

ORIGIN OF BASE BALL

Having read from boyhood, principally, the writings of Mr. Henry Chadwick that our American game of Base Ball originated from Rounders, and having been taunted with this statement around the world, generally spoken in derision of our game, and having actually played in a game of Rounders, I am now convinced that Base Ball did not originate from Rounders any more than Cricket originated from that asinine pastime.

About the only tangible argument that I ever heard advanced by Mr. Chadwick or any other authority tending to prove that Base Ball did originate from Rounders is the following:

In a recent letter to me Mr. Chadwick says: "You cannot go back on the fact that Base Ball derived its origin from the old English game of Rounders because the basic principle of both games is the field use of a bat, a ball and bases."

Admitting that this is so as far as it applies to Base Ball, as a matter of fact this does not altogether apply to Rounders, for its basic principle is the field of "a bat, a ball, posts or stakes and a hole."

This kind of reasoning might as well apply and would prove quite as conclusively that Cricket also originated from Rounders, because the basic principle of both games is the field use of "a bat, a ball and stumps or stakes;" or, that Golf, originated from Rounders, because the basic principle of both games is the field use of "a bat, a ball and a hole;" or, that Lacrosse originated from Rounders, because the basic principle of both games is the field use of "a bat, a ball and posts."

Just imagine the argument you would get into and the touchiness an Englishman would show if you told him that his favorite game of cricket derived its origin from Rounders; or the Scotchman's indescribable flow of words if you stated that his ancient game of Golf originated from Rounders; or, the American Indian's grunt if it was explained to him that his game of lacrosse originated from Rounders.

Now, boil down together the Englishman's indignation, the Scotchman's huff and the Indian's grunt into one composite mix and you have my feelings and that of every lover of Base Ball when a claim is made that our great American national game of Base Ball originated from Rounders.

Base Ball is of American Origin.

My investigation and research so far inclines me to the opinion that Base Ball did have its origin in the old colonial game of "One Old Cat." "One Old Cat" was played by three boys—a thrower, catcher and batsman. The latter, after striking the ball, ran to a goal about thirty feet distant, and by returning to the batsman's position without being put out, counted one run or "tally." Two Old Cat" was played by four or more boys with two batsmen placed about forty feet apart. "Three Old Cat" was played by six or more boys with three batsmen, the ground being laid out in shape of a triangle. "Four Old Cat" was played by eight or more boys

with grounds laid out in shape of a square. "Four Old Cat" required four throwers, alternating as catchers, and four batsmen, the ball being passed from one corner to the next around the square field. Individual scores or tallies were credited to the batsmen making the hit and running from one corner to the next. Some ingenious American lad naturally suggested that one thrower be placed in the center of the square, which brought nine players into the game, and which also made it possible to change the game into teams or sides, one side fielding and the other side batting. This was for many years known as the old game of "Town Ball," from which the present game of Base Ball may have had its origin.

One prominent Base Ball writer claims that he can prove that one of the founders of the old Knickerbocker club came onto the field one day in the early fifties with the original game of Base Ball worked out and described on a sheet of paper, and that this game was tried and liked so well that the game was adopted then and there, and the Knickerbocker club was organized to put it into effect.

If such an ancestry can be established for Base Ball every American friend of the game will be delighted.

While "One Old Cat," or "Town Ball" may not rank much higher in the ancestral scale than "Rounders," yet they strongly appeal to the lover of our national sport as distinctively American games.

The Old Knickerbocker Club of New York the First Base Ball Team

In looking over the early history of Base Ball I find the names of eleven New York gentlemen who were the founders of the original Knickerbocker Club, names that should be honored and remembered as founders of our national game by the million base ball players of the present day. They are as follows: Col. James Lee, Dr. Ransom, Abraham Tucker, James Wheaton, Duncan F. Curry, E. R. Dupignae, Jr., Wm. H. Tucker and Daniel L. Adams.

Are not some of these gentlemen still living? Or possibly some of their heirs might throw some light on the early history and especially the origin of Base Ball.

A Special Commission to Investigate The Origin of Base Ball Proposed

In order to gather this information I would suggest, and hereby respectfully request, that Mr. James E. Sullivan, President of the American Sports Publishing Company, 15 Warren street, New York City, take the initiative in the work of collecting all possible facts, proofs, interviews, etc., calculated to throw light on this subject, and when collected, submit same to a special Board of Base Ball Commissioners or Judges, with the understanding that this board will impartially examine all evidence of whatever nature and promulgate their decision as to the origin of Base Ball.

I would nominate for that Board: Ex-Governor Morgan G. Bulkeley, now United States Senator from Connecticut, and the first President of the National League; Hon. Arthur P. Gorman, United States Senator from Maryland, an old ball player and ex-President of the famous old National Base Ball Club of Washington, D. C.; Mr. A. G. Mills of New York, an enthusiastic ball player before and during the Civil War, and the third President of the National League; Mr. N. E. Young of Washington, D. C., a

veteran ball player and the first Secretary and afterward the fourth President of the National League; Mr. Alfred J. Reach of Philadelphia, and Mr. George Wright of Boston, both well known as two of the most famous ball players in their day, and such additional names as Mr. Sullivan or the above-named Board may deem it advisable to add. Mr. Sullivan to act as Secretary of this Commission.

As all of these gentlemen are interested in Base Ball I feel quite sure they will be willing to act in this capacity, and I am certain that their decision as to the origin of our national sport will be accepted by everyone final and conclusive.

I would urge strongly that everyone interested in this subject transmit soon as possible to Mr. Sullivan, Warren street, New York, any proof data or information he may possess can secure bearing on this matter with the hope that before another year rolls around this vexed question as to the actual origin and early history of the great American national game of Base Ball may be settled for all time.