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CHICAGO WHITE SOX

Dan Ryan at 35th St./Chicago, Ill. 60616/312-924-1000

November 7, 1978

Dr. Samuel Clark
Honors College
Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49008

Dear Dr. Clark:

Enclosed are copies of my Honors College paper entitled The General Manager, "The Man In The Middle," for Mike and you. Additional copies are being sent to the three professors in my oral group, Drs. Kemelgor, Everett, and Rozelle.

When I was last in Kalamazoo these professors felt that a Tuesday or Thursday afternoon would fit best into their schedules for my oral testing. I will attempt to establish a date with them, and then check back with you to see if that respective date and time is good for you and Mike. It is difficult to foresee when this will be, but I will attempt to notify you at least a couple of weeks in advance.

Thank you for your help, and I will be contacting you soon.

Sincerely,

David Dombrowski
Administrative Assistant

DD/fa
encl.

Nov 9 1978

THE GENERAL
MANAGER, "THE
MAN IN THE MIDDLE"

by

David Dombrowski

A Project Report
Submitted to the
Honors College
in partial fulfillment
for
Graduation from the Honors College

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
October, 1978

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In writing this thesis, I have benefited from the encouragement, advice, and constructive criticism of Professors Bruce Kemelgor and David Rozelle. My thanks go to them, as to the many others at Western Michigan University, who have given much needed help.

David Dombrowski

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART		PAGE
	INTRODUCTION	1
I	THE BEGINNING OF THE POSITION	2
II	TODAY'S TITLE	6
III	FAMOUS GENERAL MANAGERS	12
	Branch Rickey	13
	George Weiss	18
IV	THE START TOWARD BIG BUSINESS	21
	The First General Manager	23
V	EVOLUTION AND PROGRESS	26
	Radio	27
	Night Baseball	28
	Television	32
	Air Travel	34
VI	THE PLAYER MOVEMENT	39
VII	TODAY'S ROLE	46
	Club Goals	47
	Existent Problems	52
	Season of the Year	59
VIII	THE FUTURE	62
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	64

INTRODUCTION

This paper explores the contemporary purpose and function of the General Manager's position on a baseball team, as well as addressing some historical events that contributed to his present role. By examining these events, one can gain insight into the increased responsibility that has been thrust upon the General Manager, and the eventual delegation of these duties as the responsibilities multiplied.

Generally, the analysis of these functions was done through a management perspective. Accounting reports, usually very helpful for analysis purposes, are generally not available from baseball clubs. Most baseball teams are not corporations, and those that are, are closely held.

Material for this paper was acquired by interviewing various baseball people, through questionnaires, and by reading several books and magazine articles. Also, much information was received from Mr. Cliff Kachline, Chief Historian of the Baseball Hall of Fame.

ONE - THE BEGINNING OF THE POSITION

Management's purpose is to integrate resources to accomplish goals. This practice in baseball can be traced back to Abner Doubleday, and the origin of the sport. Then baseball was an amateur sport, played for the fun of the game. There was little need for any "front office" because the teams did not have any significant financial decisions associated with their existence. The only costs were small traveling expenses for the teams' omnibuses, and they were shared by the players.

During this period of amateurism, there was a special "Prohibitory Clause" in baseball to keep the game out of the hands of trained professionals. But, as the game grew in popularity, first from city to city, and then from state to state, it gradually became clear that there was money in the game. As soon as this fact became apparent, enclosed grounds were introduced, gate money followed, and ultimately the system of trained and paid professional players came into vogue.¹

However, despite having the "Prohibitory Clause", leading

¹"The Inauguration of the Season of 1869," New York Times, April 10, 1869, p. 11, col. 6.

clubs evaded it, and kept their amateur standing, while in reality, they enjoyed the advantage of having a "professional nine." The result, due to the competitive imbalance created by the "professional nines," was apathy on the part of the players, amounting not only to an attitude of indifference on some clubs, but to the loss of interest in the game. This led to amendment of the "Prohibitory Clause," and the eventual formation of the 1869 Cincinnati Red Stockings, the first professional baseball team.²

The Red Stockings were owned and operated by a group of Cincinnati businessmen, headed by Erin B. Champion, chief owner and president of the team.³ Champion, a local attorney and one of the community's most respected businessmen, decided along with some of the other entrepreneurs of the city that a more representative team was necessary. Touring teams from other cities were defeating Cincinnati's baseball teams, sometimes by rather humiliating scores. Being on the short end of lopsided scores, it was felt, did not contribute to civic pride. "It became ascertained that the Cincinnati Baseball Club could not survive if the pretense of amateurism

² Ibid., 11.

