

(Not So Trivial) Trivia Questions

from Charles N. Billington's

Wrigley Field's Last World Series: The Wartime Chicago Cubs and The Pennant of 1945

p. 1 of 4

Baseball During World War II

Why was the national anthem not sung before every game in 1945? In those days, as was the practice in the armed forces, it was saved only for special occasions like national holidays. In the words of Philip K. Wrigley, "There is a difference between patriotism and commercialization."

What was the important role of Roy Nelson at Wrigley Field during the wartime era? He entertained fans at the keyboard of the park's electronic organ before games, between innings, and after games—but never between pitches. In 1941, when Wrigley ordered its installation, no other major league park offered such entertainment.

What war-related reasons affected major league attendance records during WWII? Uniformed servicemen always got into baseball games for free—and went uncounted—as did average citizens who got in free on occasions when parks collected materials such as cigarettes, cooking grease, and rubber tires that were donated to the war effort.

How did the war affect players' compensation? Players' salaries in WWII went from almost six times the national average for seven months of work (\$7,306) to just under three times the national average (\$6,423) due to both a decrease in their pay and an increase in the pay of the general population. Baseball players also received 10% of their pay in war bonds. Some star players, however, were making \$50,000–\$80,000.

Why were signing bonuses for ball players (not yet popular in general) non-existent during WWII? The unpredictable draft eliminated any guarantee for owners of a return on their investment.

Why were blackouts and dimouts at ballparks, especially those on the Eastern seaboard, commonplace during WWII? To prevent the lights from aiding enemy attacks.

What was the name for games that extended into the maximum of one hour of artificial light allowed after sunset at the Polo Grounds and at Ebbets Field in New York? Twi-night baseball.

What is a balata ball? When European horsehide for baseball covers couldn't be delivered because of the German occupation of France and Britain, and rubber became limited because the Japanese empire controlled most of the Far East's rubber tree plantations—and most of the world's rubber supply—the balata ball was the solution to the 1943 baseball shortage. Made of balata and granulated cork, these "dead" balls meant very low-scoring games. In 1943, the Cubs didn't get their first homerun until their 33rd game. Fortunately, the shortages were resolved by the 1944 season.

What happened during an infamous collection drive at New York's Polo Grounds in September of 1942? During a

doubleheader against the Boston Braves in which the Giants gave free admission to youngsters under 16 in exchange for scrap metal donations, bored kids charged the field in the eighth inning. Order could not be restored; and the Giants, who were ahead at the time, forfeited to the Braves.

Cubs History

Since what year have Cubs games been on the radio? 1925.

What was the trademark line of legendary Cubs announcer Bert Wilson of WIND? "I don't care who wins as long as it's the Cubs!"

In what year did the Cubs become the first team in National League history to draw more than one million fans? 1927.

What two sportswriters eventually did stints as Cubs' general managers in the early part of the 20th century? William Veeck, Sr., hired by William Wrigley in 1919, and Jim Gallagher, hired by his son Philip K. Wrigley in 1940.

Who was the Cubs' first Latino player? Hi Bithorn, of Puerto Rican and Danish extraction. Bithorn died in Mexico City in 1962 under mysterious circumstances. San Juan, Puerto Rico's baseball stadium is named for him.

What are some of the reasons for the Cubs' quick postwar decline? The war's effect on their farm system, their lateness in developing a farm system, a poor record with recruits, management's impatience with slow-developing talent, and a series of disastrous trades.

The 1945 Cubs

Who were some of the Cubs strongest players in 1945? Phil Cavarretta at first base, Don Johnson at second, and Stan Hack at third. Right fielder and power hitter Bill Nicholson was the most popular Cub of the WWII era. Center fielder and newcomer Andy Pafko had noteworthy running, fielding, hitting, and throwing abilities, and he led the league with assists. And, in Mickey Livingston, Dewey Williams, Paul Gillespie, and Len Rice, the Cubs had a strong catching quartet as well.

Which 1945 Cub is one of only nine grandfather-grandson combinations to play in the major leagues? Shortstop Len Merullo. His grandson Matt launched his six-year career as a White Sox catcher.

What did the ethically-minded Philip K. Wrigley do when he recruited Len Merullo away from his final year of college at Villanova? For depriving the school of a year of Merullo's athleticism, Wrigley sent the school a check for \$4,000 to cover the cost of Merullo's scholarship and education.

