

# ARTICLES

## WHEN NICKNAMES WERE CROWDSOURCED: OR, HOW TO CHANGE A TEAM’S MASCOT

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The past is a foreign country:  
they do things differently there.

—L.P. Hartley, *The Go-Between* (1953)

### PROLOGUE

Look, this isn’t about which teams’ nicknames or mascots are offensive. If you follow sports, or even if you don’t, you’ve already heard those arguments. If you haven’t heard them, they’re easy enough to find on the Internet.

Instead, this is about who has the power to change a team’s nickname. As we will see, changing a team’s nickname today isn’t at all what it used to be.

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Today, nicknames or mascots (I'll use those two words interchangeably) are almost always chosen by the team's owner, or by school officials in the case of a college team. In the early days of spectator sports, though—roughly from 1890 to 1930—things were different. If a journalist in the early 1900s wanted to change a team's nickname, he simply picked a new name and began using it in his stories about the team. (Or in *her* stories, of course, but back then it was almost always *his*.)

To be sure, many of these journalistic nicknames made no impression on fans, and soon disappeared. However, some nicknames proved more catchy or attractive and got repeated by other fans and journalists. The result was an almost Darwinian competition, in which the nicknames that survived were the ones that happened to appeal to the reporters that covered the team and to the fans that followed it. In modern terms, we might say that nicknames were selected by the crowd.

Except among dedicated sports historians, the crowdsourcing of early team nicknames is now largely forgotten. Indeed, many fans today find it hard to imagine how nicknames and mascots could possibly be left to the whims and fluctuations of the market. If nobody (including team officials) had the power to designate one nickname as the team's "official" nickname, how did fans in the 1890s know who to cheer for?

One purpose of this Article is to repair this gap in our imaginations. The Article's seven case studies trace the histories of seven teams—six of them historical, one fictional—that had their nicknames changed by this crowd-based process, when the idea of an "official" team nickname did not yet exist. Plenty of other teams could be added to this list, but seven should be enough to make the point.

In addition, though, a second purpose of this Article is to show how much prevailing attitudes have changed since the early 1900s. The past is indeed a foreign country, and it cannot always be understood just by talking very slowly and loudly, like an American tourist speaking English to a foreigner. My second purpose, therefore, is to make the sepia-toned period from 1890 to 1930 more vivid for modern readers, in the hope that it will begin to seem less foreign.

In furtherance of this aim, the editors of the *Stanford Law Review* have graciously agreed to a one-time departure from the usual law review practice of peppering every page with ten (or more) footnotes, each one temporarily pulling the reader's attention away from the Article's narrative and back to the year 2015. I am deeply grateful to the Stanford editors for making this exception. Readers who are interested in my sources can still find complete bibliographic references at the end of this Article, in notes for each of the Article's seven Parts. The rest of you can simply enjoy the case studies—both real and fictional—without interruption.

## CASE ONE: THE WASHINGTON SAILORS

Madison (“Matty”) Evans was born and raised on Maryland’s Eastern Shore. He served in the U.S. Navy and attended the University of Maryland before entering the real estate business. Today, he owns the largest holding of commercial real estate in the Washington-Baltimore area. *Time* magazine would later describe his real estate empire as “the largest African American-owned business that nobody has ever heard of.”

Since Mr. Evans is entirely fictional—a figment of my own imagination—his lack of name recognition is not surprising. However, on February 16, 2016 (or perhaps it will be some other date in the near future), Mr. Evans held a press conference in downtown Washington. To the surprise of the small group of reporters who attended, Mr. Evans said that he had changed the name of Washington’s professional football team to the Washington Sailors. As he explained it, “Sailors” would honor the region’s many naval bases, as well as its historic maritime traditions. Presumably, his own naval service also influenced that choice.

When questioned by reporters, Mr. Evans said that, no, he hadn’t purchased the Washington football team. Nor had he asked the National Football League or Daniel Snyder (the team’s owner) for permission to change the team’s nickname. Instead, Mr. Evans explained that he was changing the nickname *that he himself used* in talking about the team. From now on, the team would be the Washington Sailors in his own mind, and he hoped other fans would join him in that sentiment.

Reactions to the press conference varied. NFL officials responded cautiously, recognizing Mr. Evans as a wealthy businessman who ought to be treated with respect, especially if there was any chance that his wealth might some day benefit the NFL or its sponsors. Other observers were more skeptical. A television anchor on the Fox Sports Network (who later apologized) referred to Evans as “a self-absorbed nutcase.” This prompted ESPN’s Keith Olbermann to ask when self-absorption or nuttiness had ever barred anyone from owning a professional football team.

Meanwhile, the *New York Times* observed that no NFL team had ever had an African American majority owner, and wasn’t it time for that to change? Peter King’s *MMQB* blog pointed out that Mr. Evans had not said he was interested in actually purchasing a team. NBC reported that Daniel Snyder had refused previous offers to sell the Washington team, and speculated (citing “sources close to Mr. Snyder”) that he would decline any similar offer from Mr. Evans. Newspapers in Jacksonville, Oakland, and San Diego wondered whether Mr. Evans might be persuaded to buy one of the league’s less profitable franchises instead.

Mr. Evans did not reply to any of these speculations. Instead, a week later he held another press conference to announce the next move in his campaign. To help fans identify with the Sailors nickname, Evans unveiled designs for new uniforms for the Washington Sailors, as well as a new team logo. The new

designs had nautical themes with navy blue and white as their principal colors, to make the cleanest possible break from the team's current colors of burgundy and gold. Evans also announced a complete line of Washington Sailors merchandise, from \$20 t-shirts and beer mugs to \$300 replica Sailors jerseys. These items were all on sale at his website, *WashingtonSailors.com*.

For the benefit of casual readers, let me repeat that the events of this case study are fictional. There is no "Washington Sailors" website. As far as I know, Matty Evans doesn't even exist. The quotations attributed earlier to various media figures are the products of my own imagination.

Nevertheless, even though the Evans strategy is fiction, it raises important questions. Questions like, "Could such a strategy possibly succeed?" Or, "What are you, some kind of communist?"

The answer to the second question is that, where sports are concerned, I'm a free-market traditionalist, which is no kind of communist at all. As for the first question—whether the Evans strategy could succeed—the most likely answer is that it would fizzle.

For one thing, while the country at large may be divided over Washington's current nickname, for most people football nicknames are not a hot-button issue. Also, even fans who are uneasy with the current nickname might have little interest in buying merchandise with a logo or a nickname that had never been worn by an actual NFL team. Granted, you can go online today and buy baseball caps with the logo of the "New York Knights," the fictional team that Robert Redford played for in the movie version of Bernard Malamud's novel *The Natural*. This is presumably a small market, though, and it is hard to imagine Sailors merchandise selling any better.

On the other hand, we live in a world of social media and butterfly effects, and it is easy to imagine developments that might help Mr. Evans succeed. For example, what if young Washington fans took to the blue-and-white Sailors apparel as a way to show support for the team without having to dress like their grandparents? Or what if the next pop superstar began wearing Sailors jerseys at all her concerts? What if some fans in other cities started displaying the Sailors logo as a way to show support for oppressed peoples, a bit like having a "Free Tibet" bumper sticker? Critics might scoff that some of those fans were merely showing their support for political correctness. Either way, though, Sailors merchandise would continue to sell.

Consider, too, that a number of journalists and media outlets already refuse to say Washington's nickname in print or on the air. Instead, they refer to the team simply as "Washington" or "the Washington team." This sort of evasion may be diplomatic, but it can also produce awkward pauses (or convoluted sentence structures) when people who are used to referring to teams by a nickname belatedly realize that the sentence that they are in the middle of is going to need some other way to end. The Evans strategy might therefore be attractive to writers and broadcasters as well. Sometimes it's just easier to say, "The Sailors need a stop here," rather than, "The Washington team's defense needs a stop."

In any event, purely as an abstract exercise, imagine that the Sailors nickname did catch on with fans and journalists. Imagine, too, that Sailors merchandise began to sell, while sales of the now passé burgundy-and-gold items declined. Faced with continuing losses, would the NFL and Mr. Snyder submit graciously to the verdict of the market? Or would they instead ask the legal system to protect them, arguing that Mr. Evans and the other fans and journalists had no right to give the team a different nickname?

Intellectual property law is a complicated business, and its complexities are not easily reduced to slogans (though that doesn't stop people from trying). I'm not a trademark lawyer, so I will leave these legal issues to people who get paid to deal with them. For now, I merely note that (1) my hypothetical Mr. Evans has not copied or made use of any trademark belonging to Donald Snyder or the NFL; (2) his Sailors merchandise was deliberately designed *not* to look like the team's current merchandise; and (3) there is no evidence that buyers would be confused into thinking that the Sailors merchandise was approved by Mr. Snyder or the NFL. Confusion about sponsorship would be particularly unlikely in a high-profile case like this, with Mr. Snyder repeatedly and publicly insisting that he would never agree to change the team's nickname to Sailors.

That said, this is a historical essay, not a legal brief. My main purpose is to show that, during the late 1800s and the early 1900s, campaigns like Mr. Evans's were not uncommon. To that end, the remainder of the Article describes six college and professional team nicknames during the period from approximately 1890 to 1930. The six teams we will visit are the Nebraska Cornhuskers, the Michigan State Spartans, the Notre Dame Fighting Irish, the Brooklyn Dodgers, the Washington Senators, and the Chicago Cubs. All of these teams (as well as many others I could have listed) have had their nicknames changed by journalists and fans.

#### CASE TWO: THE NEBRASKA CORNHUSKERS

College football! The pageantry of bowl games, traditional rivalries, and national championships! To many people, the very phrase conjures up images of marching bands, cheerleaders, and crowds of students waving signs at television cameras on ESPN's *College GameDay*.

If these are the images that first come to mind, please try to set those images aside. Instead, imagine two small gangs of students outlined against a light gray October drizzle. The students are pushing each other around rugby-style, with no easily discernible rules, and there are only a few dozen spectators along the sidelines. Yes, the Harvard-Yale game drew significantly larger crowds. So did Army, Princeton, Columbia, and a few others. But those schools were outliers, especially compared to younger and poorer colleges in the Midwest.

In 1899, Nebraska's football program was nine years old. The school had no official nickname for its teams, but that was not unusual. In those days, many schools lacked any official nickname. If this seems odd—and to modern readers, it probably will—remember that football programs were tiny in those

days. Many schools had no coach, or only a part-time employee. The NCAA didn't even exist.

In addition, university officials in 1899 were not at all certain that football even belonged on a college campus. A campaign to eliminate college football was being led by Charles Eliot, the president of Harvard University. Critics like President Eliot saw football as worse than cockfighting or bare-knuckle fistfighting in its brutalizing effect on young scholars. Not only that, critics also objected to the risk of serious injury or death, which were both tragically common under the rules and equipment of the time. In 1891, Columbia discontinued its football program (though it would later resume play in 1899). In 1894, four students were crippled in the Harvard-Yale game, causing that annual battle to be suspended for several years. Other schools also gave up football temporarily, including Northwestern, California, and Stanford.

Against this background, consider the following conversation—entirely imaginary, I should add—in the office of the Dean of Students at the University of Nebraska. A knock is heard, and a scruffy-looking student enters.

Dean of Students: Yes? Oh, it's you, Jennings.

Student: Sir, it's Jenkins, sir. Me and my friends want permission to play a vicious, bloody sport capable of crippling us for life, or maybe even killing us.

Dean: Now, now. You should say, "my friends and I," Jenkins. "My friends and I want permission to play football."

Jenkins: Really, sir? You too?

Dean: Don't be clever, Jenkins.

Jenkins: No, sir. But there's one more thing. We also want permission to call ourselves cornhuskers.

Dean: Eh? What's a cornhusker?

Jenkins: Sir, it's a mildly insulting nickname for residents of any of the Corn Belt states. It's roughly similar to hicks, or rubes, or hayseeds. Five years ago, our student newspaper made fun of the Iowa team by calling them cornhuskers. Now we'd like to call ourselves that.

Dean: Cornhuskers? It doesn't sound very dignified. Besides, what happened to that name people called you footballers just a few years ago—"Bugeaters," wasn't it? Now there was a name you could sink your teeth into. Ha! Sink your teeth into!

Jenkins: Yes, sir. [He leaves.]

Dean: Sophomores! Next thing you know, they'll want my permission every time they pick a nickname like Rose or Bessy for the cows at the campus farm.

As this imaginary conversation suggests, college officials in 1899 had little reason to be interested in the nicknames their football players called one another (if they were allowed to play football at all). Of course, this did not mean that no nicknames were ever used. It just meant that nicknames had to come

from unofficial sources, usually the newspapers. College football may have been under attack, but fans still followed their favorite teams, and newspaper coverage followed the fans.

Remember, too, that sports journalism was perhaps more colorful then than it is today. Reporters in those days never wrote anything as plain as “St. Louis seeks better consistency.” Instead, they wrote things like this: “As erratic as usual, St. Louis was both a blazing comet and a dull fixed star. Some days it flashed with the brilliancy of a sun and others it glowed with the modest spark of the ubiquitous firefly that flashes by night in shrubbery and meadows.”

Or this, which I suspect may be apocryphal but was reprinted often in the early 1900s and sometimes credited (if that’s the word) to the *Quincy Herald*: “The glass-armed toy soldiers of this town were fed to the pigs yesterday by the cadaverous Indian grave-robbers from Omaha. The flabby, one-lunged Reubens who represent the Gem City in the reckless rush for the baseball pennant had their shins toasted by the basilisk-eyed cattle-drivers from the West.”

Or this 1905 excerpt from the *Washington Post*, which is not at all apocryphal (I’ve seen the microfilm), previewing a game between Washington and Cleveland:

If Patten’s south wing feels right . . . that engaging young gentleman with the Fitzsimmons freckles and the oriflammes of pink hair will be sent to the post to perform against any tosser that Lucky Larry Lajoie cares to scare out of his paddock. Patten will probably have the Larrupons Buffaloeed from the chime of the gong. They always did shrink and shrivel before his honest bucolic gaze. Case has enough slippery elm to keep a blast furnace going for a week, and when he takes his stand on the Goodyear to-morrow, we should be afforded the cheerful spectacle of the Cleveland pelt-swatters on their way to the Erie bullrushes at a lope.

