

Carroll County Times "Carroll's Yesteryears" Articles

"Tidewater Cement Co. Baseball Game 1920"

Carroll County Times article for 11 June 1995

By Jay A. Graybeal

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, baseball became the predominant local sport. Baseball games were played on a variety of makeshift ballfields throughout the county until after World War II. 75 years ago two local teams, composed of workers at the Tidewater Cement Plant (known as Lehigh Portland Cement Company since 1925) in Union Bridge, prepared to face each other on July 5th. The Pilot newspaper carried letters from the captains of the opposing teams and noted that interest in the game was "nearing the fusion point."

Baseball in "High Gear" at the Cement Plant

The following letters, which we are reproducing, between two plant teams known as the "Foreman" under Mr. Blank, and the "Operators" under Mr. Crist, shows that interest is nearing the fusion point at the plant.

May 29th, 1920

Mr. Crist

Dear Sir:

According to rumors around the plant, the baseball game on July 4th, between the Operators and Foremen of the Tidewater Portland Cement Plant will be an important factor in the amusements of that day. Am informed that you are getting up a team among the operators and that you are going to wipe the Foremen's team off the map. You claim you have already hired a doctor to take care of the men on the FOREMEN'S team. That is a bright idea and we would like to suggest that you hire some more doctors to take care of the Operators' team as you will need them. When the Foremen's team steps up on that glorious day you men will have nervous prostration and will possibly also need a few nurses. The Foremen's team will not hire any doctors as they will be able to take care of themselves.

You have also boasted about your players, about what they would do and so on. Now, we admit you have a few good men, but you cannot get up a team that will have a 'ghost of a show,' alongside the Foreman's team. For instance, we will name a few of our players this time just to show you that we have the goods on you. You take Mr. Rinehart, our star Pitcher, he has the curve and drop down to a science and when it comes to a straight ball, you simply can't see it. Our Catcher, Mr. Harvey Harry, will stop any ball put over by your men and if he can't Mr. Dibbert sure will.

Then you take Mr. Eichelberger, he can out run any two men on your team. While the balance of the team will consist of extra star players, we hesitate at this time to name any more, but if you boast again what your team is going to do, we will name the balance of the players and show you beyond the shadow of a doubt how utterly impossible it is for you to get up a team to play against the FOREMEN'S TEAM.

Yours truly,

The Foreman's Team.

June 2, 1920

My dear Mr. Blank:

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In reply to your letter of the 29th ultimo, will state that your shortcomings as a mind-reader will surely be realized, by you, when our team steps on the field on the 5th of July.
When we heard of some of your players, it caused us convulsions of laughter.

As you feel that we are unable to secure a team of operators to compete with the Foremen's team, this very feeling of yours is as helpful to us as the sunshine to the flowers.

You mention in your letter that you advise us to have several doctors to take care of our players, we retaliate your remark by advising that it will be well for you to have several undertakers to take care of your team.

Calling your attention to your able catcher, Mr. Harvey Harry, it is our humble opinion that the only thing he can catch is the measles, and your star Pitcher, Mr. Rinehart, whom we know so well as being a good man when it comes to pitching horse-shoes.

The way to inspire Mr. Eichelberger to run is to have a lunch counter at each base. Mr. Lindsay can only qualify as a player by putting a protecting screen over the open space between his chippendale nether extremities. The only way to get Dad Cover over the bases is to attach a sky-rocket to his coat tail and touch it off at the proper moment. We take it for granted that you have gotten your "dope" from Mr. Moyer, who has consulted the Ouija board.

Here's to Mr. Selby that he gets Eli to apply a coat of black paint to his head so that the glare of the sun may not dazzle the players and also to keep the flies from using his head as a skating rink.

We might even go so far as to admit Mr. Ike Saylor's donkey so that he can ride it to travel the bases. You may mention to Mr. Crawmer that tobacco spitting around the bases will not be tolerated as someone may slip and break a leg. If he feels that smoking Home Run Cigarettes will encourage him to make a home run, it will then pay you to have a supply on hand for him.

Recess should be called at proper intervals so Mr. Galt, the scoreman, can take his naps at the usual times. A bucket of pink lemonade should be kept on hand to keep Mr. Dibbert from wandering around and getting in the way of the players.

Ask Mr. W. C. Thompson to buy puncture-proof balls but not to buy them where he gets his auto tires. As your player Mr. R. Green has an abundance of strawberries, it will be well to tell him that the selling of berries, during the progress of the game, will not be allowed.

To make a suggestion about Mr. Taylor, another one your star players, we advise that as he is a Taylor (tailor) it may be well to put him with the undertakers making a shroud for each of your men. As Mr. Broadwater is an able electrician, why not have him to give a little light on the subject.

Let me mention a thing or two about our Pitcher and Catcher. Our pitcher can pitch anything from a croquet ball to a 57-inch Fuller Mill ball and our catcher can catch balls like Tanglefoot can catch flies. He can pick the balls right off the bat.

When our teams steps on the field on that glorious day you will look with marked surprise, but behold, the worst is yet to come.

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Now as for yourself, your name and your team's score will be the same-BLANK.

Your truly,
Operators' Team

The ball game was played as scheduled on July 5th but ended, perhaps not surprisingly, in controversy. The foreman's team conceded defeat but charged that the operators had ended the game in order to save themselves from "disastrous defeat." The losing team's captain closed with a statement and a challenge. "You won the game, and the glory is all yours, but remember, there is another day coming and that day will be July the fourth, 1921. We may be down but we are never out, and the old Tidewater saying goes, 'It is a great life if you don't weaken.' "

Photo caption: The Tidewater Cement Plant as it appeared at the time of the memorable game between the operators and foreman on July 5, 1920. Courtesy of Lehigh Portland Cement Company.