(Not So Trivial) Trivia Questions

from Charles N. Billington's

Wrigley Field's Last World Series: The Wartime Chicago Cubs and The Pennant of 1945

p. 2 of 4

From what teenage tragedy did Andy Pafko miraculously recover? The explosion of a church heater blinded him and burned one side of his face. He was rescued by a friend who later died from the injuries suffered in the blaze. Medical treatment eventually restored his vision and, thus, his athletic career.

What crowning touch did Andy Pafko achieve during the September 1945 game in which he received gifts and public praise from the Chicago Slovak Goodwill Club for being such an upstanding member of the Chicago Slovak community? He hit a grand slam homer in front of a bursting crowd of almost 44,000.

What team trend began after Cubs catcher Paul Gillespie became impressed with a certain aspect of a Boston waiter's appearance in early July 1945? Crew cuts! Soon after Gillespie adopted the haircut, six other high-profile Cubs also sported the look: Cavarretta, Chipman, Hack, Nicholson, Rice, and Sauer.

Which 1945 Cubs pitching dynamo was also known for his volatility, clubhouse pipe smoking, gourmand inclinations, and league-leading wardrobe? Paul Derringer.

Which member of the 1945 Cubs team made an incredible recovery due to a can of exploding tar? After sliding into second base and landing on his shoulder when he played for a minor league team in Montreal in 1940, shortstop Roy Hughes was told his career was over. That winter, he was showered with hot, sticky tar when attempting to thaw a can of tar. The heat amazingly welded his shoulder muscles back together just right, and he was able to resume his life as a ball player.

Which 1945 Cub was taught his sinker and curveball by the legendary Peaches Davis, and wore a corset when he pitched because of the workplace accident that excluded him from the draft (he worked in the Oklahoma oil fields off-season)? Hank Wyse.

Which 1945 Cub was a milkman in Chicago's Edgewater and Rogers Park neighborhoods during the off-season? Pitcher Paul Erickson.

Which 1945 Cub pitcher was a tung oil farmer in Mississippi during the off-season? Claude Passeau.

Which 1945 Cub and Chicago native was a National League Batting Champion and Most Valuable Player in 1945? Team captain, Phil Cavarretta. A baseball star at Lane Technical High School during the Depression, Cavarretta was planning on dropping out and getting a job to support his family when a tryout he landed at Wrigley Field secured him a spot in the minor leagues.

Which 1945 team member became the first Cub to win a batting champ title since Heinie Zimmerman hit .372 in 1912? Phil Cavarretta with a .356.

What 1945 Cubs player turned player-manager was fired by Wrigley when told the Cubs wouldn't be competitive in 1954? Phil Cavarretta, who went on to fill in for the White Sox in 1955.

Who was the only player on the 1945 Cubs whose father had played in the Majors? Second baseman, Don Johnson. His dad, Ernie Johnson, played shortstop for the White Sox in the 1921 season after the Black Sox scandal.

What mid-season purchase showed Cubs management's commitment to winning the pennant? Hot young Yankees pitcher, Hank Borowy.

The 1945 World Series

How did the Cubs win the pennant? They simply fielded, hit, and pitched better than any other team in the league. Although extremely rare for a World Series team to lead in all three of these areas, the 1945 Cubs did. Their weakest offensive stat for the season was actually their homerun record. The Cubs had a well-balanced lineup of players who had better years at their positions than their counterparts on other teams.

Of 80 sport writers of the day, how many picked Chicago to win the World Series in 1945? 35.

Why did Philip K. Wrigley not travel to Detroit for the first three games of the 1945 World Series? Wrigley stayed in town as a show of support to fans unable to buy tickets because of scalpers and in an attempt to somehow resolve this ticket quandary. He also supervised the preparation of Wrigley Field for the big event: its thorough cleaning; the training of ushers on the Handie-Talkies; the hanging of bunting; and the addition of 4,000 folding chairs to the box seat section.

How much did Cubs' World Series tickets cost in 1945? \$7.20 for a box seat and \$6 for a grandstand ticket; scalpers were getting \$50 and \$25 for these same seats.

What did the IRS do in response to the 1945 World Series ticket scalpers? They assigned 25 special agents to make sure scalpers were paying the taxes due on the amount over the face value that they were selling the tickets for.

What crowd control device newly developed by Galvin Manufacturing Company (later renamed Motorola) was employed in Chicago during the 1945 series by Andy Frain ushers? Walkie-talkies, then called "Handie-Talkies."

