



National Baseball Hall of Fame Library MSB 15
Chicago National League Ball Club Experimental Laboratories. Records, 1935-1939. 0.4 linear feet (1 archives box).

Abstract

Records of the Chicago National League Ball Club Experimental Laboratories consisting of reports analyzing the players and practices of the Chicago Cubs prepared by pioneering sports psychologist Coleman Griffith, along with John Sterrett, in 1938 and 1939. Highlights of the General Report include excerpts from the psychologists' confidential reports that provide an interesting psychological portrait of the team through the course of the season, plus an analysis of each player and coach, providing a unique sociological survey of a 1930s Major League team. Players included in this psychological profiling include Billy Herman, Gabby Hartnett, Ken O'Dea, Bill Jurgens, Carl Reynolds, Lloyd Johnson, John Corriden, Al Epperly, Larry French, Joe Marty, Tony Lazzeri, and Dizzy Dean. Other topics in the report include how to handle superstitious players, the use of psychological techniques in Major League scouting, and a section on how to ensure that pitcher Dizzy Dean plays at maximum effectiveness for the 1939 season. The collection also includes in-depth reports on the performance of key Cubs players such as Billy Herman, as well as reports on three players: Dick Bartell, Hank Leiber, and Gus Mancuso, who were newly acquired for the 1939 season. A series of twenty subject-specific reports detailing recommendations for improving the practice and training regimen of the club are also part of the collection. Also included are several items not directly related to the Griffith psychological study: the prospectus for a program to improve visual acuity, and two menus from the 1935 spring training train trip.

Provenance: The collection was donated to the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in 1967 by James Gallagher, a former executive with the Chicago Cubs. Papers arranged and described by Anne McFarland in October 2001, with additional processing by Jonathan Nelson in January 2002.

Restrictions on Access: By appointment only Monday-Friday 9AM-4PM; staff assistance required.

Separations: None.

Grants: CL-10021-01 (IMLS)

Historical Background

Conversations looking toward the establishment of the laboratories for the study of baseball skills in the Chicago National League Ball Club were begun in the fall of 1937. These conversations led to an outline of suggested studies presented by Coleman Griffith and approved by club owner Philip Wrigley. Griffith, who is considered the father of sports psychology, was responsible for developing the world's first sports psychology laboratory in 1925 at the University of Illinois. His research focused primarily on the interaction of psychomotor skills, performance, and personality. Griffith is also the author of two landmark books in the field, *The Psychology of Athletics* and *The Psychology of Coaching*. Griffith had further conversations with officers of the Cubs organization, finalizing the details of the program prior to the start of the 1938 season. It was decided that players would be evaluated based on the following fourteen traits: physical quickness, mental quickness, courage, emotional balance, cooperation, perception, adaptability, baseball skill, loyalty, intelligence, strength, attention, leadership, and personality. In early 1938 the psychological laboratory program was put into effect.

Scope and Content

The records of the Chicago National Baseball Club Experimental Laboratories are divided into four series, **General Report**, **Player Reports**, **Subject-Specific Reports**, and **Miscellaneous**.

General Report (1938-1939) consists of the 184-page report prepared by Griffith and Sterrett based on their observations throughout the 1938 season. Highlights of the report include: a general review of the Cubs 1938 season with a psychological analysis of the players and coaches, plus extensive excerpts from a confidential report prepared by the two investigators; a two-page psychological profile of each player on the 1938 Cubs team; an analysis of batting skill in relation to practice; recommendations for improving the scouting program; and a section on a variety of special problems including gossip, cliques, the presence of wives, superstitions, and a suggested training program for pitcher Dizzy Dean.

Player Reports (1939) focuses on an analysis of three current players, three newly acquired players, and three released players. The three current players, Phil Cavarretta, Bob Garbank, and Billy Herman, are analyzed for their general batting ability, and the batting ability of Cavarretta and Herman is analyzed against each pitching staff in the National League. There is also an analysis of newly acquired players, Dick Bartell, Hank Leiber, and Gus Mancuso, and their abilities against the Cubs pitching staff during the

1938 season. A similar analysis of three players released by the Cubs after the 1938 season: Jim Asbell, Joe Marty, and Coaker Triplett, is also included.

Subject-Specific Reports (1938-1939) consists of twenty reports, primarily relating to practice and training issues. The reports provide observations and suggestions on all aspects of baseball training and practice including spring training; batting, pitching, and fielding practice; pepper games; a discussion of how much baseball ability is innate and how much is learned behavior; and a recommendation that psychological testing and observation be included in baseball scouting. These reports focus on the problems with current practices and methods for improving them. Another report of particular interest is the mid-season report in which Griffith provides another set of observations about each Cubs player, discussing both the personality and baseball performance of each player through the first half of the 1939 season.

Miscellaneous (1935, n.d.) consists of several unrelated items that came with this collection. First, there are two menus from the Cubs spring training train trip in February 1935. Second, is an undated prospectus prepared by Associated Business Consultants in which the company presents a program to measure and improve the visual performance of the players on the Cubs team. Although there is no evidence that the Cubs implemented this program, it does show that scientific methods of improving sports performance were of considerable interest to the Cubs management.

Container List
Box Folder

General Report

1 1 General report, 1938-1939

Player Reports

Current players

2 Phil Cavarretta, 1939
3 Bob Garbark, 1939
 Billy Herman, 1939
4 General
5 v. Boston pitchers
6 v. Brooklyn pitchers
7 v. Cincinnati pitchers
8 v. New York pitchers
9 v. Philadelphia pitchers
10 v. Pittsburgh pitchers
11 v. St. Louis pitchers

Newly acquired players

12 Dick Bartell, 1939
13 Hank Leiber, 1939
14 Gus Mancuso, 1939

Released players

15 Jim Asbell, 1939
16 Joe Marty, 1939
17 Coaker Triplett, 1939

Subject-Specific Reports

18 Report 1: Psychological point of view, 1938
19 Report 2: Catalina Island training program, 1938
20 Report 3: Practice and game conditions, 1938
21 Report 4: Pepper games, 1938
22 Report 5: Batting practice, 1938
23 Report 6: Infield practice, 1938
24 Report 7: Pitching practice, 1938
25 Report 8: Special training set-ups, 1938
26 Report 9: Basic factors in teaching and coaching, 1938
27 Report 10: Practical and physiological limits, 1938
28 Report 11: Morning practice, 1938
29 Report 12: Achievement tests, 1938
30 Report 13: Personality reports, 1938
31 Report 14: Form and pace habits, 1938
32 Report 15: Instinct in baseball, 1938

Container List

Box Folder

Subject-Specific Reports, continued

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| 1 | 33 | Report 16: Suggestions for procedure in scouting, 1938 |
| | 34 | Report 17: Suggestions for introducing a psychological clinic,
1939 |
| | 35 | Report 18: Basic factors in handling men, 1939 |
| | 36 | Report 19: Mid-season comments on the team, 1939 |
| | 37 | Report 20: Some qualifications of a baseball manager, 1939 |

Miscellaneous

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| | 38 | Menus, spring training team train, 1935 |
| | 39 | Vision program prospectus, n.d. |