*[Partial translation: The starting pitcher for Washington was expected to be Case Patten, a left-handed spitball pitcher (spitballs were legal then). Cleveland was managed by Lawrence “Napoleon” Lajoie.]*

Naturally, journalists in Nebraska were no less creative than those elsewhere in the country. As a result, the prairie blossomed and bloomed (as they might have said) with a bumper crop of unofficial names. During the 1890s, Nebraska’s teams were referred to as Nebraskans, Antelopes, Goldenrods, Rattlesnake Boys, Old Gold Knights, Tree Planters, Hawkeyes—and yes, even Bugeaters.

In defense of Nebraska’s sportswriters, some of these names are less strange than they at first appear. Nebraska’s early teams wore gold-colored uniforms, which presumably explains Old Gold Knights and Goldenrods. It also explains why those nicknames fell out of favor when Nebraska changed its colors to scarlet and cream. In addition, anyone who knows the lyrics to “Home on the Range” knows that antelopes were once plentiful on the prairies. From 1897 until 1909, Nebraska played its home games at Antelope Field in Lincoln.

Tree Planters came from Nebraska’s official state nickname (“the Tree Planter State”), adopted by the legislature just a few years earlier in 1895. The

nickname honored Nebraska pioneers who planted lots of trees as windbreaks, to the benefit of later settlers. In the 1890s, a minor league baseball team in Lincoln had been known as Tree Planters.

As for Bugeaters, that was a common if not very dignified nickname for people from Nebraska, much like Hoosiers was for people from Indiana. The most charitable interpretation of Bugeaters makes it out to be the name of a species of bat (also known as the bull bat) beloved by farmers for keeping insect populations down. Other accounts say that Bugeater originated as a taunt, mocking Nebraskans for their poverty and their supposed subsistence diets.

This brings us to Charles Sumner Sherman, known to his friends as "Cy." The son of a Civil War veteran, Sherman later served for many years as sports editor of the *Lincoln Star*. Among his other contributions, he helped develop the polls used by the Associated Press to rank the top college football teams.

In 1899, however, Sherman was a twenty-seven-year-old reporter for a different paper in Lincoln, the *Nebraska State Journal*. Some sources describe him as the sports editor of the *Journal*, but I have not been able to verify this. On a local paper in 1899, the difference between "reporter" and "sports editor" may have been small.

At any rate, Sherman was not impressed with Bugeaters or any of the other nicknames. On the other hand, he thought "Cornhuskers" had style and panache. Sherman did not begin by taking that nickname to the Dean of Students, though, where he would probably have met the same reception as young Jenkins.

Instead, Sherman took matters into his own hands. Beginning in 1900, he stopped using the older nicknames like Bugeaters or Tree Planters in his stories about the team. In their place, Sherman referred to the team almost exclusively as Cornhuskers. He also persuaded Albert Watkins, a friend and fellow reporter (and a stringer for the *Chicago Daily Record*), to use Cornhuskers in his reports to other Midwest papers.

Even then, the new nickname was not an instant success. Presumably, not everyone in Nebraska was thrilled to be called the equivalent of rubes or hayseeds. Other fans may have been happy with Antelopes, which reportedly was then being used by some of the Omaha newspapers. (Sherman later explained, possibly with tongue in cheek, that he rejected that nickname as soon as he learned that antelopes were members of the lowly goat family.)

In any event, Sherman was not easily discouraged. As a later historian put it, Sherman used all of his "influence and persistence" to "ingrain the name into the University culture." In 1907, the student yearbook changed its name to "The Cornhusker." (It had previously been "The Sombrero," for reasons unknown.) The Nebraska legislature was slower, waiting until 1946 to change "the Tree Planter State" to "the Cornhusker State" as the state's nickname. By then, the football-going public had already come around to Cy Sherman's way of thinking. Cornhuskers was already established as a nickname for Nebraska's teams, and the cry of "Bugeaters" was heard no more.

Did Cy Sherman “steal” Nebraska’s nickname? If he did, nobody seems to have objected. In 1933, Sherman was made an honorary member of Nebraska’s varsity letterman’s club, and he is still honored in Lincoln as the father of the Cornhuskers.

#### CASE THREE: THE MICHIGAN STATE SPARTANS

Skip ahead now to 1925 in East Lansing, Michigan, on the banks of the Red Cedar River. Founded in 1855, Michigan Agricultural College is about to change its name to Michigan State College. (Today it is Michigan State University.) The change is intended to emphasize the college’s excellence in many fields, not just agriculture—but to do it diplomatically, without offending the agricultural alumni.

As part of their rebranding strategy, school administrators wanted a new nickname for their football and baseball teams. Teams at Michigan Agricultural had no official nicknames, but unofficially they had been called Aggies or Farmers, or sometimes even “the Fighting Farmers.” Fighting or not, all of those names emphasized the agricultural roots that the school now wanted to de-emphasize.

Many agricultural schools have faced similar problems, though not all of them followed Michigan State’s strategy. It has been estimated that, on average, the Aggies nickname has been applied to at least 100% of the agricultural colleges in this country. Sometimes that nickname was chosen by the college itself; more often, it was bestowed on the school by snobbish rivals or by unimaginative journalists. Some of these schools—Texas A&M, Utah State, and New Mexico State, to name just three—later embraced their Aggie heritage by making Aggies their official nickname. However, Michigan State took the opposite tack, which meant that nicknames like Aggies and Farmers had to go.

Accordingly, a contest to select a new nickname was organized by Michigan State’s press officer. The winning entry, chosen by an official panel of judges, was the slightly unusual nickname “Staters.” In spite of having the school’s official approval, though, Staters never caught on at Michigan State. This time, the campaign for a different nickname was led by George S. Alderton, the sports editor of the *Lansing State Journal*.

No one knows if George Alderton ever met Cy Sherman, though it is certainly possible that he knew *of* Sherman. Both men covered college football in the Midwest, and Sherman (the elder by twenty-six years) was a well-known figure when Alderton began his career. Either way, by chance or by imitation, Alderton followed Sherman’s strategy by refusing to use the Staters nickname in his stories about Michigan State’s teams. When Alderton wanted to lighten his prose or adopt a more colloquial tone—that is, whenever other sportswriters would use a nickname—Alderton used the nickname he himself preferred, which was Spartans. He persuaded some other reporters to do the same, and the rest (as they say) was history. As Alderton himself later recalled,

No student, alumnus or college official had called up the editor to complain about our audacity in giving the old school a new name, so we ventured into headlines with it. Happily for the experiment, the name took. It began appearing in other newspapers and when the student publication used it, that clinched it.

In sum: As late as 1925, fans and journalists (especially journalists) exercised more control over Michigan State's nickname than school officials did. If school administrators were supposed to have the right to select any nickname they wanted, nobody seems to have told George Alderton.

#### CASE FOUR: THE NOTRE DAME FIGHTING IRISH

In 1889—or it might have been 1899—Notre Dame's football team traveled to Evanston, Illinois, to play Northwestern. At the time, Notre Dame did not yet have a reputation for football success, and Northwestern was heavily favored against the small sectarian school from Indiana. To the home crowd's dismay, Notre Dame led at halftime and beat Northwestern handily. Supposedly, when the teams returned to the field to start the second half, Northwestern students began to chant, "Kill the fighting Irish! Kill the fighting Irish!"

Or maybe not. No contemporary reports confirm this story, and the earliest origins of the "Fighting Irish" nickname are now lost in history. For example, another story has Notre Dame winning a different upset, this time in 1909 against Michigan. In this version, a Notre Dame player rallied the team by asking, "What's the matter with you guys? You're all Irish and you're not fighting worth a lick." The next day, the *Detroit Free Press* used a version of that phrase in its story about the game, but no other source picked up on the nickname (at least not then). And why should they have? The *Free Press* article also referred to Notre Dame's players as "Sons of Erin," but nobody began to use that as a nickname either.

Instead, from the 1890s to the 1920s, Notre Dame was yet another school with no official nickname. Like Nebraska and Michigan State, Notre Dame made up for this deficit by having plenty of unofficial nicknames. What makes Notre Dame's story a little different is that many of the unofficial nicknames came from the school's enemies, not from its friends.

Of course, some of the unofficial names were friendly enough. Notre Dame's teams were sometimes called the Blue and Gold, after the school's colors. Warriors was another frequent label. When Notre Dame played on the East Coast, local newspapers sometimes called the team Hoosiers, because the school was located in Indiana; or Westerners, because Indiana was west of New York. ("Hoosiers" would later be the nickname of teams from Indiana University, but that's a different story.)

Instead, our story is concerned with the more controversial nicknames: names like Papists or Catholics or Irish (by itself, with no modifier). In many regions of the country, those were not terms of praise. Other nicknames wore

their prejudice even more openly—for example, the Dirty Irish, the Horrible Hibernians, and the Dumb Micks.

There were also unofficial nicknames that dropped the Irish or Catholic themes, but emphasized the fact that Notre Dame teams traveled all over the country to play top-ranked opponents, something few other schools did. As a result, Notre Dame's teams were sometimes called Ramblers, Nomads, the Wandering Irish, and Rockne's Rovers. Some Notre Dame historians have suggested that these "nomadic" nicknames carried the sly implication that Notre Dame's student-athletes had enrolled in that school only to travel and play football, with no interest in going to class.

Into this sea of names dove Francis Wallace, a 1923 graduate of Notre Dame who had previously been one of Knute Rockne's student press agents. In 1925, Wallace was a sportswriter for the *New York Post* when he decided Notre Dame needed a more acceptable nickname. Wallace's first idea was "Blue Comets," reflecting Notre Dame's speed and one of its school colors. Following a strategy that will by now be familiar, Wallace began using Blue Comets in all his stories about Notre Dame football.

However, the result was not what Wallace had hoped. Not to put too fine a point on it, Blue Comets sunk without a trace. While crowdsourcing allows anyone to *try* to give a team a nickname, it doesn't guarantee success.

To his credit, Wallace quickly recognized his failure. His next choice for a new nickname was "Fighting Irish," a choice that must have seemed as odd to some Notre Dame fans as Cornhuskers at first seemed to some Nebraskans. As we have seen, Fighting Irish as a nickname had been around since about 1900, but it was not yet widely used, and it still carried negative connotations for some. Irish immigrants were the subject of many stereotypes, but the most common included their supposed fiery tempers and tendency to fisticuffs.

Nevertheless, when Wallace saw that Blue Comets was not going to catch on, he began using Fighting Irish in his stories in the *New York Post*. A year later, Notre Dame's student newspaper endorsed Fighting Irish as well, noting that the "unkind appellation," though initially "given in irony" as an insult, had become part of the school's heritage. In 1927, Wallace moved to the mass circulation *New York Daily News*, where his stories on Notre Dame were carried by the wire services to a national audience. By then, everyone knew who the Fighting Irish were.

Of course, Fighting Irish is now the official nickname of Notre Dame's teams, embraced by the university itself. This was not a foregone conclusion, though, for some fans and even some Notre Dame officials still had doubts about the name. Later in 1927, the editor of the *New York World* (Herbert Bayard Swope) wrote to the president of Notre Dame (Father Matthew Walsh) asking if the university had any official position concerning the Fighting Irish nickname. President Walsh may have had reservations of his own, but he replied in these terms:

The University authorities are in no way averse to the name "Fighting Irish" as applied to our athletic team . . . . It seems to embody the kind of spirit that we

like to see carried into effect by the various organizations that represent us on the athletic field. I sincerely hope that we may always be worthy of the ideals embodied in the term "Fighting Irish."

At least three things are noteworthy about this letter. First, by the late 1920s, it no longer seemed strange to consult a university president about his school's football nickname. Something—though it is not clear what—must have changed between 1899, when Cy Sherman went to work, and 1927, when President Walsh wrote this letter. Young Jenkins, wherever he was, would surely have smiled.

Second, even though university presidents now took an interest in their football teams' nicknames, that interest fell far short of modern beliefs about who gets to choose a nickname. For instance, President Walsh made no claims about every school having a *right* to choose its own nickname. Nor did he claim Notre Dame now *owned* the Fighting Irish nickname (though his successors today claim exactly that). In 1927, trademark ownership was unlikely to have occurred to President Walsh, and if it had, he might have snorted. Why would his school "own" something that had been created by its opponents as an ethnic slur?

Third, President Walsh's letter did not even say that Fighting Irish was now the *only* acceptable nickname for the team. Granted, many modern sources (including Notre Dame's own website) describe 1927 as the year the school "officially adopted" the Fighting Irish nickname. However, President Walsh's letter did not say anything about "adopting" Fighting Irish; nor did it ever refer to it as in any way an "official" nickname. While it is easy to forget, the idea of an "official" nickname is mostly a more recent invention. In 1927, nothing turned on whether or not a nickname had been "officially" adopted, so that distinction was not one that many people bothered with.

Instead, all President Walsh said was that the school was "not averse" to people calling its teams the Fighting Irish. He didn't say that Fighting Irish was now the *only* nickname the school would accept. And before you respond, "Well, that must have been what he *meant*," consider that Ramblers (one of the less offensive of the older names) saw frequent use long after President Walsh's letter, in the 1930s and into the 1940s. Newspapers even used Fighting Irish and Ramblers interchangeably in the same story, or sometimes in the same sentence. This 1935 headline from the *Milwaukee Journal* is typical: "IRISH COAST TO A VICTORY. Notre Dame's Ramblers Defeat Detroit . . ."

In other words, the modern notion that teams should have only one nickname is exactly that: a modern notion. To be sure, most fans today take that notion for granted. Many people believe that the U.S. Constitution *defines* a sports team as the union of one city or geographic location and just one nickname. From that perspective, the idea of a polygamous relationship between a team and its (multiple) nicknames may seem bizarre, or perhaps even immoral. The truth, though, is that from 1890 to the 1930s, even respectable people saw nothing improper in these arrangements.

In fact, to really understand the nicknames of that era, it may help to think of language itself as a form of crowdsourcing. In most countries, no centralized body decides which words are acceptable and which ones are not. Instead, anyone is free to coin a new word whenever they like, and everyone else is free either to ignore that word or to start using it themselves. Broadly speaking, the words that catch on with other speakers are the words most likely to survive. Words that do not catch on are likely to disappear.