The wives of the Chicago players and sportswriters were involved in what early "crisis" of the 1945 World Series? As Detroit was an industrial capital of the Allied powers during WWII, hotel space was always difficult to find. Chicago players and sportswriters traveling with their wives to Detroit were initially lodged on a docked passenger steam ship with extremely

(Not So Trivial) Trivia Questions

from Charles N. Billington's

Wrigley Field's Last World Series: The Wartime Chicago Cubs and The Pennant of 1945

p. 3 of 4

small cabins, while management and single players were booked at better hotels. The wives protested so vehemently that first night that everyone was relocated by 2 a.m. from the ship to the Book-Cadillac Hotel, where manager Grimm was staying.

What was financially notable about the 1945 World Series? It was the most lucrative Fall Classic in history at that time, generating revenues of \$270,125. Each Detroit player earned \$6,123 for the series; each Chicago player earned \$4,277, or approximately the average salary of a major league player that year. Parking lots could get up to \$1 per space; hot dog vendors averaged \$60 per day.

What was memorable about the length of Game Six of the 1945 World Series? The Cubs won in 12 innings, making it the longest World Series game ever played up to that time.

1945 Statistics

The 1945 Cubs ended the second phase of their season with what winning percentage? A remarkable 75%.

When in 1945 did the Cubs secure the first place position? Early July. They had quickly moved from fifth to second place, thanks to going 13-3 on an extended road trip, which was not predicted to be easy for them. By late July, the Cubs were an astounding 24-7 against East Coast opponents in their last 31 games. By the beginning of August they were 5½ games in front of St. Louis. At that time they were 31-6 in their last 37 games and 16-1 in their last 17 road games.

When the Cubs led the National League at the end of August, 1945, how far ahead of the Cardinals were they? 7½ games up.

How many last place finishes would the Cubs experience in the 20 years after their exuberant 1945 season? Eight last-place and six second-to-last place finishes.

What new major league record did the Cubs set when they won their second game against the Dodgers on September 16, 1945? Winning 18 doubleheaders in a season, eclipsing St. Louis's 1944 record by one.

What is the middling claim-to-fame of the 1945 Detroit Tigers? Their 88-65 record in 1945 was the lowest winning percentage by a pennant winner in baseball history to that point.

How would the 1945 Cubs record hold up in 2003? The Cubs' 1945 record was so good they would have finished first in any major league division in 2003. Conversely, the 2003 team record would have earned the Cubs third place in the American League and fourth place in the National League in 1945.

What was significant about the Cub's third-place finish in 1946? It would be the Cubs' last first-division finish for 21 years.

What was the Cubs' best record in the 18 years after their 1945 pennant win? .500 (77-77) in 1952. Whereas they had five first-place finishes in the previous 21 years, and participated in 13 pennant races and came in last only once in the 70 years prior to 1945.

Baseball History

How many U.S. cities had professional minor league teams in the 1930s, at the peak of their popularity? 330 cities had professional minor league teams, with a total of about 5,000 salaried players, making the minor leagues an important American industry. Major league teams were based in larger cities that were joined by rail.

How is the incident on August 19, 1941, when Pirates manager Frankie Frisch attempted to get umpire Jocko Conlon to call the game due to the rainy conditions, but is instead thrown out, best remembered? It was immortalized by Norman Rockwell as a *Saturday Evening Post* cover.

What upstart baseball organization drained many good players from the major leagues in 1946? The Mexican League, a professional league funded by Mexican millionaire Jorge Pasqual.

National League History

Which National League team was the biggest disappointment of the 1945 season? The Cincinnati Reds. An expected pennant contender at the beginning of the season, they came in seventh place, and lost 21 of their 22 games with Chicago that year.

What National League team set two new records for futility in the 1945 season? The Philadelphia Phillies. Coming in dead last and 15 games out of seventh place, the Phillies became the first team ever to finish 17 seasons in last place and 13 seasons with over 100 defeats. This, despite star Vince DiMaggio setting a major league record by hitting four grand slam home runs in one season.

Who shepherded three legendary teams to greatness (Cincinnati Reds, Brooklyn Dodgers, and New York Yankees)? Larry MacPhail.

Who was the first team to offer season tickets (1934), the first to travel by plane (from St. Louis to Chicago, 1935), and the first to broadcast their games on radio (1934)? The Cincinnati Reds under the direction of Larry MacPhail.

