Collection Number
BA MSS 15

Title
Chicago National League Ball Club Experimental Laboratories Records

Inclusive Dates
1935-1939

Abstract
Records of the Chicago National League Ball Club Experimental Laboratories consists 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.


Access
By appointment during regular business hours, email research@baseballhall.org. Available on microfilm.

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
1 1 General report, 1938-1939
Player Reports
Current players
1  2  Phil Cavarretta, 1939
1  3  Bob Garbark, 1939
      Billy Herman, 1939
1  4  General
1  5  v. Boston pitchers
1  6  v. Brooklyn pitchers
1  7  v. Cincinnati pitchers
1  8  v. New York pitchers
1  9  v. Philadelphia pitchers
1 10  v. Pittsburgh pitchers
1 11  v. St. Louis pitchers

Newly acquired players
1 12  Dick Bartell, 1939
1 13  Hank Leiber, 1939
1 14  Gus Mancuso, 1939

Released players
1 15  Jim Asbell, 1939
1 16  Joe Marty, 1939
1 17  Coaker Triplett, 1939

Subject-Specific Reports
1 18  Report 1: Psychological point of view, 1938
1 19  Report 2: Catalina Island training program, 1938
1 20  Report 3: Practice and game conditions, 1938
1 21  Report 4: Pepper games, 1938
1 22  Report 5: Batting practice, 1938
1 23  Report 6: Infield practice, 1938
1 24  Report 7: Pitching practice, 1938
1 25  Report 8: Special training set-ups, 1938
1 26  Report 9: Basic factors in teaching and coaching, 1938
1 27  Report 10: Practical and physiological limits, 1938
1 28  Report 11: Morning practice, 1938
1 29  Report 12: Achievement tests, 1938
1 30  Report 13: Personality reports, 1938
1 31  Report 14: Form and pace habits, 1938
1 32  Report 15: Instinct in baseball, 1938
1 33  Report 16: Suggestions for procedure in scouting, 1938
1 34  Report 17: Suggestions for introducing a psychological clinic, 1939
1 35  Report 18: Basic factors in handling men, 1939
1 36  Report 19: Mid-season comments on the team, 1939
1 37  Report 20: Some qualifications of a baseball manager, 1939

Miscellaneous
1 38  Menus, spring training team train, 1935
1 39  Vision program prospectus, n.d.