

In the WAKE of the NEWS

By DAVID CONDON

FIFTY YEARS AGO the Chicago White Sox had one of the greatest baseball teams ever assembled. But Charles A. Comiskey's 1919 team never became legendary as champions. Eight became involved in sport's most infamous scandal, and after a half-century they still are remembered as "The Black Sox."

Edward Victor [Knuckles] Cicotte, a right-handed pitcher and a self-confessed ringleader of the conspiracy to throw the 1919 world series to the Cincinnati Reds, was buried Thursday in Livonia, Mich.

Cicotte, 84, undoubtedly took several secrets to the grave, because the complete truth of the Black Sox never can be known.

This newspaper and its writers, including two former conductors of The Wake of the News, were instrumental in bringing the Black Sox scandal into the open. So what actually is known is summarized anew for this generation.

Besides Cicotte, the players involved were:

Joseph Jefferson [Shoeless Joe] Jackson, left-handed hitting outfielder. Born July 16, 1887; died Dec. 1951. A baseball superstar with a lifetime batting average of .356.

George Davis [Buck] Weaver right-handed hitting third baseman. Born Aug. 18, 1890; died Jan. 31, 1956. Ty Cobb called him "The greatest third baseman I ever saw. There was no chance of beating out a bunt on him." Weaver died denying his guilt.

Oscar Emil [Happy] Felsch, right-handed hitting center fielder. Born Aug. 22, 1891; died Aug. 17, 1964.

Claude Preston [Lefty] Williams, southpaw pitcher; born March 9, 1893, and died in November, 1959.

Frederick William McMullin, utility infielder. Born Oct. 13, 1891; died Nov. 21, 1952. And the two survivors:

Charles Arnold [Chick] Gandil, right-handed hitting first baseman. Born Jan. 19, 1889. Another alleged ringleader.

Charles August [Swede] Risberg, right-handed hitting shortstop. Born Oct. 13, 1894.

THE 1919 SERIES opened in Cincinnati. The Reds chased Cicotte in the fourth inning and won, 9 to 1. The Reds were limited to four hits by Williams but won the second 4 to 2.

Then Dickie Kerr blanked the Reds, 3 to 0, in Comiskey Park. Cincinnati beat Cicotte, 2 to 0, in the fourth game. A 5 to 0 shutout over Williams was posted in the fifth game. The series returned to Cincinnati.

Chicago took the next two: Kerr won, 5 to 4, in 10 innings, and Cicotte, who asked for the pitching assignment, baffled the Reds, 4 to 1.

They came back to Comiskey park, and Cincinnati clinched the series by routing Williams in the first inning for a 10 to 5 victory.

Even before the series opened, there were rumbles it had been rigged for Cincinnati to win.

Ring Lardner, former conductor of The Wake of the News, was singing "I'm Forever Throwing Ball Games."

THE TRIBUNE'S James Crusinberry, in the lobby of Cincinnati's Sinton hotel, said he saw a former featherweight champion waving money to bet on the underdogs from Cincinnati.

Comiskey was on the scent after the opening loss. Some suggested his suspicions were sour grapes.

Before the fifth game, Manager Kid Gleason told THE TRIBUNE'S Harvey T. Woodruff, another previous conductor of The Wake. "It's the best team that ever went into the world series. But it isn't playing the baseball that won the pennant."

THE suspicious Comiskey held up the pay of eight players. Seven of the eight were back in 1920. Gandil had a salary dispute, refused to report, and was suspended.

In July, 1920, Crusinberry was with Lardner in New York and received a telephone call from Kid Gleason, who was at Dinty Moore's with a man he identified as Abe Attell, the former featherweight champion. Gleason said Attell was implicating Arnold Rothstein, notorious New York gambler.

All Crusinberry could do momentarily was listen.

But the lid began to lift on Sept. 18, 1920, when THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE headlined a lengthy letter from Fred M. Loomis, a business man who lived at 4840 S. Michigan av. with business offices in the First National Bank building. Loomis, an intimate of several Sox players, wrote in part:

"Only recently a friend of mine told of talking to a

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player of a visiting team . . . that player stated that it was shameful the way certain White Sox played ball in the world series . . ."

The letter to THE TRIBUNE ignited the fuse. On Sept. 23, this newspaper reported in a page 1 banner: "BARE 'FIXED' WORLD SERIES." The story was preceded by an italicized statement from Hartley L. Replogle, assistant state's attorney:

"The last world series between the Chicago White Sox and the Cincinnati Reds was not on the square. From five to seven players on the White Sox are involved."

