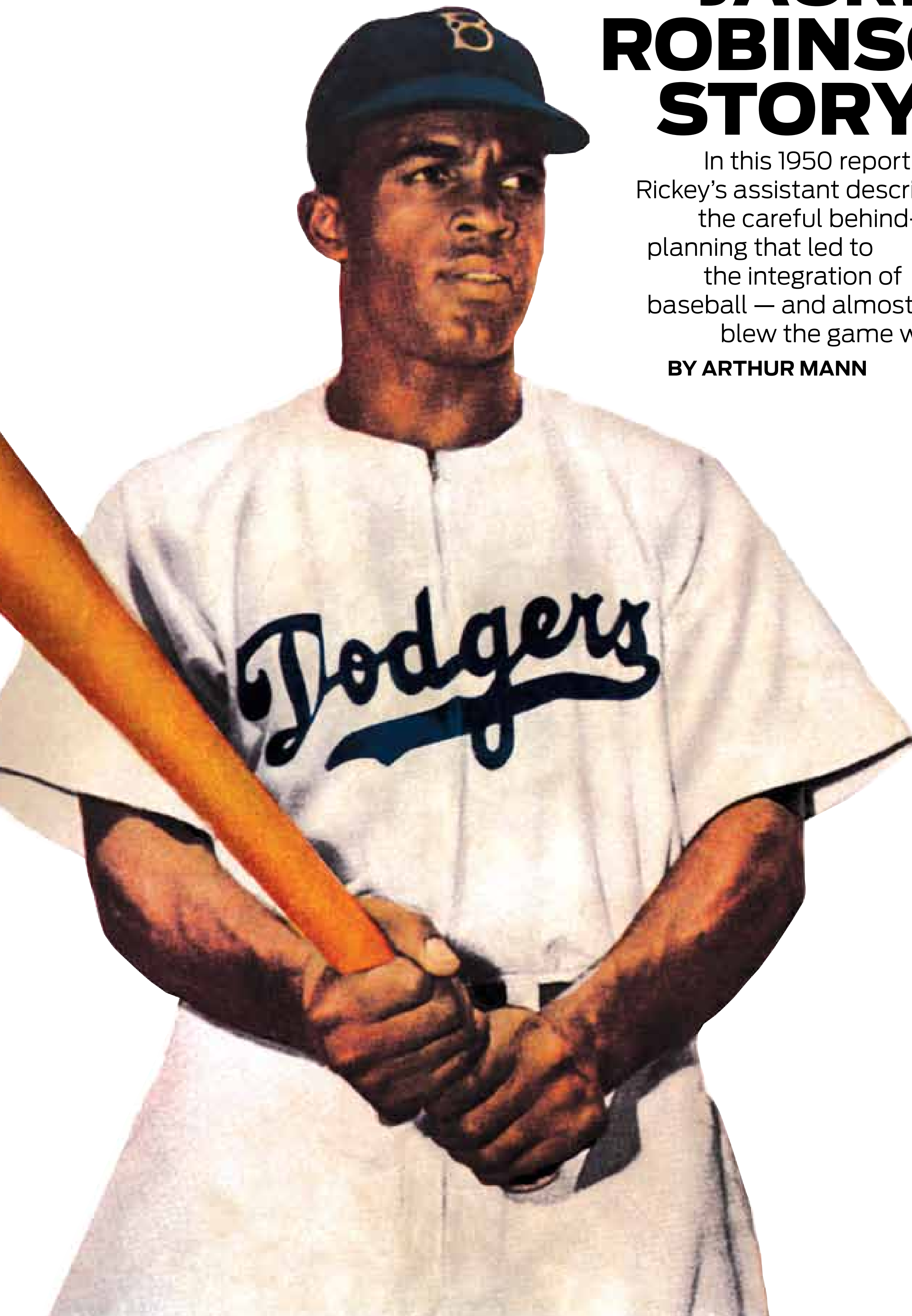
Brother Gilbert explained to Ruth that boys played ball for fun, but that he was now taking a man's job that called for business arrangements. "Mr. Dunn has agreed to pay you

THE PLAYERS

THE JACKIE ROBINSON STORY

In this 1950 report, Branch Rickey's assistant describes the careful behind-the-scenes planning that led to the integration of baseball — and almost blew the game wide open*

BY ARTHUR MANN



*Editor's note: We're presenting this 1950 article with only minor cuts for length. For accuracy, we chose not to change certain words that might be unacceptable in a contemporary piece, but were in common use at the time.