National League Players of the Wartime Era

Who was the first major league ball player to enlist in WWI, then later re-enlisted at age 54 in 1943 to serve in WWII? Hank Gowdy, a Cincinnati Reds coach in 1945.

(Not So Trivial) Trivia Questions

from Charles N. Billington's

Wrigley Field's Last World Series: The Wartime Chicago Cubs and The Pennant of 1945

p. 4 of 4

Who incredibly hit nine balata balls out of the park in 1943 to lead the team in homers? Augie Galan of the Brooklyn Dodgers; they acquired him earlier from the Cubs.

How old was the youngest person ever sent in to pitch a major league game? Fifteen. Teenager Joe Nuxhall did some relief pitching in 1944 for the Reds, who were depleted of older and more established players by WWII.

Who ended up becoming one of the era's best southpaw pitchers because as a youth he was too impatient to wait for his broken right arm to heal? Max Lanier of the St. Louis Cardinals.

Who wrote a colorful depiction of 1930s/1940s major league baseball, including a whole chapter devoted to the Dodgers' exploits with Ernest Hemingway during spring training in Havana, Cuba? Kirby Higbe in his biography, *The High Hard One*.

Who spent time in prison for writing bad checks after 12 distinguished years in the major leagues, then went on to become a prison guard? Kirby Higbe.

What was remarkable about major leaguers Dick Sipek, who played for Cincinnati in 1945, and his father, New York Giants pitcher, Luther "Dummy" Taylor? They were both deaf, and two of only three deaf players to play major league baseball up until that point.

Which wartime Dodgers player was one of the few baseballers exempt from the military because of his height? Howie "Steeple" Schultz, who at 6-foot, 6-inches went on to be a pioneering NBA player.

What are Tigers Pitcher Paul "Dizzy" Trout's ironic connections to Chicago? As a hotshot high school player from Terra Haute who traveled to Chicago in 1934 to try to pitch batting practice for the Cubs, Trout's offer was refused. The Cubs even refused his request for something to eat when he told them he had walked four miles to the park from the train station. He later spurned the Cubs interest in him in favor of Detroit, where his pitching during the 1945 series was an important reason for the Tigers' victory. He son, Steve Trout, later pitched for the Cubs during the 1984 playoffs, 12 years after his father had died.

The Wartime St. Louis Cardinals

What team could claim the strength of their 4-F players as an important reason for their consecutive pennants in 1942, 1943, and 1944? The St. Louis Cardinals.

Which team made more than half a million dollars between 1939 and 1942 selling aging players' contracts to other clubs?

The St. Louis Cardinals, who replaced their veteran players with lower-paid players from their well-known extensive farm system.

Despite the tremendous popularity of minor league baseball in the United States in the first part of the 20th century, which three teams of the wartime era had no working agreement with minor league teams? The Phillies, the Pirates, and the Browns. Until 1941, the Cubs only had an arrangement with one team: the Los Angeles Angels. By contrast, in 1940, the Cardinals controlled 32 minor league teams, and had agreements with eight others, putting 600 minor leaguers, or almost 1/6 of all minor league players, at their disposal.

The Postwar White Sox

What famed White Sox outfielder joined the team in 1951, kicking off perhaps the greatest decade in Sox history? Minnie Minoso. One of the Cubs' conspicuous postwar missteps was their lateness in recruiting and developing talented African-American and Latino ball players. The White Sox captured the city's minority baseball audience before the Cubs even knew such an audience existed.

Who added to the White Sox's success in the decades after WWII, by bringing fireworks, giveaways, and exploding scoreboards to Comiskey Park? Bill Veeck.

How did the White Sox postwar attendance compare with the Cubs? From 1951-1967 the Sox outdrew the Cubs in every season, and in four of those years—1959, 1961, 1962, and 1964—their attendance was nearly double the Cubs'.

What things gave the Cubs an advantage over the White Sox with the Baby Boomers growing up in the 50s and 60s, thus creating a legion of future fans? Games televised in the afternoons, which children could watch after school. Afternoon games, period (there weren't yet lights at Wrigley). Park accessibility (with its more amiable neighborhood location and easy accessibility by el or bus, Wrigley Field was a more natural choice for young fans than the industrial area surrounding Comiskey Park). This was the era when the Cubs played in "Beautiful Wrigley Field," and fans were invited to come have a picnic in the sunshine and watch Ernie Banks hit a home run.