One consequence of this decentralized process is that we often end up with multiple synonyms for the same thing. For example, think about the synonyms for a home run in baseball. Homers, bombs, dingers, slams, round-trippers, four-baggers, see-you-laters—and these are only a few. In the early 1900s, reporters were expected to have an ample stock of these synonyms (and the ability to coin new ones of their own), if only to avoid repetitions like this:

Adams led off the scoring with a four-bagger in the second. Baker added a four-bagger of his own in the top of the third, but Concepción tied it with a two-run four-bagger in the bottom of the fifth. With the bases loaded in the sixth, Davis smacked a grand slam four-bagger . . .

Well, you get the idea. To reporters and headline editors of the time, any request that they always use a single nickname for a team—“Don’t call us anything but the Fighting Irish”—would have been as unwelcome (and as inexplicable) as a request that they call every home run a four-bagger. Even in 1927, near the end of the crowdsourcing era, President Walsh stopped well short of such a request.

#### *A note on baseball team names before 1890*

Speaking of home runs, the next three case studies all deal with professional baseball rather than college football. Professional football is omitted here because it had not yet left its mark on the world by 1920. (Neither had college or professional basketball.) Instead, the team sports that most Americans followed during this period were college football and college and professional baseball.

An 1869 game between Princeton and Rutgers is usually cited as the first intercollegiate “football” game, although the game those teams played was closer to soccer than it was to modern American football. Rules that a modern football fan would recognize were not widely used until the early 1880s. By comparison, a recognizable form of baseball was played in New York City as early as 1846, and some forms of the game are even older.

To understand team nicknames, though, we can pass relatively quickly over baseball’s early history. The earliest baseball teams were formed by social clubs or other organizations, whose members decided it might be fun to field a team and challenge some other social club to a game. (By the way, this is why baseball teams are sometimes still referred to as “clubs.” Many European soccer teams—or football clubs—have a similar history.)

These club baseball teams were commonly known by the name of the club or organization their members belonged to. However, if the club name was long

and wordy (as many of them were), it was often shortened by taking the most distinctive word in the club's name and adding an *s* to make a kind of plural. For instance, the team from the Eckford Base Ball Club in Brooklyn was usually called "the Eckfords." The team from the National Base Ball Club in Washington was called "the Nationals." In Cleveland, the team from the Forest City Base Ball Club was known as "the Forest Citys" (note the spelling). In New York, a team from the Mutual Hook and Ladder Company No. 1 (a volunteer firemen's brigade) was known as "the Mutuals."

Apparently, nobody objected to the unorthodox spellings this template produced, like "Forest Citys" rather than "Forest Cities." Nor did anyone object that "mutual" was an adjective, not a noun, or that its plural made no literal sense (what is more than one mutual?). Literal meanings aside, in nineteenth-century baseball usage "more than one Mutual" simply meant "more than one member of the Mutual Hook and Ladder Company."

In fact, a few legacies of this older form of nickname survive even today. Why is Oakland's current team called "the Athletics" rather than "the Athletes"? Because its players originally came from the Athletic Base Ball Club in Philadelphia. (The team's move to Oakland came later.) Following the template we have already seen, the 1890s baseball plural of "Athletic Base Ball Club" was "the Athletics." The Metropolitan Base Ball Club in New York had a similar history. Using the 1890s baseball plural, that club's team became known as "the Metropolitans" even though "metropolitan," too, was originally an adjective rather than a noun. Of course, today "the Metropolitans" is usually shortened to "the Mets."

Eventually, though, as intercity play grew more common, most teams came to be called by the name of their home city rather than the name of a long-forgotten social club. To be sure, the "baseball plural" continued to be used, but the *s* now got added to the team's home city, or sometimes to the name of the team's manager or the color of the team's uniform. Thus, New York's National League team was called "the New Yorks," or occasionally "the McGraws" (after manager John J. McGraw). Similarly, Cleveland was called "the Clevelands," and sometimes "the Naps" (after its manager Napoleon Lajoie), or "the Blues" (after the color of its uniforms).

In this Article, I will have little to say about these formulaic nicknames—nicknames that merely pluralize the name of a city or a manager. Remember, my interest is in who can *change* a nickname. Changes in formulaic nicknames were superficial, merely substituting the name of a new manager or a different city. The underlying formula ("add an *s* to the team's home city") did not change at all.

Instead, the nicknames that changed in a less superficial way were almost always nicknames in the modern style: nicknames that associated the team with a plural *noun* like Tigers or Cubs. If one noun fell out of favor, or another came to seem like a better symbol for the team, teams could (and sometimes did) switch to a different noun, as we saw in Nebraska when Cornhuskers replaced

Bugeaters. But between 1890 and the 1920s or 1930s, these changes were made by the crowd rather than by the team itself. Here is another example.

#### CASE FIVE: THE BROOKLYN DODGERS

In 1887, four of Brooklyn's players (some sources say six) got married within a few weeks of one another. In those days, most teams had rosters of no more than fifteen players, so having four (or six) of them get married was a big deal.

As a result, some journalists began referring to the team as "the Grooms" or "the Bridegrooms." Like every other reporter in that era, Brooklyn scribes coined these nicknames themselves, without asking permission from the team or from the individual grooms. In this case, the name caught the public's fancy and was used regularly in newspapers for several years. (The record does not reveal how long the players' marriages lasted.)

There were other nicknames too, many of which were plays on the name of the team's manager. In 1891 and 1892, when the team was managed by John Ward, it was colloquially called Ward's Wonders, or (sometimes sarcastically) just "the Wonders." From 1893 to 1896, when Dave Foutz was the team's manager, reporters called the team Foutz's Fillies (or Foutz's Follies, when their play warranted it). These names, too, were invented by sportswriters rather than being chosen by the team.

During much of that decade, Brooklyn's team was also known as the Trolley Dodgers, often shortened to Dodgers. In 1892, Brooklyn had converted its trolleys from horsepower to electricity, and the increased speed of the electric trolleys resulted in a number of injuries. By 1895, a pro-horse reform faction claimed that the new trolleys had already killed 180 people. In that same year, a Kansas City newspaper offered this bit of gallows humor: "People seldom kill themselves in the city of Brooklyn. When they get tired of life they simply quit dodging trolley cars."

According to an often-repeated story, "trolley dodgers" was already a well-known nickname for Brooklyn residents in general, before the baseball team appropriated it. Recent work by Peter Jensen Brown casts considerable doubt on this story. Either way, in 1895 several papers reported that "'Trolley Dodgers' is the new name which eastern baseball cranks [i.e., fans] have given the Brooklyn club." Modern readers should note that the newspapers did not say, "The Brooklyn club has chosen a new nickname *for itself*." Instead, the story accurately described fans as having come up with their own new way of referring to the team.

In fact, Dodgers did not immediately take over as the team's only nickname. Older names like Grooms or Bridegrooms still saw occasional use, as did managerial nicknames like Ward's Wonders or Foutz's Fillies. During the 1900s, another occasional nickname was "Infants"—possibly because the team was young, or possibly because the team's owner made a speech that included the memorable phrase, "Baseball is in its infancy."

When a new manager, Ned Hanlon, took over in 1899, he indirectly inspired another and longer-lasting nickname. Around that time, five impresarios known as the Hanlon Brothers toured the country with a lavish stage spectacle called *Superba*. Among other attractions, *Superba* included dancing girls, trapeze artists, a waterfall on stage, and even a live train wreck (with special effects) at every performance. The theatrical Hanlons were not related to Brooklyn manager Ned Hanlon, but the coincidence was too good for reporters to pass up. Since the stage show was billed as “The Hanlon Brothers’ *Superba*,” it didn’t take long for sportswriters to call the baseball team “Hanlon’s Superbas.” This nickname, too, caught the fancy of fans and was used for at least two decades.

Those two decades overlapped with the years from 1914 to 1931, when Ned Hanlon had stepped down and Brooklyn was managed by Wilbert Robinson. Seventeen years is a long time for a manager to stay with one team, but “Uncle Robbie” (as he was known) was popular with fans, players, and even the team’s ownership. Among other accomplishments, Robinson led Brooklyn to World Series appearances in 1916 and 1920, the first time Brooklyn had been in a World Series since 1890. (They would not be there again until 1941.) Sometime during Robinson’s tenure, a reporter began referring to the team as “the Robins.” That name, too, caught on with fans and was widely used.

The upshot was that sportswriters from about 1887 to 1931 had a number of nicknames (or synonyms) they could use when referring to the Brooklyn team. Moreover, just as we saw earlier with Notre Dame, sportswriters in Brooklyn often used the different nicknames interchangeably, sometimes in the same sentence. Here is an example from 1931: “60,000 SEE ROBINS DOWN GIANTS TWICE. Dodgers Triumph, 5-2 and 18-8 . . .”

To sum up: Team nicknames did change, but the changes almost never resulted from a team owner’s considered judgment about what his team should be called. Instead, nicknames were coined by creative and/or persistent journalists, and they could change at any time as the nickname rose or fell in the crowd’s esteem. Baseball historian Richard Worth captures the spirit of this era perfectly:

[N]o one could decide what nickname was to be the sole and official moniker of a baseball franchise. . . . [R]eporters were free to choose any team nickname they wanted to describe the hometown players and their exploits. Reporters from cities of opposing teams could do the same. The result was dozens and even scores of nicknames for teams, some of which did not survive more than a few weeks and others that are still used today, some 140 years later.

Eventually, though, the freewheeling years of crowdsourcing came to an end. No single year stands out as the endpoint, for the transition was gradual rather than abrupt, and different teams had different histories. In Brooklyn, however, the era of crowdsourcing ended in 1932.

Charlie Ebbets, the team’s longtime owner, had passed away in 1925. At first, the new owners made no changes, and they kept “Uncle Robbie” on as the

team's manager. However, Robinson resigned in 1931, making Robins less apt as a nickname. At that point, the new owners decided (for the first time in franchise history) to select a single, *official* nickname. They asked local members of the Base Ball Writers Association of America to choose the new name. In January 1932, the writers announced that choice: Dodgers.

Even then, the old nicknames did not disappear overnight. Some complained that Dodgers suggested cowardice: someone who "dodges" a fight rather than standing his ground. W.O. McGeehan, a columnist for the *New York Herald Tribune*, was almost apoplectic when the team management officially accepted that nickname:

It was all right for supercilious baseball writers to call the sterling athletes on the Brooklyn pay roll the "Dodgers." The writers could not be suppressed.

But with the management accepting a name that carries with it so much ridicule and contempt, the Brooklyn customers are rising in their wrath.

Apparently, McGeehan's indignation was not widely shared, for there are no contemporary reports of wrathful mobs in the borough of Brooklyn. (Those would come in 1957, when Walter O'Malley announced he was moving the team to Los Angeles.) Nevertheless, a number of fans were disappointed that the team had not honored "Uncle Robbie" by selecting Robins as the team's permanent nickname.

In fact, even though the team announced its choice of Dodgers in January 1932, the *New York Times* ignored that announcement and continued to call the team "Robins" until well into the 1932 season. At the end of June, however, the team owners introduced new uniforms with "Dodgers" printed across the chests. (This provoked another anti-"Dodger" column from McGeehan, criticizing the expense of having new uniforms made.) Once Dodgers appeared on the team's uniforms, though, even the *New York Times* bowed to the inevitable and began calling the team by that name.

To be sure, other nicknames would arise later. The longest lasting was "dem Bums," popularized in the 1940s and 1950s by the sports cartoons of Willard Mullin in the *New York World-Telegram*. However, Bums was never anointed by the team itself as its official nickname, and by the 1940s, official status had begun to matter. In the end, Bums was never more than a supplemental nickname, coexisting with Dodgers but never threatening to replace it.

In short, the power of the press—even all the power of the *New York Times*—did not always prevail over a team's owner with respect to nicknames. This was especially true in the late 1920s and the 1930s, when the crowdsourcing era was coming to an end. By comparison, the next case study will show what happened when a team's owner tried to dictate a nickname to the press in 1905, when crowdsourcing was at its peak. First, though, let me say a word about nicknames that were given to individual players.

*Individual players' nicknames*

In 1914, the Baltimore Orioles played in baseball's International League. This was considered a minor league, but minor league teams in those days were not bound as "farm clubs" to any major league team. Instead, a team like the Orioles could sign any player it wanted, as long as it had the financial resources to do so. If a player the Orioles signed turned out to be good, they could then try to sell the player's contract (at a profit) to any big league team.

Jack Dunn, the owner and manager of the Orioles, had a reputation for striking gold by signing unproven prospects. In 1914, he signed an especially raw nineteen-year-old pitcher named George Herman Ruth, Jr. When one of the players asked who the new guy was, another supposedly replied, "He's one of Dunnie's babes."

At least, it could have happened that way, although there is no way to be sure. Like the Fighting Irish nickname, whose origin is now lost in history, there are conflicting stories about just when or why Jack Dunn's kid pitcher began to be called Babe. All we know is that Dunn eventually sold Babe Ruth to the Boston Red Sox, who in turn sold him to the New York Yankees. In New York, he gave up pitching to concentrate on the outfield, and became arguably the greatest slugger of all time.

Naturally, Ruth acquired lots of nicknames along the way. He was known as "the great Bambino" and "the Home Run King," as well as "the Sultan of Swat," "the Colossus of Clout," and at least a dozen others. As I may have mentioned, sports journalism was more colorful in those days. (If Babe Ruth had played today, would he have had any nicknames other than the uninspired "Bee-Ruth"?)

In those days, though, it was common for star players to have multiple nicknames. For example, Lou Gehrig was later known as "the Iron Horse" for the number of consecutive games he played. But Gehrig was also referred to as "Columbia Lou," "Larrupin' Lou," "Buster," and even "Biscuit Pants," the last after his thick legs and unusual gait.

For our purposes, the significant point is that every one of these nicknames was crowdsourced. Each nickname was invented by sportswriters or fans, rather than by the team's owner. Consequently, each nickname's survival or failure depended on hundreds of decisions by individual members of the crowd. Nicknames like "the great Bambino" were popular with lots of fans and journalists, so that nickname got repeated. Other nicknames, like "the Maharajah of Mash" and "the Wazier of Wham," didn't find favor with the crowd and disappeared.