Now that Jackie Robinson is one of the established stars of baseball, and Negro players are becoming commonplace in the major leagues, it is hard to realize that there was such a storm over the entrance of this pioneering player into organized baseball four seasons ago.

In fact, the general public never did realize just how violent a storm it was. Jackie Robinson came into the Brooklyn organization over the expressed opposition of much of baseball's top brass. There were official prophecies of rioting and bloodshed. And various ballplayers engaged in undercover protest movements. Some of this got into print, but much of it never went beyond the inner councils of the Brooklyn club. I served as assistant to Dodger President Branch Rickey during much of this period, and I feel that the full story should be told, not only for the enlightenment of the public but in the long-range interests of baseball itself.

A good starting point is a meeting Branch Rickey held with the club's directors and stockholders in early 1943, shortly after signing a five-year contract as general manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers. At this stage in World War II, other clubs were cutting down their scouting activities, on the theory that the draft would get all the good boys anyhow. Rickey proposed instead to expand the Dodger talent-hunting staff to the point where they were contacting "every available baseball prospect down through age 16, yes, even 15."

Rickey frankly presented this project as a gamble. "If the war continues well past the two- or two-and-a-half-year mark," he said, "this manpower will be absorbed by the military. We will lose everything. On the other hand, the war could end within two or two and a half years, and I have a strong hunch, based on experience and faith in our soldiers, that it will not go much beyond the two-year mark. If so, the Brooklyn baseball club will be in possession of so large a complement of youth – boys of all skills and sizes – that our position for the future will be assured. I will not make this decision alone. Gentlemen, it is up to you."

This broad program, approved after due discussion, was dramatic enough. However, there was one revolutionary point which Rickey wanted sorely to introduce, but somehow could not. He wanted his people first to weigh the project as a whole, rather than get sidetracked on a detail of policy. He decided that the policy question might better be taken up individually with the board members and stockholders.

It was George McLaughlin, president of the Brooklyn Trust Company, whom Rickey first approached. McLaughlin was neither board member nor stockholder, but his bank had long been the financial backlog and bulwark of the Brooklyn club in the days of heavy credit financing. He was consulted not only as a banker but as a former New York City police commissioner, a civic leader and a man with a deep knowledge of social affairs.

"We are going to beat the bushes, and we will take whatever comes out," Rickey said, with a twinkle in his eye. "And that might include a Negro player or two."

The banker eyed the baseball man for an instant, and then emitted a characteristic grunt. "I don't see why not," he said. "You might come up with something."

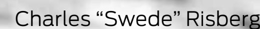
After this, Rickey tested the various stockholders and board members of the Dodgers. This was the first step in a carefully drawn plan for tapping the ignored talent pool of Negro baseball players. Despite subsequent hue and cry to the contrary, this was not a long-range sociological scheme. The motivating force was and always had been better baseball players. Naturally, Rickey was conscious of the sociological importance of the move. But he had watched Negro athletes come to the front in sports like boxing and track and field. He simply felt that if they could be great athletes in other sports, why not in baseball?

By the middle of 1944 he had a fair idea of what Negro talent was available in the Caribbean countries, Central and South America, and Mexico. He was now scrutinizing the so-called Negro Leagues in the United States. He soon concluded that they were not leagues in the recognized sense of the word. The teams played an inconsistent number of ball games in league competition; those with the better rosters would play between 40 and 45 league games a year, while the poorer teams had as few as 25. The Negro teams played as many as 10 and 12 exhibition games each week – sometimes three in a single day. They did not have uniform player contracts. In fact, there were no contracts at all, except for a few box-office stars like Satchel Paige and Josh Gibson.

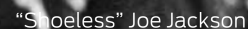
Many big-league baseball clubs were profiting from Negro baseball. They rented their baseball parks to the booking agents for big Negro games at a guaranteed per-game minimum of $1,000, with the option of taking 25 percent of the gross receipts. Since the booking agents exacted an additional 15 percent off the top, the Negro teams were left with only 60 percent of the gross. Little wonder that they had to engage in those marathon schedules of exhibition games.

Not even Rickey's trusted scouts knew at this time that he had any intention of bucking the color line. They were further thrown off the track in 1945 when, after the German surrender, Rickey spearheaded a move to form the United States League, a new Negro organization which was to have teams in key cities, including Brooklyn. For himself or for the Ebbets Field owners, he reserved a franchise and formulated plans for the Brooklyn Brown Dodgers. Brooklyn scouts George Sisler, Wid Matthews, and Clyde Sukeforth turned in many reports on colored candidates, but with the understanding and assumption that they were scouting for the Brooklyn Brown Dodgers.