³ Cliff Kachline, paraphrase of an interview held on July 11, 1977.

was continued", Champion wrote in a Cincinnati paper.⁴

In addition to Champion as president, other businessmen filled the positions of vice president, secretary, treasurer, and four directors' chairs. These men were responsible for financial decisions involving the ball park and players' salaries.⁵ These officers in turn hired a captain and manager for the team. The captain and manager were in charge of acquiring players and charting out the team's schedule. The Wright brothers were the first captain and manager. George served as captain and shortstop, and Harry was the manager and center fielder. George, highest paid player on the team, was guaranteed \$1400.00 for the season which began on March 15th and ended on November 15th. Other salaries scaled from brother Harry's \$1200.00 to \$600.00 for utility player Richard Hurley.⁶

The Red Stockings were every bit as good as the founding businessmen had hoped. Led by the Wright brothers and pitcher Asa Brainard, the Red Stockings produced a two year record of ninety two victories and one tie in ninety three starts, finally suffering a defeat on June 14, 1870, at the hands

⁴Wells Twombly, 200 Years of Sport in America (United States: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1976), p. 75.

⁵Kachline, July 11, 1977.

⁶Frank G. Menke, The Encyclopedia of Sports (New Jersey: A. S. Barnes & Company, 1975), p. 69.

of the Brooklyn Athletics, 8-7, in eleven innings.⁷

Despite the Red Stockings success, they disbanded after the 1870 season. The team broke up due to the formation of the new National Association League and the Red Stockings refusal to enter into a bidding war for their highly sought after players.⁸ During their existence the Red Stockings received many services from their club officers, captain, and manager that are also performed by today's General Manager. By looking at these services: player acquisition, scheduling arrangements, financial decisions involving the ball park, and players' salaries, one can see the similarity between those services provided then, and now. And, although the functions and decisions rendered back then, were not as complicated as today's, one can safely trace the beginning of baseball's front office management to the beginning of professional baseball, and the 1869 Cincinnati Red Stockings.

After having traced the beginning of front office management back to 1869, it now becomes important to look at the present day functions and roles that are included in this sphere of operations.

⁷Ibid., p. 69

⁸Cliff Kachline, paraphrase of interview held on November 11, 1977.

TWO - TODAY'S TITLE - AND WHAT IT MEANS

The General Manager originally was the chief officer of a team and directed park operations, ushering, maintenance, advertising, publicity, ticket operations, and the judging of talent.⁹ He was the supervisor of the ball club and made the final decisions in all, or almost all areas of operations. But, over the years, the title has definitely taken on many different meanings.

The duties of today's General Manager are not so clear, for today every club is operated differently. The title may still mean the head of all operations of a ball club, but this is presently true in only a handful of cases. Or, most commonly the title could describe an individual handling only baseball operations, while handing most of the business operations over to another person. This leaves the General Managers most predominate duty as judging talent. There is a growing trend - which to some baseball men seems to make sense - of promoting former scouts into the General Manager chair. This group now included Bob Kennedy of the Cubs; Al Campanis of the Dodgers; Phil Seghi, Indians; Charlie Fox, Expos; Paul Owens, Phillies; Harding Peterson, Pittsburgh; and

⁹ Bill Veeck, paraphrase of interview held on May 10, 1977.

Bob Fontaine, Padres.¹⁰ The advantages of this trend are obvious inasmuch as a primary function of the General Manager is in player development and procurement, which requires the ability to judge talent at every level of competition.

The title of General Manager may actually not communicate anything specific about the General Manager's duties. But, an obvious question follows: Who decides what functions the General Manager will perform, and why are these functions so diverse?

Interviews with various baseball executives indicate that one person on each team decides what duties a General Manager will assume on a particular team. With all but one club in the Major Leagues being owned by a closely held corporation, partnership, or sole proprietorship, it is apparent that the original decision concerning the General Manager's duties lies upon the shoulders of the owner. If the owner wishes to remain quiet and in the background of operations, he can delegate all decision making to the General Manager. If the owner takes a more active role in running operations, this could relegate the General Manager to either baseball or business operations, but not both.

The obvious reason for this diversification of duties

¹⁰ Jerome Holtzman, "Baseball", Chicago Sun Times, May 1, 1977.

is due to the different purposes of owning a ball club, and the different owners' personalities. With twenty-six different people owning that many different ball clubs, there are that many separate ways of operating ball clubs and delegating duties. So, after examining the role of the General Manager it appears that the only conclusion that can be drawn is that there are as many different definitions of the title as there are teams.