To put it another way, when we are talking about individual players' nicknames, the idea of an "official" nickname loses its meaning. Imagine that a friend asks you, "What was Babe Ruth's nickname in 1910?" You reply that Babe Ruth had lots of nicknames: the great Bambino, the Home Run King, and others you proceed to list. But your friend isn't satisfied. "Oh," he says, "I don't doubt that a popular player like Ruth had plenty of unofficial nicknames."

I just want to know which one was his *real* nickname—the one that was *official*.” When player nicknames are crowdsourced, however, this question is almost meaningless, for it presupposes a distinction (between an individual player’s official and unofficial nicknames) that didn’t then exist. The only possible reply is that every one of the Babe’s nicknames was “real,” even though none was in any way “official.”

My point, of course, is that most fans in 1910 would also have been puzzled by similar questions about a team: questions like, “What was the Brooklyn team’s *official* nickname in 1907?” If you can understand why fans in 1910 would have found this question puzzling, you are well on your way to understanding how team nicknames used to be thought of. Otherwise, let’s try another case study.

#### CASE SIX: THE WASHINGTON SENATORS

Thomas C. Noyes—usually called Tom—spent his entire life as a journalist. This gave him one thing in common with Cy Sherman, George Alderton, and Francis Wallace. The similarity ends there, however, for Noyes viewed the newspaper business from a loftier perch.

Tom’s father was Crosby Stuart Noyes, a part owner and longtime city editor of the *Washington Star*, which was once the largest daily in Washington. Tom’s oldest brother, Frank, later became the president of the *Star*. Frank also helped found the Associated Press, and was its first president from 1900 to 1938. Another brother, Theodore, served for nearly forty years as the *Star*’s editor-in-chief.

Tom himself held the position of city editor at the *Star*, and later became the company’s vice president under his brother Frank. As a consequence, when Tom became interested in baseball, he had more options than Cy Sherman or Francis Wallace had. Rather than writing lots of newspaper stories about a team, Tom could afford to buy a baseball team of his own. In 1904, Tom Noyes became the owner of the Washington franchise in the recently formed American League.

To say that Washington did not have a glorious baseball history would be an understatement. True, nearly forty years earlier there had been a successful amateur team named the National Base Ball Club, referred to informally as “the Nationals” (using the “baseball plural” discussed earlier). But that was in baseball’s Mesozoic era: before the rise of professional teams, and before organized leagues. Indeed, the National Base Ball Club owed most of its fame to having been the first eastern team to tour the Midwest, traveling from town to town and challenging any local team it could find. At the time of this tour, in 1867, regular schedules to determine league champions and World Series winners were still several decades off.

Moreover, the decades since 1867 had not been kind to Washington’s baseball fans. The National Base Ball Club had gone out of business just a few years after its famous tour. In 1876, when the forerunner of today’s National

League (NL) was founded, Washington was left out entirely. The city later received an expansion team in 1892, but that team was so unsuccessful that it was eliminated in 1900, when the National League contracted from twelve teams to eight.

One year later, though, in 1901 a rival league (later known as the American League (AL)) began operations. The American League placed a new team in Washington, hoping to win over the fans who had so recently been abandoned by the National League. However, Washington's AL team did even worse than its NL team had done, finishing eighth (out of eight teams) in 1903 and 1904. Later, sportswriter Charles Dryden would famously revise Colonel Harry Lee's eulogy for George Washington: "First in war, first in peace, and last in the American League."

Like most teams of that era, Washington's AL and NL teams had no official nickname but several unofficial ones. Senators was the most frequent, but the National League team had also been referred to as the Statesmen, the Capitals, and even the Nationals (in memory of the 1867 touring team). When this National League team failed and an American League team replaced it, the new AL team was called by the same unofficial nicknames that the NL team had been. Once again, Senators was the nickname used most often, just as it had been with the earlier National League team.

On its face, Senators seems like an obvious choice for a nickname. The team played in the national capital, where the U.S. Senate meets. The first Ottawa Senators hockey team came by its nickname in exactly that way. So did any number of minor league baseball teams, in state capitals from Albany to Sacramento.

In addition, though, the Senators nickname may have had a special significance for Washington's AL team in 1901 because of its connection to one particular Senator. Arthur Gorman represented Maryland in the Senate for twenty-one years, but he had been a baseball player in his youth. In the 1860s, Gorman had been one of the founders of the National Base Ball Club, which (in 1901) was still Washington's only previous successful team.

Later, Gorman served a year as president of the National Association of Base Ball Players, the earliest ancestor of today's players' union. When Gorman resigned that office to begin his own political career, he remained active as an advisor to teams and league officials. Indeed, if Senator Gorman had owned the Washington team (he tried to buy it in 1903), the team would surely have been known colloquially as "the Gormans." Instead, Gorman's participation remained behind the scenes, and the team was called the Senators.

By 1904, though, when Tom Noyes bought the team, the years of baseball futility made it obvious that something would have to change. As new owners everywhere have done, Tom's first step was to fire the team's manager. His next step was less orthodox, though: he decided to change the team's nickname. Early in February of 1905, he issued the following statement:

The new owners . . . desire to get as far away as possible from the old regime and start the coming season . . . without any barnacles to hinder its move to-

ward prosperity. With this end in view it is intended to bury the moss-covered title of "Senators" and secure . . . another nickname . . . that may be lucky and . . . popular.

While the language of this statement is old-fashioned, its purpose was thoroughly modern. We have already seen that college officials paid very little attention to nicknames in 1905. The Notre Dame and Michigan State case studies, where the school took at least some interest in its nicknames, came twenty years later. Yet here we have a team owner—in 1905—recognizing that a team's nickname might matter to its fans, and might therefore affect the team's profitability. As a consequence, the team owner proposed to choose a nickname himself, rather than leaving that choice to the whims or wisdom of the crowd.

To be sure, Tom also invited fans to submit their own suggestions for the new nickname. This might seem to be a kind of crowdsourcing, as it did give fans some input into the selection process. However, Tom clearly expected the fans' advice to be a one-time input, leading to the selection of a permanent nickname which future fans and journalists would have no occasion to change. By contrast, when I use the term "crowdsourcing," I mean an ongoing and *entirely* decentralized process, in which no official nickname is ever selected, so there is nothing for fans to vote on or suggest.

Whatever we call the process, public interest ran high, for the team received some 2800 submissions. Some suggestions were names that had already seen occasional use, like Statesmen or Capitals. Some were jokes, like "the Washington Promisers" or "the Washington Heartbreakers." Apparently, though, the clear favorite among fan submissions was "the Washington Nationals." In March of 1905, Tom announced that he would listen to the fans and make Nationals the team's new nickname.

Tom then reinforced the message that things would be different by purchasing new uniforms for the team, with "Nationals" written on the chest. As we already know, in 1932 Brooklyn would take a similar step, breaking out new uniforms to underscore the adoption of Dodgers as a nickname. In 1905, though, Tom's Nationals were the first major league team *ever* to print a nickname on their uniforms. Today, of course, team nicknames appear regularly on uniforms—so their total absence prior to 1905 is further evidence that nicknames were seen differently then.

At any rate, Tom's choice of Nationals was received with great enthusiasm. "Hail to the Nationals!" read the first line of the article in the *Washington Post*. *Sporting Life* gave it in mock Latin: "Vale, Senators! Ave, Nationals!" When the new Nationals—last-place finishers in their previous two seasons—opened the 1905 season with an unprecedented hot streak, the new name must have seemed doubly blessed. In May, the team found itself alone in first place, the furthest into a season it had ever occupied that unfamiliar territory. One anonymous writer contributed this doggerel:

A year ago, amid the tears  
Of every baseball fan in town,  
And to the scornful sound of jeers,  
The  
Senators  
were  
falling  
down.

But now a different tale is told!  
We quaff the overflowing cup,  
And shout aloud, in accents bold,  
up.  
climbing  
are  
Nationals  
The

Other newspapers made wry observations like, "It must have been the name Nationals, as the Senators could never have won three straight games from Boston . . . ."

Eventually, of course, the team's hot streak came to an end. September found the team back in more familiar surroundings: seventh place in an eight-team league. By then, fans and journalists were less attached to the new nickname. Local writers continued to use Nationals occasionally, but they used Senators just as frequently, and often used the two names interchangeably. For example, in 1912 two new pitchers were described as having "done excellent work since joining the Senators." The newcomers were then credited (in the same sentence) as having "made the Nationals' pitching department one of the strongest in the league."

In addition, newspapers in other cities had been reluctant even from the beginning to call Tom's team the Nationals. Possibly the out-of-town reporters felt less of an obligation to follow the dictates of Tom and his successors; or possibly they had less of a financial motive to do so. However, out-of-town papers may also have had another, more prosaic reason for not calling the team the Nationals.

Since 1901, when the American League began operations, newspapers often distinguished teams in each league by calling them either "Nationals" or "Americans." For example, the team we know as the New York Yankees played in the American League, so in the early 1900s they were often referred to as the New York Americans. The other New York team, the Giants, was a National League team and was often called the New York Nationals—or even just "the Nationals," if the city (New York) was clear from the context.

This use of Nationals or Americans was especially common in cities with teams in both of the two leagues, a list which at that time included New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, and St. Louis. However, even in cities with one major league team, newspapers often used Nationals or Americans as a convenient (if perhaps unnecessary) league identifier. Thus, Detroit and Pittsburgh were each the home of only one big league team, but references to “the Detroit Americans” or “the Pittsburgh Nationals” were common.

With the help of this background information, readers can now spot the problem that Tom Noyes apparently overlooked. Newspapers in Philadelphia or St. Louis were not about to start calling Tom’s team the Nationals when they were already using that name for their own city’s National League team. Not only that, Tom’s team played in the *American* League, so under the convention just described it would normally have been referred to as the Washington *Americans*. Calling that team the Washington Nationals would only have added to the confusion.

In fact, after a year or two, even the Washington papers had gone back to using Senators more often than they used Nationals. The new uniforms with “Nationals” on them were quietly put into storage at the end of the 1906 season and were never used again. In 1912, when Tom Noyes died, his successors did not try to push the nickname issue. As a result, the Nationals nickname slowly disappeared, except in an abbreviated form as “Nats” when headline writers needed extra space. One baseball publication later summarized this history as follows:

Fans, by ballot [sic], decided their club was to be called the Nationals, instead of the Senators. The only trouble with the vote was that its result was not binding on headline writers. Therefore, the Washington club still is often called Senators, as well as the Nats and Griffs, the latter nickname being derived from the name of Owner Clark Calvin Griffith, the Old Fox.

Of course, there is now a modern team in Washington whose official nickname is Nationals. That team left Montreal (where it had been nicknamed the Expos) and moved to Washington in 2004. At the time, Washington city officials opposed reviving the Senators nickname, because the U.S. Senate had no voting members representing the District of Columbia. “We don’t have senators here,” said Washington mayor Anthony Williams. “Give us two senators, and I’ll be happy to call [the team] the Senators.”

Not wanting to buck the local government, the new owners instead revived the Nationals nickname. As the current Washington team is a member of the *National* League, the “Nationals” nickname is finally appropriate.

#### *Nicknames in baseball reference books*

Our next destination is Chicago, to follow the nicknames of that city’s National League team. However, Chicago will also introduce us to some baseball reference tools: hardbound books, like the *Baseball Encyclopedia*, and websites

like *Baseball-Reference.com* and *Baseball-Almanac.com*. Before we arrive in Chicago, it may help to have some background on these.

The earliest baseball reference books date to the 1870s, when several publishers began issuing annual booklets to sell to baseball fans. The best known (and longest running) was the *Spalding Official Base Ball Guide*, published each year by the sporting goods magnate Albert G. Spalding, who later owned Chicago's National League team. Other companies issued similar books, but the differences between different editions need not concern us here.

Each year's *Spalding Guide* contained both player- and team-level statistics for every team in every league known to man, minor leagues included. Each *Guide* also contained a wealth of information about the organization of every big league team. In most years, this included each team's president and other officers. In some years, it even included the telephone number at the team's home ballpark.

Nevertheless, pre-1930 *Guides* never bothered to include a systematic list of team nicknames. The nearest they came was a humorous essay in the 1915 *Spalding Guide* replying to readers' requests for information about the various "pet names" that had been "bestowed" on big league teams. That essay was never updated after 1915, nor was it reprinted in any subsequent *Guide*.

Today, of course, any reference guide worth owning can tell you the *current* nickname of every big league team. In 1990, the Macmillan Company expanded its coverage of team nicknames even further. The eighth edition of Macmillan's *Baseball Encyclopedia* not only listed every team's current nickname, it also listed one nickname for the team in every year the team had been in existence.

For example, if you wanted to know the nickname of the St. Louis American League team in 1922, the *Encyclopedia* could give you an answer (the Browns). It could also tell you the first and last years in which Superbas was a nickname of the Brooklyn National League team (1899 and 1912, according to the *Encyclopedia*). Today, similar information is now available from websites like *Baseball-Reference.com* and in book form from the National Baseball Hall of Fame's *Desk Reference*, published in 2002. As near as I can tell, though, the 1990 edition of the *Baseball Encyclopedia* compiled this information first.

Here's a puzzle, though. For every year of each team's existence, the *Baseball Encyclopedia* lists only a single nickname for that team. However, we have already seen that teams in the crowdsourcing era often had no official nickname and more than one unofficial nickname. So how did the editors decide which nickname to list for years when a team had more than one nickname?

The 1990 *Encyclopedia* did not say what principle its editors followed in making that decision. Presumably, though, the editors reviewed whatever historical materials were available—newspaper stories, names on team uniforms, and so on—to try to decide which nicknames had been used *most frequently* in each year. Any nicknames that were used less frequently got cut from the *Encyclopedia's* list, if only to keep that list at a manageable size.

I have no quarrel with the editors' estimates of which nicknames were, in fact, used most frequently in any year. My only regret is that the form of the resulting list tends to reinforce the inaccurate expectations of many modern readers. In particular, the *Encyclopedia's* list encourages readers to expect that teams from 1890 to 1930 chose nicknames the same way that teams do today, choosing their nickname "officially" and limiting themselves to exactly one nickname per team.