Meanwhile big-league club owners in general had become most conscious of the Negro question. At a joint meet-


Charles “Swede” Risberg

Oscar “Happy” Felsch

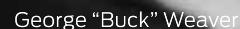

“Shoeless” Joe Jackson

Fred McMullin

Claude “Lefty” Williams

Eddie Cicotte

Arnold “Chick” Gandil


George “Buck” Weaver

THE BLACK SOX SCANDAL

The White Sox met the Cincinnati Reds for a dramatic World Series in 1919. Looking back, it would be regarded as the biggest, sloppiest, crudest fix of a sporting event that ever was known to man.

BY JOHN LARDNER
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN 1938

The first of October, 1919, was the Fourth of July all over again in Cincinnati. Most of the big stores were closed for the day. Flags draped the business section of town, and newsboys yelled themselves hoarse.

Tickets? You could still get a block of three for a hundred bucks from that operative over there in the corner of the lobby, if you liked to do business with Sitting Bull on a strictly Custer basis.

Everybody who was anybody would be at the ball game that afternoon. Anybody who was everybody would do the best he could. They were setting up direct-wire connection, *follow it play-by-play on the scoreboard, getcher official lineup here, getcher autograph picture of Eddie Roush!*

Big-league baseball had boomed in its first season after the World War. Every year the magnates cleared their throats and said: “Baseball, the national pastime, has enjoyed a banner year,” and this time, in the autumn of 1919, they never spoke a truer word. The fever was soaring. Lotteries or pools, selling tickets on total scores for the week, had done a million-dollar business from Oregon to Virginia since May. Batting averages were familiar to the country, and players heroic, as they never had been before.

And now, at the end of the season, the fans were sitting down, unglutted, to a World Series that was a World Series. Or, rather, to an exhibition of skill and science by the greatest ball club of all time, complete with human foils. For the White Sox, of Chicago, were like John L. Sullivan in the days when the Strong Boy toured the country offering $100 to the local volunteer who could go three rounds with him.

Cincinnati, the critics said, would last five rounds anyway – the Series was five games out of nine. The Reds were simply the survivors of a National League dogfight. But the Sox –

Take the testimony of an expert witness, Edward Trowbridge Collins.

“They were the best,” says Eddie, their captain and second baseman. “There never was a ball club like that one, in more ways than one. I hate to say it, but they were better than the Athletics I played with from 1910 through 1914.

“Offensively, from top to bottom, there wasn’t a breather for an opposing pitcher in the lineup ; and when it came to pitchers, Cicotte, Williams, Kerr, and Faber were tops as pitchers in the American League at the time – all on one club.”

Shano Collins or Nemo Liebold in right field; your witness, Eddie Collins, the peer of Lajoie, Hornsby, and Gehringer, second base; Buck Weaver, natural ballplayer of natural ballplayers, third base; Shoeless Joe Jackson, forerunner of Ruth, left field; Hap Felsch, great thrower and dangerous hitter, center field; Chick Gandil, a slick genius, first base; Swede Risberg, sure-handed fielder and tidy batsman, shortstop; Ray Schalk, the fastest and smartest catcher of his generation, behind the plate; and Cicotte, Williams, Kerr.

The Reds were just a pretty good team, and their best friends did not claim more for them at the time. The Redlegs who survive today – Greasy Neale, for one, whose brain, working on the side line of the Yale Bowl every fall, can be heard to purr like a dynamo as far away as Bridgeport – will not contradict you when you classify them as the short-enders of the century. On paper, they were 5 to 1.

But October 1 brought high carnival to Cincinnati just the same. Thirty-one thousand squeezed into the grandstand and bleachers, and hundreds of thousands stood outside by the scoreboards.

This was the first postwar World Series, the crowning glory of baseball’s renaissance, and it was Shineball Eddie Cicotte pitching for the White Sox – the greatest right-hander, next to Walter Johnson, in the game.

Cicotte’s second pitch of the day hit the batter, Maurice Rath, Red second baseman, in the small of the back. It wasn’t the first pitch, as generally believed. The first was a called strike.