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B an Johnson, president of the league, admitted he "had heard statements that the White Sox would not dare to win the 1920 pennant because the managers of a gambling syndicate, alleged to have certain players in their power, had forbidden it." The White Sox at the moment were in the midst of the 1920 pennant race!

The names of the eight players were not made public until THE TRIBUNE of Sept. 25-revealed them. On Sept. 29, THE TRIBUNE headlined: "TWO SOX CONFESS; EIGHT INDICTED, INQUIRY GOES ON." Cicotte and Jackson had talked.

Cicotte had been pressured by a development—in

THE FIRST CROOKED PLAY OF SERIES?

According to assigned TRIBUNE writers, the first crooked play of the 1919 world series came with Cincinnati batting in the fourth inning of the opening game. The score was 1 to 1. One batter was out. Lou Duncan singled. Bill Kopf tapped an easy grounder to Cicotte, who was an excellent fielding pitcher. "There was ample time for a double play. Cicotte drew his arm back to throw to second base, then hesitated and finally threw to Risberg. The throw was low and to Risberg's left, whereas it should have been to his right for the relay to first base. Risberg stumbled over the bag, which left him in bad position." Cincinnati then got five consecutive hits, scored five runs, and Cicotte was relieved by Roy Wilkinson.

Philadelphia. There one Bill Maharg, well known in sporting circles, had said that he and Bill Burns, a former big league pitcher, had conspired to involve eight Sox in throwing the series. According to Maharg, Cicotte had said the series could be fixed if the eight received \$100,000.

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MAHARG SAID the Sox were told they would be paid \$20,000 after each loss in the best five games out of nine series. Maharg implicated Attell but said he believed the fixers were faking Rothstein's involvement.

Maharg said he and Burns lost "every cent we had" when Honest Dickie Kerr won the first White Sox victory.

After Maharg's damaging statements, Cicotte hastened to Comiskey and said: ". . . I double crossed you . . . I got \$10,000 for being a crook."

"Don't tell it to me," said Comiskey. "Tell the grand jury."

Cicotte reportedly was tearful telling the jury:

" . . . The eight of us . . . got together in my room three or four days before the games started. Gandil was master of ceremonies. We talked about throwing the series—decided we could get away with it. . . . I told them I had to have the cash in advance. . . . I found the money under my pillow. There was \$10,000. . . . I went on. I threw the game."

Jackson confessed to a judge: "They promised me \$20,000. All I got was \$5,000 that Lefty Williams handed me in a dirty envelope." A few hours later Jackson told THE TRIBUNE that

because Kerr won the third game, "these gamblers double crossed us for double crossing them."

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THIS WAS ENOUGH for Comiskey. Altho the White Sox were only a game behind Cleveland in the pennant race, the Old Roman suspended seven of the accused. Gandil already was under suspension. Cleveland won the pennant.

THE TRIBUNE of Sept. 28, 1920, noted briefly that Federal Judge Kenesaw M. Landis, a great fan, was "stunned" by the news. Besides the scandal, the next day's editions carried an insignificant notation that Hugo M. Friend, a master in chancery, had become judge of the circuit court.

Months later, Circuit court Judge Hugo M. Friend presided at the criminal trial of the alleged fixers. Because Attell, the key witness, refused to identify himself as the Abe Attell mentioned in the grand jury testimony, the case was weak. The eight legally were exonerated.

By that time tho, baseball had plucked Judge Landis from the federal bench to become the game's first czar. Landis banned the eight from ever again playing in the major leagues.

Comiskey, after all was said and done, gave 10 of his players—including Ray Schalk, Red Faber, and Eddie Collins—his personal check for \$1,500 each. That was the difference between the winning and losing share of the 1919 world series.

Thru 50 years, the Black Sox story has stayed alive and no one has the complete truth. Crusinberry finally revealed he had written the letter for Loomis. Thirteen years ago Gandil published a story that did implicate Rothstein. Gandil said that when Rothstein demanded a guarantee that the eight would throw the game, he assured the gambler that the players pledged their honor. According to Gandil, Rothstein retorted: "It's weak collateral."

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Ten Years Ago Today—The Braves regained the National league lead by beating Cincinnati twice in Milwaukee, 12 to 4 and 2 to 1.