Here's another way to put it. Teams today generally do have exactly one nickname per team, so modern fans are used to there being a single definitive answer to questions like, "What was Atlanta's nickname in 2002?" (Answer: the Braves.) Readers might therefore have felt cheated if the *Baseball Encyclopedia*—supposedly a comprehensive reference book—had been unable to answer similar questions about early twentieth-century teams. This is why the *Encyclopedia* can claim to identify a single year (1912) as the year when Brooklyn no longer used Superbas as a nickname—even though that nickname died away gradually, not abruptly, and was occasionally used even after 1912.

By contrast, other modern reference books—John Thorn's *Total Baseball*, for instance, or the yearly *Emerald Guides* published by the Society for American Baseball Research (SABR)—do not attempt a year-by-year list of historical nicknames. In effect, these works do not presume that there will always be a single answer to questions like, "What was the nickname of Chicago's National League team in 1905?" In fact, our final case study takes us to Chicago, to see exactly why that question is hard to answer.

#### CASE SEVEN: THE CHICAGO CUBS

If you consult the aforementioned *Baseball Encyclopedia* (the 1990 edition), you will learn that Chicago's National League baseball team has had only three nicknames since 1890. According to the *Encyclopedia*, the team's nickname was Colts from 1890 to 1897, Orphans from 1898 to 1901, and Cubs from 1902 to the present.

As we have already seen, the brevity of this list is due to the *Encyclopedia's* decision to list just one nickname per team (in any given year), omitting all nicknames except the one that was used most often. To understand crowdsourcing, though, we have to look at *all* of a team's nicknames, including ones that were used less frequently (perhaps because they were rejected by the crowd). With that goal in mind, here is a slightly more complete survey of Chicago's nicknames.

As its long-suffering fans are painfully aware, Chicago's National League team has not won a World Series title since 1908. To be sure, in the 1880s the team had been a juggernaut, winning five league championships from 1880 to 1886. Eventually, though, the team had to rebuild, and its roster in 1887 had lots of raw recruits. (The modern term, "rookies," would not be coined until the 1890s.)

At that time, a few writers began referring to the team as “Colts”—or sometimes “Anson’s Colts,” after the team’s player/manager, Adrian “Cap” Anson. In those days, “colt” was a common term for a young ballplayer, usually used in reference only to the youngest members of the team. For instance, if a headline reported “Colts to take extra fielding practice,” that would normally be understood to mean that the extra practice was only for the youngsters, while the veterans on the team were doing something else.

However, to refer to an entire team as colts—youngsters and veterans alike—may have been less flattering. To an established veteran, calling his team “the colts” might not have been too different from calling the team “the bush-leaguers,” or “the guys who haven’t shown anything yet.” Thus, when reporters began calling Chicago’s entire team “the Colts,” they never asked for the team’s permission, and would not likely have gotten it if they had.

Meanwhile, Chicago’s rebuilding efforts failed to produce results, and the Colts nickname was used even more often. These headlines recount the team’s struggles:

“BOSTON TAKES ANOTHER GAME.

The Colts Throw Away a Number of Opportunities to Win.”

“COULDN’T HIT THE BALL.

Inability to Bat Causes the Colts’ Defeat at Brooklyn.”

“BEATEN BY THE HOOSIERS.

It Was a Close Game, but Anson’s Colts Couldn’t Win.”

Sometimes the references to “Anson’s colts” became “Anson’s pets,” or even “Anson’s babies.”

Eventually, in 1897, the management decided a shake-up was needed. Among other moves, the team fired the aging Anson (who by then was known as “Pop”), leading some wits to describe the now-fatherless club as “Orphans.” A few years later, when the American League began operations in 1901, several of the team’s players jumped to Chicago’s American League team (the team now known as the White Sox). After that, what was left of Chicago’s National League team was for a while called the Remnants. Needless to say, Orphans and Remnants were also used without ever seeking the National League team’s permission.

By 1902, the defection of so many players to the American League left the team facing another rebuilding year, with yet another roster of youngsters. As a *Chicago Tribune* columnist observed, “the present team is more generally composed of colts than any which ever carried that name in Anson’s day.” The Colts nickname therefore continued to be widely used. In that same year, though, a spring training item in the *Chicago Daily News* referred to the team as Cubs, marking the first known use of that nickname for the team. Cubs, like

Colts, was a common name for young ballplayers—or young anything-elses, for that matter. Young journalists were called cub reporters, and a young Sam Clemens learned to pilot a riverboat as Horace Bixby's cub.

With such similar meanings, it is not surprising that Cubs and Colts both saw frequent use. Indeed, newspapers often used both nicknames interchangeably, just as we have already seen with nicknames in other cities. For instance, a 1902 story in the *Chicago Tribune* was headlined "COLTS DEFEAT THE REDS. Selee's Men Down Cincinnati," referring to Frank Selee, the team's manager. The lead paragraph then began, "*The Cubs* [my italics] took the third and last game of the series . . . ."

This takes us through Colts, Cubs, and Orphans, the three nicknames listed by the *Baseball Encyclopedia*. Other nicknames were also used, but some had the life span of a mayfly, and presumably were not meant to last. For example, in 1899 some players rode horses during spring training in New Mexico, so reporters briefly referred to the team as Cowboys or Rough Riders. The joke may have been witty enough the first time it was used, but it didn't age well, and the crowd soon tired of it.

There was also a brief period in the spring of 1903 when some reporters called the team "the Panamas," after players wore a new style of hat known by that name. A year later, Panama hats gained even more publicity when President Teddy Roosevelt was photographed wearing one at the construction of the Panama Canal. The publicity was in one sense misplaced, since "Panama" hats were actually a product of Ecuador. Still, nobody ever tried calling Chicago's baseball team "the Ecuadorians." After a week or so, nobody called them "the Panamas" either.

More important, there were other nicknames that had both a longer shelf life and a more interesting history than Cowboys or Panamas. The Chicago Zephyrs deserve at least some mention. The Spuds and the Microbes deserve more.

To the ancient Greeks, Zephyrus was the god of the western wind. In 1905, Chicago was already known as the windy city, and it was located in what many people in those days thought of as the uttermost west. Not only that, in Greek mythology the west wind was the harbinger of spring—and what signaled the coming of spring in turn-of-the-century America? Why, the start of baseball season, of course! To classically trained writers, Zephyrs must have seemed the perfect nickname for a Chicago baseball team.

However, the rest of the crowd disagreed. To be sure, the *Chicago Tribune* persisted for a while, just as Cy Sherman and Francis Wallace had done. In 1905, the *Tribune* used Zephyrs in stories and headlines from the beginning of spring training all the way to the middle of June. Here is a sample, all from a single week in May 1905:

"ZEPHYRS HIT, BUT FAIL TO COUNT,"

“ZEPHYRS LOSE BY 1 TO 0,”

“ZEPHYRS SUFFER THIRD SHUTOUT,” and inevitably,

“ZEPHYRS LOSE ENTIRE SERIES.”

No other papers followed the *Tribune*'s lead, though, and neither did the rest of the crowd. By July, even the *Tribune* seems to have given up on Zephyrs.

At about the same time, the team was sold to Charles W. Murphy, a former journalist and the son of Irish immigrants. In those days, “Murphy” was rude slang for anyone who was Irish—there is no record that Notre Dame was ever called the Murphys, but it wouldn't surprise me—and “Murphy Spuds” was slang for Irish potatoes. Fans who cared little for the ancient Greeks may have found this humor more to their liking, for Spuds (or Murphy's Spuds) began appearing in several papers late in the 1905 season. It got even more use in 1906, when a brief item in *Sporting Life* offered this observation: “‘Murphy's Spuds’ seems to be the name that is to hang on to the Chicago Nationals this season. Some Pittsburg [sic] joker started the cognomen, and now it is finding general favor.”

Notice, once again, that the story describes the nickname as chosen not by the team itself, but by the crowd—that is, by the Pittsburgh joker, and by any fans and journalists who liked the joke well enough to keep using it.

For a while Spuds seemed to have real staying power. The *Chicago Tribune* used Spuds regularly in 1906, though they also continued to use other nicknames like Cubs or Colts. In 1907, the *Tribune* continued to use Spuds throughout the team's spring training. However, once the 1907 regular season began, the *Tribune* dropped that nickname like, well, a hot potato. A brief item on March 31 said that “the sobriquet of ‘Spuds’ seems to be slipping,” but did not explain why. I will return to this puzzle shortly.

First, we need to complete the story of Chicago nicknames by considering the least likely nickname of all: the Chicago Microbes. For years, baseball historians conjectured that Microbes must have referred to the small size of some of the team's players, just as Cubs and Colts referred to their tender years or lack of experience. However, recent work by Robert Loerzel has traced the nickname to a different source—one that owed more to local and regional politics than to anything on the baseball diamond.

Half a century earlier, in 1855, Chicago had been the first major U.S. city to build a comprehensive sewer system. Until then, Chicago sewage had gone pretty much wherever gravity took it, leading to cholera and dysentery epidemics. The 1855 system aimed to fix this problem by using state-of-the-art techniques to channel the sewage into pipes, rather than into the open ditches that were the previous state of the art. The new pipes carried the sewage safely and rapidly away and dumped it, untreated, into the Chicago River.

Unfortunately, the Chicago River emptied into Lake Michigan, which was the main source of drinking water for the city of Chicago. True, Lake Michigan is a very large body of water, and the city's water was drawn from pumps two miles offshore. Still, not everyone found this reassuring, especially as the city grew and the volume of sewage increased. When health experts admitted to doubts about the safety of this practice, the city responded by building the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal.

One of the canal's aims was to make shipping easier, by improving the water link between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River. However, the canal was also intended to protect Chicago's drinking water (hence the "Sanitary" part of its name). Specifically, the new canal enabled the city to reverse the direction of the Chicago River, making it flow out of rather than into Lake Michigan. This meant Chicago's sewage, rather than emptying into Lake Michigan, would be carried off to—well, to somewhere other than Chicago, which of course was the point.

In St. Louis, though, this was the point that worried residents. Reversing the Chicago River sent its water into the Des Plaines and Illinois Rivers, and those rivers flowed into the Mississippi upstream from St. Louis. The city of St. Louis drew much of its own water directly from the Mississippi, and citizens didn't care for the idea that they might have to drink tainted water from Chicago's sewers. Chicago officials tried to explain that, as its *allegedly* polluted water passed into the Des Plaines and Illinois Rivers, it became mixed with such a volume of fresh water that the concentration of germs or microbes would be well below the danger level. The citizens of St. Louis showed their confidence in these assurances by filing a suit (ultimately unsuccessful) to prevent the new canal from opening.

As fate would have it, the 1903 National League baseball schedule called for Chicago to open with a five-game series at St. Louis. The day before the scheduled opener, the team traveled to St. Louis by train. When they arrived, they were met at the station by the local press (as was customary in those days) and by Patsy Donovan, the manager of the St. Louis team. With opening day so close at hand, the press conference also attracted members of the public, including newsboys and street urchins.

As it happened, the newsboys and urchins made the most significant contribution to the press conference. After the two team managers shook hands, one of the boys reportedly shouted, "Hey there, Patsy; yer shakin' hands wid a microbe!" Others chimed in: "Ho, microbes—de Chicago microbes—is here ter get beat by Patsy."

Fans in St. Louis (and, to a lesser extent, in other cities on the banks of the Mississippi) quickly caught on to the idea of calling Chicago's baseball team the Microbes. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and the *St. Louis Republic* referred to the team as Microbes throughout the 1903 season. So did the *St. Paul Globe*, whose readers got a steady diet of headlines like "Microbes Throw Game Away" and "Reds Blank Microbes." Indeed, the *Globe* had chortled audibly when news of the nickname reached St. Paul:

NAME IS SELECTED FOR SELEE'S BALL TEAM.

St. Louis Newsboys Dub the Chicago Club the "Microbes" . . . .

After tramping about the country under half a dozen different cognomens, it has remained for St. Louis to give to [Chicago owner] James A. Hart's players an appellation which, it is considered here, is pretty likely to stick. Hereafter they will be known as the Microbes—"Frank Selee's Microbes."

Surprisingly, some Chicagoans did not object to being called Microbes. A week after the opening day press conference in St. Louis, *Sporting Life* reported the following (the italics are mine):

The St. Louis fans have dubbed the Chicago team the Microbes. This news was received resentfully at first, *but is now accepted with much enjoyment*. Of course, this title came from the famous drainage canal war between the cities, as the St. Louis natives accuse Chicago of sending millions of bacilli down the Mississippi to pollute the Missouri drinking water. "We are microbes they can't swallow," grinned Selee, as the tenth inning brought victory yesterday.

Some of Chicago's players, too, were willing to accept Microbes as a nickname, perhaps because of the ongoing question of what else to call the team (the "half a dozen different cognomens" that were mentioned by the *St. Paul Globe*). Pitcher and utility player Jock Menefee is reported to have said that Microbes was "a whole lot better than being called a 'Cub,' anyway." At thirty-five, Menefee was the oldest man on the team, and he may have disliked being called an unproven youngster. Another pitcher, Jack Taylor, quipped, "I've been called an Orphan so long that I almost forgot at times that 160-acre farm that is coming to me."

Chicago newspapers, too, were not all opposed to Microbes as a nickname. In fact, different papers had markedly different reactions. As far as I can tell, the *Chicago Tribune* never used Microbes as a nickname at all. On the other hand, Robert Loerzel reports that the *Chicago American* used Microbes from 1903 to as late as 1905.

This difference in the newspapers' responses can be understood as one more episode in a long battle between the *Chicago Tribune* and William Randolph Hearst, the owner of the *Chicago American* (together with its morning sibling, the *Chicago Examiner*). That battle reached its peak a few years later, in 1910, when twenty-seven people died during a circulation war between the newspapers. No, that's not a misprint. In gangland Chicago, a circulation "war" was a literal description, not a mere figure of speech. Standard tactics included the use of hired gunmen to hijack other papers' delivery trucks.

Even before their hostility reached the shooting stage, the Hearst papers and the *Tribune* often opposed each other. For one thing, the *Tribune* supported the Sanitary Canal. Robert R. McCormick, who would later serve as the *Tribune*'s president and editor-in-chief for more than thirty years, had been elected chairman of the Chicago Sanitary District's board of trustees from 1905 to 1910. The Hearst papers had opposed his election, and criticized his performance throughout that five-year term.