In the last half of the fourth inning, Cicotte took the mound with the score 1 to 1 and looked nervously around at his fielders. Something about his manner had been puzzling the inmates of the press box from the start, from the time he hit Rath. Now they muttered, “What the hell?” Those men behind Eddie Cicotte could field their positions in their sleep.

Then *boff! boff! boff!* A run was in, and there were Reds on second and third. Dutch Ruether, Cincinnati pitcher, came to the plate. He whaled a terrific triple between Felsch and Jackson.

A few minutes later, five Red runs were in, and Cicotte was out. Kid Gleason, tough, gray little manager of the White Sox, was on the playing field, yanking his arms around, crazy with rage and grief.

The Reds won the ball game 9 to 1, as the Sox batsmen, each a sharpshooter, waved gently at Ruether’s delivery.

Cincinnati went solidly nuts that night. But some of the folks from out of town – ballplayers who watched from the grandstand, certain Chicago baseball writers, and a small percentage of Chicago fans – were mumbling and shaking their heads. This wasn’t any part of the ball club they’d been seeing.

Kid Gleason went into conference that night with his employer, the Old Roman, Charles A. Comiskey. And up in a double room at the Sinton Hotel, where the telephone rang every 60 seconds, a fellow called Bennett, from Des Moines, became very irritable. “This thing is beginning to smell,” he said to his roommate, a fellow from New York. “The dogs in the street know it.”

If, by dogs in the street, Mr. Bennett meant smart gamblers, he was absolutely correct. But the country at large didn’t know for another 12 months that the fix was in – the biggest, sloppiest, crudest fix of a sporting event that ever was known to man. It was a makeshift job; compounded in equal parts of bluff and welsh and cold gall, with no contributor or agent-contributor knowing what the man next to him was up to, and very seldom bothering to find out.

The Series was fixed on the strength of a fake telegram, with the help of a pair of go-betweens who lost their shirts

ROLE OF A LIFETIME

The young man who portrays the rookie in Norman Rockwell's famous painting recalls how he was discovered

When Sherman "Scotty" Safford walked into the Pittsfield High School cafeteria in 1956, he spotted a mysterious man sitting at a nearby table.

"He had a Bing Crosby-type pipe, very wavy hair, and a receding chin," recalls Scotty, now 75. "I knew he was somebody special, because nobody smoked in that place."

The mystery man was Norman Rockwell, and he came to Pittsfield High in search of a model. "I was a tall, gangly string bean of a kid," says Scotty. "At 6-foot-4, I towered over everybody, and obviously this caught his eye."

Rockwell met Scotty, shared his idea for an upcoming *Post* cover, and invited the athlete to pose as the talented "hayseed" who shows up on his first day in the major leagues with bat, glove, and suitcase in hand, convinced he's there to save the team. "As a 17-year-old kid, I couldn't have been more thrilled," Scotty recalls.

By the time the issue hit newsstands in March 1957, Scotty was in the Army and stationed at Fort Dix. His mother called with the news, telling him to run to the post exchange and buy as many copies as he could carry.

"I went AWOL," says Scotty, who wasn't allowed out of the barracks without a pass. "When I came back, my company commander was there; the executive officer was there; the first sergeant was there. My sergeant was standing at the top of the stairs in front of the door and growled, 'This better be good, mister!' I had an armload of magazines and I handed him one and said, 'I'm on the cover of the *Post* this week.' And I walked right by him and went upstairs."

Only later did the impact of his actions sink in. "The next morning at zero-dark-thirty, we're standing there, and it's pitch dark," Scotty says. "The company commander comes up with the magazine and says, 'Private Safford, would you sign this for me?'"

Scotty never saw Rockwell again, but *The Rookie* (right) became an instant classic. "It means so much to me," Scotty says. "probably more so as time goes on because I realize how special it was."

– Diana Denny

The Rookie
March 2, 1957
Norman Rockwell

Sleepy Inning
April 23, 1955
Earl Mayan

100th Anniversary of Baseball
July 8, 1939
Norman Rockwell

YOU CAN ALMOST HEAR THE BOOS

Yogi Berra appeared on the *Post* cover in this painting by Earl Mayan on April 20, 1957. Berra actually posed inside Yankee Stadium, but Mayan pictured him before a crowd of Red Sox fans. For models, he used his friends from Huntington, Long Island, who agreed to attend a game and act as the unfriendly crowd urging Berra to drop the ball. The *Post* reported that Mayan's friends "were real nice-looking people till he asked them to look like baseball fans."

Yogi Berra
April 20, 1957
Earl Mayan