However, there are generalities that can be made about the person who holds the title of General Manager. The General Manager is often in a position to make decisions that can make or break a ball club. He is not the only person who decides on these crucial issues, but he often occupies that final spot on the top of the organization that must make that final choice between yes or no. Or, as it has been explained by a present day General Manager, "The buck stops here."¹¹

So, the General Manager must have enough confidence in himself to make an important decision, and then be willing to take the second guessing from the fans, media, and even the players. Often, when a General Manager makes a decision on affairs such as trades, the immediate results of such a

¹¹ Jim Campbell, paraphrase of interview held on May 21, 1977.

move are not seen, which leaves the General Manager open to much criticism. Trading away an aging .300 hitter, who has reached his peak, for a couple of youngsters playing minor league ball with outstanding potential, can leave the General Manager open to criticism. The fans always want a winner now, and they do not want to look three years into the future when those minor league players mature and bring a winner.

Although this decision making process of the General Manager may not be that different from decision making by people in other fields of work, the public nature and exposure of his final choice is unique to the sports world. Being in the public eye means that the General Manager must possess an ability to make decisions without worrying about the public's opinion, or his occupational future. If the General Manager makes two or three bad moves in a row, and his ball club is faltering in the standings, the General Manager can be blamed by the press and owner. Because of this, the General Manager, along with the manager of a ball club, find themselves in a potentially transient position. Their future is on the line frequently, and they are on the spot to produce now.

Another generality that can be drawn about the General Manager is that he is a man in at least his upper thirties, and usually his upper forties. This age bracket exists for one reason - experience. The General Manager does not become

a General Manager directly out of college, or retire right off the playing field to the top office, for he must gain valuable experience in the actual operations of a ball club. This insight will come from working and observing day to day activities in as many areas as possible. These areas vary from minor league scouting to negotiating contracts with players.

The ability to work hard and long hours is another distinguishing feature of a General Manager. The General Manager will often work days of sixteen to eighteen hours, and he must be able to do this at a high level of efficiency. One can often call a General Manager's office as early as nine o'clock in the morning, and then call him at midnight of the same day, and he will still be at the ball park. Thus, it can be seen that one quality will not make a General Manager, but many features mold a person into a General Manager.

So, what conclusions can be made about the General Manager? One can generally conclude that he is a man in his middle to upper years of life, who has acquired enough experience to learn the in's and out's of baseball. Along with this valuable experience he must be a man not afraid of making a crucial and/or controversial decision that will leave him open to public criticism. He must not fear the

position's transience, and last but not least, he must believe in himself, and his help.

Before proceeding further with an examination of the General Manager's role, it would be informative and enlightening to examine the careers of perhaps two of the most famous General Managers in history.

THREE - FAMOUS GENERAL MANAGERS

The researching of the General Manager's position would not be complete without some material being included on one or two of the most famous General Managers in baseball history. These men have helped create and mold the traditional position of the General Manager.

Questionnaires were sent and phone calls made to baseball people who are historians of the game, with historians being classified as people that have been involved in the game of baseball for many years. The reason for inquiring about these famous people was that replies were needed from people that had actually had a first hand account of working with these famous General Managers.

These baseball historians were asked specifically to list their choice as the three or four most famous General Managers in baseball history, and why these men were well known. When replies were received, a variety of names were listed. These names included Larry MacPhail of Cincinnati; Frank Lane, of various teams; Connie Mack, Philadelphia Athletics; and Ed Barrow, New York Yankees. Significantly, two names appeared on almost all replies, Branch Rickey and George Weiss.

Branch Rickey

Rickey was born to deeply religious pioneer parents on December 20, 1881. Young Rickey was a good athlete, excelling in both football and baseball, while exhibiting leadership abilities. He attended Ohio Wesleyan University, playing football and catching in baseball. In 1903, Rickey debuted in the major leagues when Cincinnati purchased him as a catcher. However, he was soon released by the Reds' manager for refusing to play on Sunday, the most profitable day of the week, due to his religious beliefs.

Meanwhile, Rickey continued his studies, earning his B.S. from Wesleyan. After graduation, Rickey received his first taste of coaching, this being at a small college in Ohio. While coaching, Rickey continued playing professional baseball, but never achieved stardom. In 1908, Rickey entered the University of Michigan law school. There he received his degree while at the same time coaching the Wolverine baseball team.