At this point, I have to rely on conjecture, for the historical record runs out. It is plausible, though, that McCormick and the *Tribune* would not have wanted the public to be constantly reminded of microbes, especially while the canal was still under legal attack for arguably carrying too many of the creatures. On the other hand, Hearst and his editors may have been happy to keep the microbe issue alive and in the public eye, reminding Chicagoans that their new and expensive canal was full of microbes. If they could bring up that issue even on the sports pages, by using Microbes as a nickname, then so much the better.

In sum, from about 1902 to 1907, there were lots of nicknames used for the team now known as the Cubs. Even if we ignore short-lived names like Cow-boys or Panamas, that still leaves Colts, Orphans, Spuds, Zephyrs, Microbes, and Cubs. Every one of these appeared frequently in major newspapers, for at least half a season or so.

Why didn't the team owners settle the matter by announcing their own choice for the team's nickname, as any modern team would do? Chicago's owners during this period were Albert G. Spalding (1882-1902), James Hart (1902-1905), Charles Murphy (1905-1913), and Charles Phelps Taft (1914-1916). As near as I have been able to determine, none of these men ever expressed a public opinion about what nickname(s) the team should have. In effect, the owners took the same position as my hypothetical Dean of Students at the University of Nebraska, or the same position as the editors of the early *Spalding Guides*. In other words, they took no position at all. If fans or journalists wanted to make up "pet names" to call the team, they were free to do so. But that was the business of fans and journalists, not of the team or its owners.

A different view, however, was held by Frank Chance, who was the team's manager (not its owner) from 1905 to 1912. Some historians report that, in 1907, Chance asked the city's newspapers to call the team the Cubs. One author puts it even more forcefully, saying Chance "insisted" that no other nickname be used.

I have not been able to find any contemporary reference to a request or an insistence. Either one would have been unusual during this era. Frank Selee, Chance's predecessor as manager, was known to have preferred Colts as the team's nickname, but there is no evidence that Selee ever asked journalists to give up all other nicknames. (If he did, the journalists must have refused, for multiple nicknames were used throughout Selee's tenure as manager.) Of course, Tom Noyes did make such a request in Washington in 1905—but we know that Tom's request flopped.

On the other hand, the *Tribune's* abrupt abandonment of Spuds at the start of the 1907 season (the "puzzle" that I mentioned earlier) is certainly consistent with Chance having requested them to do so, especially if the request was behind the scenes. Moreover, if there was any person who, as early as 1907, could have gotten the press to grant such a request, it would have been Chance. Charles Murphy, the team's owner in 1907, had never been liked by the press or by fans, but Frank Chance was loved by both.

Chance had been a popular first baseman with Chicago when Frank Selee was the team's manager. When Selee retired during the 1905 season, Chance took over the reins. By then, the team was no longer rebuilding, and in his first full season as manager Chance was able to lead the team to its first World Series appearance in twenty years. Chicago lost that Series, but they returned to win it in 1907. A year later, they followed that up with their second consecutive title, the first two World Series titles the team had ever won (and, so far, the last two). Small wonder, then, that Frank Chance's nickname in Chicago was "the Peerless Leader." Small wonder, too, if the Chicago press granted him almost anything.

In any event, even if the owners never publicly took a stand on the team's nickname, Chance surely had the owners' support and cooperation. In 1907, the team had "Cubs" printed on the free scorecards it gave out at home games. In addition, the team had new uniforms made for the 1907 World Series, and the new uniform included a picture of a bear on the sleeves. This made Chicago either the second or third team ever to indicate a team nickname on its uniform. (The first was Tom Noyes's short-lived try in 1905.) If this were not enough, just before the 1908 season the team announced that it was expanding its home grandstands. According to plans, the architectural decorations at the new stands would feature "extensive use of cub bears."

In short, even if the crowd has the ultimate say about what nicknames it wants to use, a team's owner usually has a bully pulpit from which to influence the crowd. An owner's prerogatives usually include control over the team's uniforms and the decoration of its home ballpark, as well as access to editors and reporters. Today, the owner's prerogatives might also include some control over radio and television broadcasters.

Nevertheless, in the late 1800s and early 1900s, most owners chose not to make any use of this bully pulpit. Even in Chicago, once Chance stepped down as the team's manager, the newspapers began coining their own nicknames once again (though on a smaller scale than before). For example, in 1913, several papers began calling the team "the Trojans," for no better reason than that the new manager, Johnny Evers, came from Troy, New York. The Trojans nickname turned out to be fleeting, though, as Evers lasted only one year as manager. Meanwhile, references to Cubs continued to decorate the team's uniforms and its home field. Not surprisingly, Cubs is the nickname that survived.

#### *Observations on the end of crowdsourcing*

This leaves us with another puzzle. Why did the crowdsourcing of nicknames end when it did?

"Marketing" is the answer most usually given. However, if we mean the marketing of *merchandise*—hats, shirts, and so on, with teams' logos or nicknames on them—the years don't match up very well. Marketing of that sort didn't become important until the 1960s, the decade in which NFL Properties and the MLB Promotions Corporation were organized. The earliest of the major

college licensing programs came even later, at UCLA (1973) and Ohio State (1974). As we have already seen, the crowdsourcing era had begun to fade forty years earlier.

A variant of the “marketing” theory points to changes in the economy in general, especially the growing importance of branded or trademarked products in other lines of commerce. This, too, may have been a factor, although the timing still does not fit very well. For example, the Chicago Cubs did not register their “Cubs” logo as a trademark until the 1970s, and many colleges did not register trademarks until even later. (If anyone is interested, the University of Nebraska recently registered “Bugeaters” as a trademark, and has licensed some apparel makers to use that name.)

Other explanations, though, seem even more speculative. For example, is it significant that, up until the 1930s, radio stations paid nothing to broadcast a team’s games? Until then, both sides’ compensation was entirely in-kind: the radio coverage gave the team more publicity, and carrying the games gave the radio station more listeners. In the 1930s, though, teams started demanding (and getting) a side payment from the radio stations for the right to broadcast the games. This suggests that the interaction of supply and demand between teams and media outlets may have shifted during the late 1920s or early 1930s. However, even if it did, there is no obvious reason why such a change in demand should also change teams’ attitudes toward their nicknames.

Or was it a change in journalistic styles, with sportswriting becoming less florid and reporters losing the art of coming up with creative nicknames? The decline in the number of nicknames given to individual players has been well documented. Less ornate styles were taking over in other fields, too, as Victorian gingerbread gradually gave way to Frank Lloyd Wright. It seems a stretch, though, to attribute team owners’ greater control over their teams’ nicknames to these broader cultural trends.

In short, we do not have a good account of *why* crowdsourcing died away, especially since it still reigns when it comes to nicknames for individual players. For now, I will leave that puzzle for others. Instead, let me end the historical tour by returning to the near future.

#### THE WASHINGTON SAILORS (REVISITED)

At the outset of this Article, I described a fictional strategy that might have been used to get people to start calling Washington’s pro football team the Washington Sailors. Probably the strategy would fail. But what if—backed by the money of a determined supporter like Mr. Evans—the strategy threatened to succeed? Specifically, what if after a year or two, only Daniel Snyder, the NFL, and a few other holdouts continued to call the team by its present nickname? What if sales of Mr. Snyder’s burgundy-and-gold merchandise plummeted, while navy blue Sailors souvenirs began appearing everywhere?

I suggest that history gives us two possible ways of thinking about cases like this. The first, and more modern view, sees Mr. Evans’s strategy as theft.

After all, if the team (and its current nickname) belong to Daniel Snyder, how can anyone else claim the right to change that nickname? In a recent editorial, the *Washington Times* put the issue in just those terms: "The Redskins are a private business enterprise, and the owner has the right to call his team whatever he likes."

However, history also gives us a second way of looking at cases like this. On this view, the key question is not whether Mr. Snyder *owns* the nickname, but whether that ownership gives him the right to limit what other people *say* about the team. Here is one more example, to clarify the issue.

Suppose that I have a large collection of paintings of Elvis Presley rendered expertly on black velvet. Let us stipulate that I own those paintings, so anybody who took the paintings without my permission could be prosecuted for theft. However, even though I unquestionably *own* these paintings, my ownership does not usually give me the right to control what other people *say* about them. For instance, if I want everyone to call my collection by a certain name—"Miracles on Velvet," let us say—I can encourage people to use that name, but I cannot usually *compel* them to use it. And if most people ignore my preferred name, and the collection instead becomes widely known as "Craswell's folly," I cannot normally claim to be the victim of theft.

To put it starkly, anyone who thinks that my hypothetical Mr. Evans is guilty of a form of "nickname theft" must recognize that they are also condemning Cy Sherman in Nebraska, George Alderton at Michigan State, and Francis Wallace in his columns about Notre Dame. Guilty verdicts would also be required for all of the sportswriters who succeeded, at least temporarily, in getting people to call Chicago's baseball team the Orphans or the Microbes. We might even have to build new prisons to hold all the journalists who kept calling Tom Noyes's baseball team the Senators, even after the team's owner (Tom) had explicitly rejected that nickname.

In short, the modern view of nicknames sees them as something a person (or a team) gets to choose for himself. The more traditional view saw nicknames as something that other people give you. History alone cannot tell us which way of thinking about nicknames is correct. What history can do is show us how greatly our view of nicknames has changed over the years. It can also help remind us that we have a choice, and that today's view of nicknames is not the only possible view.

Go Sailors!



## NOTES AND REFERENCES

Historical writing is always difficult, but histories of team sports add an additional challenge. Most people have attachments to particular teams (I do myself), and many are equally attached to the *stories* about the sport that we grew up with. Abner Doubleday inventing the game at Cooperstown. Babe Ruth calling his home run shot. These—and many other, less famous stories about individual teams—are the baseball equivalents of George Washington and the cherry tree. They are fun to tell. They often have instructive morals. And when their facts are wrong, they are remarkably hard to correct.

In this Article, I have tried to rely on original sources whenever possible. Specific references are listed below, but there are a number of resources I want to thank at the outset, for their assistance runs far deeper than the citations below will suggest. Many of these are the “usual suspects”—the work of the Society for American Baseball Research (SABR), comprehensive websites like *Baseball-Reference.com* and *Baseball Almanac*, and hardcover publications like the *Baseball Encyclopedia* and *Total Baseball*. To these should be added Richard Worth’s remarkable *Baseball Team Names: A Worldwide Dictionary, 1869-2011* (2013). While I have occasionally taken issue with these sources over particular points, my debt to them is far larger.

## CASE ONE: THE WASHINGTON SAILORS

*Page 1224.* “New York Knights” apparel can be purchased at *New York Knights 1939 Ballcap*, EBBETS FIELD FLANNELS, <http://www.ebbets.com/product/New-York-Knights-1939-Ballcap> (last visited June 8, 2015).

*Page 1224.* A partial list of media outlets with a house policy against using the team’s current nickname would include the *Boston Globe*, *Charlotte Observer*, *Detroit News*, *Kansas City Star*, *Mother Jones*, *New York Daily News*, *New Republic*, *Orange County Register*, *Slate*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, and *Seattle Times*. Most other news organizations allow each individual reporter to decide whether to use the nickname.

*Page 1225.* Readers who want to learn more about the legal issues will find thoughtful discussions in Stacey L. Dogan & Mark A. Lemley, *The Merchandising Right: Fragile Theory or Fait Accompli?*, 54 EMORY L.J. 461 (2005); and Mark A. Lemley & Mark P. McKenna, *Owning Mark(et)s*, 109 MICH. L. REV. 137 (2010). Also helpful is Joseph P. Liu, *Sports Merchandising, Publicity Rights, and the Missing Role of the Sports Fan*, 52 B.C. L. REV. 493 (2011). The legal protection of a company’s “goodwill,” which raises somewhat similar issues, is discussed in Robert G. Bone, *Hunting Goodwill: A History of the Concept of Goodwill in Trademark Law*, 86 B.U. L. REV. 547 (2006).

## CASE TWO: THE NEBRASKA CORNHUSKERS

*Page 1226.* For more on President Eliot's campaign to abolish college football, and on early college football generally, see JOHN SAYLE WATTERSON, COLLEGE FOOTBALL 9-38 (2000).

*Page 1226.* The reference to Iowa's football team as "the cornhuskers" appeared in the *Hesperian*, Nebraska's student newspaper, in 1894. "Bugeaters," referring to Nebraska's own team, first appeared in the *Hesperian* in 1893. For more on this history, see MARK FRICKE, NEBRASKA CORNHUSKER FOOTBALL (2005).

*Page 1227.* The colorful description of St. Louis ("both a blazing comet and a dull fixed star") is from John B. Foster, *National League Season of 1921*, in SPALDING'S OFFICIAL BASE BALL GUIDE, 1922, at 83, 87 (John B. Foster ed., 1922).

*Page 1227.* The story attributed to the *Quincy Herald* ("The glass-armed toy soldiers of this town . . .") appeared in several publications, including *The Nomenclature of the National Game*, in 5 LITTLE MASTERPIECES OF AMERICAN WIT AND HUMOR 20, 20 (Thomas L. Masson ed., 1903); *Base Ball Notes*, BROOKLYN DAILY EAGLE, July 23, 1895, at 4; Untitled Column, COURIER-JOURNAL (Louisville, Ky.), Feb. 9, 1896, at 9; and *Slang of the Diamond a Complete Language*, L.A. HERALD, Aug. 2, 1906, at 22. The earliest publication I have found is in *Something Like an Ancestry*, 26 LIFE 360, 360 (1895).

*Page 1227.* The preview of the Washington-Cleveland game ("If Patten's south wing feels right . . .") is from Clarence L. Cullen, *Stahl and His Team*, WASH. POST, May 15, 1905, at 8.

*Page 1228.* For Cy Sherman's promotion of the Cornhusker nickname, I have relied mostly on two articles in his former newspaper, both published while he was still alive. Gregg McBride, *Tribute Paid to Husker Gridmen*, LINCOLN STAR, Dec. 8, 1933, at 16; Cy Sherman, *Brass Tacks*, LINCOLN STAR, Mar. 15, 1939, at B2. Modern accounts of the events include MARK FRICKE, NEBRASKA CORNHUSKER FOOTBALL (2005), and MIKE BABCOCK, NEBRASKA CORNHUSKERS: COLORFUL TALES OF THE SCARLET AND CREAM (2004). Many sources agree on the broad outlines of the story but differ in some details.

## CASE THREE: THE MICHIGAN STATE SPARTANS

*Pages 1229-30.* Accounts of George Alderton's campaign appear in many sources, including MICHAEL EMMERICH, 100 THINGS MICHIGAN STATE FANS SHOULD KNOW & DO BEFORE THEY DIE 122-24 (2013). The quotation from Alderton on page 1230 ("No student, alumnus or college official . . .") is from Michigan State's own website. *The Nickname*, MICH. ST., <http://www.msu.spartans.com/trads/msu-trads-nickname.html> (last visited June 8, 2015).

## CASE FOUR: THE NOTRE DAME FIGHTING IRISH

*Pages 1230-31.* The best single article on the history of Notre Dame's nickname is Edward T. O'Donnell, *Why Notre Dame Originally Opposed the Name "Fighting Irish,"* PAST LANE (Jan. 1, 2013), <http://inthepastlane.com/2013/01/01/why-notre-dame-originally-opposed-the-name-fighting-irish>. For a more detailed history of Notre Dame football generally, including the nickname controversy, see MURRAY SPERBER, SHAKE DOWN THE THUNDER: THE CREATION OF NOTRE DAME FOOTBALL (1993). Unless otherwise noted, all material in this Part comes from those two sources.

*Page 1230.* Possible dates for the game against Northwestern are considered in ERIC C. HANSEN, STADIUM STORIES: NOTRE DAME FIGHTING IRISH 171-72 (2004). Notre Dame's own website gives the date as 1889, *1889 Schedule*, NOTRE DAME, <http://www.und.com/sports/m-footbl/archive/nd-m-footbl-sched-1889.html> (last visited June 8, 2015), but as Hansen points out, Notre Dame did not play a road game against Northwestern that year.

It is also possible that the Northwestern students, rather than chanting "kill the fighting Irish," might have used a more offensive word than "fighting." This entirely plausible conjecture is suggested in PATRICK R. REDMOND, THE IRISH AND THE MAKING OF AMERICAN SPORT: 1835-1920, at 262 (2014).

*Page 1230.* The *Detroit Free Press* story on Notre Dame's win over Michigan is E.A. Batchelor, *U. of M. Outplayed and Beaten by the Notre Dame Eleven*, DETROIT FREE PRESS, Nov. 7, 1909, at 17. ("Shorty" Longman was Notre Dame's coach in 1909; Michigan was coached by the legendary Fielding "Hurry Up" Yost.) The story's lead paragraph offers another example of sportswriters' style in those days: "Eleven fighting Irishmen wrecked the Yost machine this afternoon. Three sons of Erin, individually and collectively representing the University of Notre Dame, not only beat the Michigan team, but they dashed some of Michigan's fondest hopes and shattered Michigan's fairest dreams."

*Page 1231.* The "nomadic" nicknames are discussed at some length in MURRAY A. SPERBER, SHAKE DOWN THE THUNDER: THE CREATION OF NOTRE DAME FOOTBALL 79-82 (1993).

*Page 1231.* The account in Notre Dame's student newspaper, the *Scholastic*, is reported on Notre Dame's own website. *The Fighting Irish*, NOTRE DAME, <http://www.und.com/trads/nd-m-fb-name.html> (last visited June 8, 2015).

*Pages 1231-32.* The same Notre Dame website describes President Walsh as having "officially adopted" Fighting Irish as the school nickname in 1927. *Id.* I have not found any source that describes exactly what steps constituted this "official adoption," other than President Walsh's letter. For example, there are no references to Notre Dame's board of trustees ever passing a resolution adopting Fighting Irish as a nickname, or to any other formal action by school

officials. Instead, the characterization of President Walsh's letter as "officially adopting" the Fighting Irish nickname appears to be an interpretation added by later writers.

*Page 1232.* The quoted headline is from *Irish Coast to a Victory*, MILWAUKEE J., Jan. 2, 1935, at 3.

*A note on baseball team names before 1890*

*Page 1233.* For a detailed look at the history and origins of baseball, see DAVID BLOCK, *BASEBALL BEFORE WE KNEW IT: A SEARCH FOR THE ROOTS OF THE GAME* (2005).

*Pages 1233-34.* Where professional baseball teams' nicknames are concerned, the single most comprehensive list (by a wide margin) is RICHARD WORTH, *BASEBALL TEAM NAMES: A WORLDWIDE DICTIONARY, 1869-2011* (2013). The introduction to that book provides an excellent overview of the subject. *Id.* at 1-5. Another useful overview, focusing specifically on the history of nicknames used by current major league teams, can be found in *History of Baseball Team Nicknames*, WIKIPEDIA, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_baseball\\_team\\_nicknames](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_baseball_team_nicknames) (last visited June 8, 2015).

*Page 1233.* For a fascinating look at early teams' origins not just in social clubs, but in fire brigades, voluntary militias, trade groups, and ethnic or religious associations (to mention just a few of the possibilities), see WARREN GOLDSTEIN, *PLAYING FOR KEEPS: A HISTORY OF EARLY BASEBALL* (1989).

*Page 1234.* Of course, what I am calling the "baseball plural"—better known to linguists as a form of "zero derivation"—is not limited to baseball. For example, consider the phrase "commercial advertisements," in which the word "commercial" serves as an adjective. Somewhere along the way, that phrase got shortened to just "commercials," turning the former adjective into a noun.

CASE FIVE: THE BROOKLYN DODGERS

*Page 1235.* The early history of the Brooklyn franchise is described in RONALD G. SHAFER, *WHEN THE DODGERS WERE BRIDEGROOMS: GUNNER MCGUNNIGLE AND BROOKLYN'S BACK-TO-BACK PENNANTS OF 1889 AND 1890* (2011).

*Page 1235.* For a thorough examination of the "trolley dodgers" nickname, as well as the political controversies (and the real public health costs) surrounding the electrification of trolleys, see Peter Jensen Brown, *The Grim Reality of the "Trolley Dodgers,"* EARLY SPORTS & POP CULTURE HIST. BLOG (Apr. 7, 2014, 6:01 PM), <http://esnpc.blogspot.com/2014/04/the-grim-reality-of-trolley-dodgers.html>. As Brown notes, the macabre joke ("People seldom kill themselves . . .") is from a May 19, 1895, story in the *Kansas City Journal*.

The story that Trolley Dodgers was a preexisting nickname for Brooklyn residents appears in a number of sources, including Joseph Gephart, *Baseball Nicknames*, N.Y. TIMES, Feb. 23, 1941, § 7 (Magazine), at 21.

*Page 1235.* Articles carrying the report of the Dodgers nickname (“‘Trolley dodgers’ is the new name which eastern baseball cranks have given . . .”) include *In the Sporting Swim*, S.F. CHRON., May 4, 1895, at 9, and *Sports of All Sorts*, OTTAWA J., Sept. 7, 1895, at 6.

*Page 1236.* On the *Superba* stage productions generally, see MARK COSDON, *THE HANLON BROTHERS: FROM DAREDEVIL ACROBATICS TO SPECTACLE PANTOMIME, 1833-1931*, at 121-25 (2009).

*Page 1236.* The quoted headline (“60,000 See Robins Down Giants . . .”) is from William E. Brandt, *60,000 See Robins Down Giants Twice*, N.Y. TIMES, May 31, 1931, § 10, at 1.

*Page 1236.* The long quotation (“[N]o one could decide . . .”) is from RICHARD WORTH, *BASEBALL TEAM NAMES: A WORLDWIDE DICTIONARY, 1869-2011*, at 3 (2013).

*Page 1236.* For a contemporary account of the sportswriters’ choice of Dodgers, see Thomas Holmes, *Brooklyn Baseball Club Will Officially Nickname Them ‘Dodgers,’* BROOKLYN DAILY EAGLE, Jan. 23, 1932, at 14. One modern account gives Canaries as one of the alternative nicknames considered by the writers (because Canarius was the original name of the Dodgers’ manager Max Carey). See JOHN SNYDER, *365 ODDBALL DAYS IN DODGERS HISTORY* (2010) (entry for Jan. 23). There is also a 1940s account to the effect that the team had previously chosen Kings as its nickname (because Brooklyn is in Kings County, New York), and that Dodgers was a second choice that the team turned to when Kings for some reason “failed to click.” Joseph Curtin Gephart, *Nicknames of Baseball Clubs*, 16 AM. SPEECH 100, 101 (1941). However, I have been unable to find any contemporary support for this claim, and Gephart’s discussions of other teams’ nicknames contain known errors.

*Page 1237.* The quotation from W.O. McGeehan (“It was all right for supercilious baseball writers . . .”) is from W.O. McGeehan, *What’s in a Name?*, N.Y. HERALD TRIB., July 10, 1932, § 3, at 3. The suggestion that “Dodgers” implied cowardice appeared later in the same column. The criticism of the team’s management for incurring the cost of new uniforms is from W.O. McGeehan, *Give a Team a Bad Name*, N.Y. HERALD TRIB., Sept. 15, 1933, at 22.

*Page 1237.* The day after the new uniforms appeared, the *New York Times* acknowledged the change—and the change in the team’s nickname—in its story on the game: “Appearing for the first time with the name Dodgers blazoned across their chests and large numerals on their backs, the erstwhile Robins fell upon Hubbell . . .” Roscoe McGowen, *Clark of Dodgers Turns Back Giants*, N.Y. TIMES, June 27, 1932, at 21.

*Page 1237.* Mullin's sports cartoons are collected in WILLARD MULLIN ET AL., *WILLARD MULLIN'S GOLDEN AGE OF BASEBALL* (2013).

*Individual players' nicknames*

*Page 1238.* Babe Ruth's career, including the conflicting stories about how he was nicknamed Babe, is described in any number of sources. See, for example, LEIGH MONTVILLE, *THE BIG BAM: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF BABE RUTH* (2006), and KAL WAGENHEIM, *BABE RUTH: HIS LIFE AND LEGEND* (1974).

*Page 1238.* For a biography of Lou Gehrig, including his various nicknames, see RAY ROBINSON, *IRON HORSE: LOU GEHRIG IN HIS TIME* (1991). Gehrig's nicknames are also discussed in Bruce Markusen, *The Nickname Game: Lou Gehrig*, *HARDBALL TIMES* (Sept. 18, 2009), <http://www.hardballtimes.com/the-nickname-game-lou-gehrig>.

CASE SIX: THE WASHINGTON SENATORS

*Page 1239.* For contemporary biographical sketches of the eminent members of the Noyes family, see DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA: *CONCISE BIOGRAPHIES OF ITS PROMINENT AND REPRESENTATIVE CONTEMPORARY CITIZENS, AND VALUABLE STATISTICAL DATA, 1908-1909*, at 348-49 (1908).

*Page 1239.* For a history of Washington's original National Base Ball Club, see FRANK CERESI & CAROL MCMAINS, *THE WASHINGTON NATIONALS AND THEIR GRAND TOUR OF 1867* (2013). Washington's American League franchise is covered by TOM DEVEAUX, *THE WASHINGTON SENATORS, 1901-1971* (2001).

*Page 1240.* Arthur Gorman's involvement with various Washington teams is described in Brian McKenna, *Arthur Gorman*, *SOC'Y FOR AM. BASEBALL RES.*, <http://sabr.org/bioproj/person/1c2a4dc3> (last visited June 8, 2015). For a more general biography, see JOHN R. LAMBERT, *ARTHUR PUE GORMAN* (1953).

*Pages 1240-41.* Tom Noyes's announcement ("The new owners . . . desire . . .") is quoted in *A Few Breezy Pick-Ups*, *PITTSBURGH PRESS*, Feb. 9, 1905, at 14.

*Page 1241.* Contemporary accounts of Noyes's announcement, and of the nicknames submitted in response, include *Fans Hunting a New Name*, *WASH. POST*, Feb. 10, 1905, at 8, and *New Name for the Senators*, *WASH. POST*, Feb. 13, 1905, at 8.

*Page 1241.* Depictions of team uniforms for any particular year (including Washington's uniforms in 1905 and 1906) can be found in the National Baseball Hall of Fame's excellent online database, *Dressed to the Nines: A His-*

*tory of the Baseball Uniform*, NAT'L BASEBALL HALL FAME, [http://exhibits.baseballhalloffame.org/dressed\\_to\\_the\\_nines/database.htm](http://exhibits.baseballhalloffame.org/dressed_to_the_nines/database.htm) (last visited June 8, 2015).

*Page 1241.* The *Washington Post*'s story is *Senators' New Name*, WASH. POST, Mar. 26, 1905, at S1. *Sporting Life*'s version is Paul W. Eaton, *From the Capital*, SPORTING LIFE, Apr. 1, 1905, at 7.

*Page 1242.* The anonymous verse ("A year ago . . .") appeared in *Reception for Team*, WASH. POST, May 4, 1905, at 9. The wry comment quoted below it ("It must have been the name Nationals . . .") is from *American League Notes*, SPORTING LIFE, Apr. 29, 1905, at 7.

*Page 1242.* The description of the performance of the two newly acquired pitchers is from *American League Notes*, SPORTING LIFE, July 27, 1912, at 13. Some reminiscences about the concurrent use of Nationals and Senators up to the 1950s can be found in John Kelly, *Senators? Nationals? Nats? What's in a Name?*, WASH. POST (Oct. 6, 2012), <http://wapo.st/1e2eCdz>.

*Pages 1242-43.* Tom's choice of the Nationals nickname was announced at the end of March 1905. I do not know how long it would have taken editors in other cities to decide how (or whether) to respond, but in May 1905 the *Chicago Daily Tribune* still referred to the team as the Senators. See, for example, the stories in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* on May 4, 1905 (*Three in a Row for Senators*, CHI. DAILY TRIB., May 4, 1905, at 10), May 9, 1905 (*Athletics Defeat Senators*, CHI. DAILY TRIB., May 9, 1905, at 8), May 22, 1905 (*Sox Win Before a Great Crowd*, CHI. DAILY TRIB., May 22, 1905, at 8), and May 24, 1905 (*White Sox Lead in Pennant Race*, CHI. DAILY TRIB., May 24, 1905, at 8).

*Page 1243.* The quotation ("Fans, by ballot . . .") is from the *BASEBALL GUIDE AND RECORD BOOK 1943*, at 30 (J.G. Taylor Spink et al. eds., 1943).

*Page 1243.* The statement by Mayor Williams ("Give us two senators . . .") was reported in *In Washington, It'll Be "Let's Go Nats,"* USA TODAY (Nov. 22, 2004, 1:01 PM), [http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/sports/baseball/nl/expos/2004-11-19-nats-nickname\\_x.htm](http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/sports/baseball/nl/expos/2004-11-19-nats-nickname_x.htm).

#### *Nicknames in baseball reference books*

*Pages 1243-44.* On early reference books, the first book to compile statistical information from the preceding year was BEADLE'S DIME BASEBALL PLAYER (Henry Chadwick ed., New York, N.Y., Beadle & Co. 1862). The annual *Spalding Guides* began publication in 1877; in 1883, they were joined by the *Reach's Guides*, published by another sporting goods executive (and former baseball player), A.J. Reach. Both series were published annually until they merged operations in 1940. The *Sporting News* took over publication in 1943

and continued to put out an annual edition until 2007, when (like many print publications) it was supplanted by the Internet.

For more information on these publications, and on many other shorter-lived series, see Ralph E. LinWeber, *Baseball Guides Galore*, SOC'Y FOR AM. BASEBALL RES. JS. ARCHIVE, <http://research.sabr.org/journals/baseball-guides-galore> (last visited June 8, 2015). For more on the history of baseball statistics in general, including the difficulties facing early compilers, see ALAN SCHWARZ, *THE NUMBERS GAME: BASEBALL'S LIFELONG FASCINATION WITH STATISTICS* (2004).

*Page 1244.* The humorous essay on “pet names” for big league teams appeared in SPALDING'S OFFICIAL BASE BALL GUIDE, 1915, at 11-14 (John B. Foster ed., 1915).

Other nonrecurring essays in the *Guides* covered such topics as player-management relations, the struggles between the National League and its various rivals, the spread of baseball abroad, and how-to tips for aspiring ballplayers. In those essays, the authors of the *Guides* used team nicknames (e.g., referring to Cincinnati as “the Reds”), in much the same way as any newspaper of that time. However, with the exception of the 1915 essay mentioned above, none of the pre-1930 *Guides* included any systematic listing of each team's nickname. The *Guides* took some pains to make it easy to find any team's address and telephone number, but they put no such effort into making it easy to find a team's nickname.

*Page 1244.* For a 1918 use of the Superbas nickname, see *Buccaneers Take Last from Robins*, N.Y. TIMES, May 19, 1918, § 2, at 5. “Buccaneers” refers to the team known today as the Pittsburgh Pirates. “Robins” and “Superbas,” of course, refer to the Brooklyn team.

*Page 1245.* The modern reference books listed here (the ones that do not offer a year-by-year list of historical nicknames) are TOTAL BASEBALL: THE OFFICIAL ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL (John Thorn et al. eds., 4th ed. 2004), and THE EMERALD GUIDE TO BASEBALL (Gary Gillette et al. eds., 2014).

#### CASE SEVEN: THE CHICAGO CUBS

*Page 1245.* THE BASEBALL ENCYCLOPEDIA: THE COMPLETE AND OFFICIAL RECORD OF MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL 60-61 (8th ed. 1990). As noted earlier, a few other books offer similar year-by-year lists of each team's most frequent nicknames. All give the same general sequence of nicknames for Chicago (Colts to Orphans to Cubs), though sometimes they differ slightly on the dates of each nickname. For example, the *Chicago Cubs Team History & Encyclopedia*, BASEBALL-REFERENCE.COM, <http://www.baseball-reference.com/teams/CHC> (last visited June 8, 2015), lists Orphans as the team's most frequent nickname from 1898 to 1902, rather than 1898 to 1901, as the *Baseball Encyclopedia* has it.

*Pages 1245-46.* My account of the team's early years is drawn mostly from modern sources, though there does not seem to be any dispute about the basic facts. Some modern books tracing this history include EDDIE GOLD & ART AHRENS, *THE GOLDEN ERA CUBS: 1876-1940* (1985); GLENN STOUT & RICHARD A. JOHNSON, *THE CUBS: THE COMPLETE STORY OF CHICAGO CUBS BASEBALL 3-27* (2007); and WARREN N. WILBERT, *A CUNNING KIND OF PLAY: THE CUBS-GIANTS RIVALRY, 1876-1932* (2002).

*Page 1246.* For examples of stories using "Anson's Colts" as a nickname, see *Still Another Defeat*, CHI. DAILY TRIB., Aug. 24, 1890, at 5, and *Beaten at Boston: Anson's Colts Defeated in the Opening Game at the Hub*, CHI. DAILY TRIB., July 11, 1890, at 2. For examples of "colts" used as a generic term for young ballplayers, see SPALDING'S BASE BALL GUIDE AND OFFICIAL LEAGUE BOOK FOR 1891, at 16-17, 20 (Henry Chadwick ed., Chicago, Ill., A.G. Spalding & Bros. 1891), and Charles Dryden, *Spuds Get Little Work*, CHI. DAILY TRIB., Mar. 8, 1907, at 10.

*Page 1246.* The quoted headlines, all from the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, appeared on Aug. 5, 1890 (*Boston Takes Another Games*, CHI. DAILY TRIB., Aug. 5, 1890, at 6), Aug. 22, 1890 (*Couldn't Hit the Ball*, CHI. DAILY TRIB., Aug. 22, 1890, at 6), and July 23, 1889 (*Beaten by the Hoosiers*, CHI. DAILY TRIB., July 23, 1889, at 3). The "Anson's babies" nickname appears in *An Incentive to Victory*, CHI. DAILY TRIB., Sept. 7, 1887, at 3. "Anson's pets" appears in *Couldn't Hit the Ball*, CHI. DAILY TRIB., Aug. 22, 1890, at 6.

*Page 1246.* The quotation ("the present team is more generally composed of colts . . .") is from *Baseball Season Begins Today*, CHI. DAILY TRIB., Apr. 17, 1902, at 6.

*Page 1246.* The spring training report in 1902 (the first recorded use of Cubs as a nickname for the team) appeared in the *Chicago Daily News* on March 27, 1902. The headline read, "SELEE PLACES HIS MEN. Manager of the Cubs Is in Doubt Only on Two Positions." A subheading gave further information (and showed that spring training has always been a season for optimism): "Leader of West Side Club Thinks He Has Secured a Bunch of Fast Youngsters." The body of the article began, "Frank Selee [the team's manager] will devote his strongest efforts on the team work of the new Cubs this year."

*Page 1247.* The quoted article ("Colts Defeat the Reds . . .") appeared in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* on June 22, 1902, at 9.

*Page 1247.* The origins of the Cowboys, Rough Riders, and Panamas nicknames are described in STEVE JOHNSON, *CHICAGO CUBS YESTERDAY AND TODAY* 14 (2008). Some of the details are uncertain; for example, Johnson describes the Panama hats as having been worn during spring training in 1903, while one contemporary source suggests that this may have occurred in May of that year, after the regular season had begun. See *National League News*,

SPORTING LIFE, May 30, 1903, at 7. However, there is no disagreement over the basic history of the Panamas nickname.

*Page 1247.* Many years later, Zephyrs was the official nickname of a short-lived professional basketball team in Chicago. After its first year, the owner changed the team's nickname to Packers. After its second year, the owner moved the team to Baltimore.

*Pages 1247-48. Zephyrs Hit, but Fail to Count*, CHI. DAILY TRIB., May 12, 1905, at 8; *Zephyrs Lose by 1 to 0*, CHI. DAILY TRIB., May 14, 1905, § 2, at 1; *Zephyrs Suffer Third Shutout*, CHI. DAILY TRIB., May 17, 1905, at 8; *Zephyrs Lose Entire Series*, CHI. DAILY TRIB., May 18, 1905, at 8.

*Page 1248.* The *Sporting Life* report on the origins of the Spuds nickname appears in *National League News*, SPORTING LIFE, May 26, 1906, at 17.

*Page 1248.* The idea that "Microbes" referred to some players' small size appears in RICHARD WORTH, *BASEBALL TEAM NAMES: A WORLDWIDE DICTIONARY*, 1869-2011, at 60, 323 (2013). It is also mentioned in JOHN SNYDER, *365 ODDBALL DAYS IN CHICAGO CUBS HISTORY* (2010) (entry for Mar. 27). Robert Loerzel has done research demolishing this conjecture. Robert Loerzel, *We Solve the Mystery of the Cubs' Early Name: The Microbes*, TIMEOUT (Apr. 3, 2012), <http://www.timeout.com/chicago/things-to-do/we-solve-the-mystery-of-the-cubs-early-name-the-microbes>.

*Pages 1248-49.* For a thorough discussion of the political, environmental, and urban-planning issues raised by Chicago's sanitation practices over the years, see HAROLD L. PLATT, *SHOCK CITIES: THE ENVIRONMENTAL TRANSFORMATION AND REFORM OF MANCHESTER AND CHICAGO* 135-95, 421-37 (2005).

*Page 1249.* The lawsuit, brought by the city of St. Louis and the State of Missouri, reached the Supreme Court twice in the space of six years. In 1901, the Supreme Court ruled that it was the proper court to decide Missouri's case, because the dispute involved one state suing another. *Missouri v. Illinois*, 180 U.S. 208, 238-41 (1901). Five years later, though, the Court ruled against Missouri on the merits of the case. In an opinion by Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., the Court concluded that Missouri's health concerns were not sufficiently supported by the available evidence. *Missouri v. Illinois*, 200 U.S. 496, 522-26 (1906). For a contemporary discussion of the scientific evidence, see *Chicago Drainage Canal and the City of St. Louis*, 88 SCI. AM. 464 (1903).

*Page 1249.* For examples of the Microbes nickname in St. Louis, see *Microbes Defeat Bridegrooms by Bunching Hits*, ST. LOUIS REPUBLIC, Sept. 15, 1903, at 9; and *"Microbes" Easy for the Cardinals*, ST. LOUIS REPUBLIC, Sept. 4, 1903, at 8.

*Page 1249.* The most thorough account of the press conference at the train station is from *Name Is Selected for Selee's Ball Team*, ST. PAUL GLOBE,

Apr. 19, 1903, at 9. This is the article quoted on page 1249; it is also my source for most of the materials in this Part.

*Page 1250.* The passage from *Sporting Life* (“The St. Louis fans have dubbed . . .”) is from W.A. Phelon, Jr., *Chicago Gleanings*, SPORTING LIFE, Apr. 25, 1903, at 14.

*Page 1250.* The statements attributed to Jock Menefee and Jack Taylor were reported in *Name Is Selected for Selee’s Ball Team*, ST. PAUL GLOBE, Apr. 19, 1903, at 9.

*Page 1250.* See Robert Loerzel, *We Solve the Mystery of the Cubs’ Early Name: The Microbes*, TIMEOUT (Apr. 3, 2012), <http://www.timeout.com/chicago/things-to-do/we-solve-the-mystery-of-the-cubs-early-name-the-microbes>.

*Page 1250.* For more detailed accounts of the conflicts between Hearst and McCormick, and their effects on Chicago’s newspapers, see RICHARD NORTON SMITH, *THE COLONEL: THE LIFE AND LEGEND OF ROBERT R. MCCORMICK, 1880-1955*, at 134-38 (1997), and FRANK C. WALDROP, *MCCORMICK OF CHICAGO: AN UNCONVENTIONAL PORTRAIT OF A CONTROVERSIAL FIGURE 89-90* (1966).

*Page 1251.* The report that Frank Chance urged the local press to call the team the Cubs can be found in STEVE JOHNSON, *CHICAGO CUBS YESTERDAY AND TODAY* 14 (2008). The version in which Chance “insisted” that the team be called Cubs appears in JOHN SNYDER, *CUBS JOURNAL* 17 (2005).

*Page 1251.* For more on the 1906 World Series, played against the Cubs’ crosstown rivals, see BERNARD A. WEISBERGER, *WHEN CHICAGO RULED BASEBALL: THE CUBS-WHITE SOX WORLD SERIES OF 1906* (2006).

*Page 1252.* The description of the scorecard is from ART AHRENS, *CHICAGO CUBS: TINKER TO EVERS TO CHANCE* (2007). The description of the planned expansion of the team’s home grandstands is from I.E. Sanborn, *Pennant Is to Fly April 22*, CHI. DAILY TRIB., Mar. 30, 1908, at 12.

*Page 1252.* As a column in *Sporting Life* explained, “The Cubs now are being called the Trojans in Chicago because Johnny Evers hails from Troy, N.Y.” *National League Notes*, SPORTING LIFE, Aug. 9, 1913, at 10. The use of that nickname (nonexclusively, of course) continued for several months. For another example, see Richard G. Tobin, *The Chicago City Series*, SPORTING LIFE, Oct. 25, 1913, at 12.

#### *Observations on the end of crowdsourcing*

*Pages 1252-53.* On the possible relationship between “branding” and the professionalization of the sports bureaucracy, see Stephen Hardy, *Evolutions in American Sport*, 36 J. SPORT HIST. 337, 340-41 (2009).

*Page 1253.* Officially licensed Bugeaters apparel can now be purchased at BUGEATERS, <http://bugeaters.com> (last visited June 8, 2015).

*Page 1253.* The introduction of fees for radio broadcast rights is described in Eric C. Covil, *Radio and Its Impact on the Sports World*, AM. SPORTSCASTERS ONLINE, <http://www.americansportscastersonline.com/radio/history.html> (last visited June 8, 2015). The subsequent history of team-media relations is traced in Eric E. Johnson, *The NFL, Intellectual Property, and the Conquest of Sports Media*, 86 N.D. L. REV. 759, 761-66 (2010).

*Page 1253.* For data on the decline in the number of nicknames given to individual players, see James K. Skipper, Jr., *An Analysis of Baseball Nicknames*, 10 BASEBALL RES. J. 112 (1981).

#### THE WASHINGTON SAILORS (REVISITED)

*Page 1254.* The *Washington Times* quotation (“The Redskins are a private business . . .”) is from an unsigned editorial, Editorial, *Hail to the Redtails?*, WASH. TIMES (May 2, 2013), <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/may/2/hail-to-the-redtails>.