In 1913, Colonel Bob Hedges, owner of the St. Louis Browns, invited Rickey to be one of the team's scouts, covering the Pacific coast teams. Accepting, Rickey later became club secretary and manager of the team. When the Browns were sold in 1916, Rickey remained as vice-president and business manager. Meanwhile, a group of St. Louis

businessmen had purchased the St. Louis National League Club, the Cardinals. Rickey accepted their offer to become club president of the Cardinals. But, Phil Ball, the new owner of the Browns, refused to release his business manager, and Rickey had to go to court to prove that his contract permitted him to change jobs if a better one was offered.¹²

Rickey's first year as club president saw the Cardinals rise in the standings, although most of the credit was given to Cardinal manager Miller Huggins. After a short stint in the army, Rickey resumed his baseball duties as field manager. With his uncanny ability to recognize baseball talent, Rickey began to find good players. And the famous Rickey notebook, with names of potentially outstanding talent, was already started. But, the Cardinals were in deep debt and unable to meet operating expenses, and several times had to forego opportunities to sign these players. Rickey, showing his great dedication, occasionally was even compelled to pass up his own salary.

Due to his ability to judge talent, minor league officials whom Rickey approached would often wire to richer teams, saying that if Rickey wanted a certain player, that player must be good, and the other club would be in a position to

¹² Current Biography, Volume 6, Number 9 (New York, New York, October, 1945), p. 499.

make a better offer for the player. Or, if Rickey turned a discovery of his over to a minor league club for more seasoning, the manager might "double cross" him and sell his discovery to a rival club. This kind of thing made Rickey angry, and he finally concluded that if he was too poor to buy, he would have to raise his own talent. By 1919, the Cardinal boss took a step which was eventually to change the entire minor league structure by establishing the "farm system".

Rickey began modestly enough, by buying eighteen percent of a Houston club.¹³ This transaction was ridiculed by baseball men, but before long, all clubs were establishing their own farm teams. In 1940, this farm system expanded to the point that the Cardinals owned thirty two clubs outright and had optional agreements with eight others, there being six hundred players involved.¹⁴

Less than a month after the Cardinals won the 1942 World Series, Sam Breadon, their President, notified Rickey that his contract would not be renewed. The major reason for this dismissal being Rickey's large salary and profit

¹³ Ibid., p. 499.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 499.

sharing arrangement, totaling \$88,000.00 for 1941 and \$65,000.00 for 1942 - the highest income in baseball. Rickey immediately signed a five year contract, at a reported salary of \$85,000.00, as President and General Manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers.¹⁵

The Dodgers began to dominate the league under Rickey's tutelage, just as the Cardinals did before them. Under his leadership, the Dodgers won four pennants between the years of 1946 and 1953.

Of far greater significance, Rickey was the man who wiped out the color line in baseball. In 1945, he signed Jackie Robinson as the first Negro in the game, bringing him up to the Dodgers in 1946 after Robinson spent one sparkling season with Montreal in the International League.

By 1945, Rickey, John L. Smith, and Walter O'Malley had purchased seventy five percent of the Dodger's stock. After Smith died, O'Malley took over his stock, and soon Rickey and he came to a parting of the ways.

Rickey served as General Manager of the Pittsburgh Pirates from 1951-55, and was a member of the Pirates' board of directors from 1956-59. Rickey finished his illustrious

¹⁵
Ibid., p. 499

career in an advisory capacity to the St. Louis Cardinals right up until his death in 1965. Capping Rickey's career was his posthumous selection to baseball's Hall of Fame in 1967.

Rickey's career had many peaks. He was widely recognized as one of the most astute executives in the history of major league baseball. In his role of General Manager, he was the prime decision maker in matters concerning the development and employment of playing talent, first for the Cardinals and later for the Dodgers. In the early 1930's and forties, Branch Rickey had the greatest influence in the league over any player or manager. Between 1926-46 the Cardinals won nine pennants, and they all could be traced to Rickey's genius, even though he had moved to Brooklyn in 1943. His Dodger teams then took over where the Cardinals stopped, winning four pennants between 1946 and 1953.

Rickey was truly an innovator. He introduced the farm system, broke the color barrier in baseball, and promoted ideas like Ladies Day. Despite his strict conventionality, Rickey's teams showed a great deal of color. It was he who built one of the most colorful teams in baseball history, the World Series winning, 1934, St. Louis Cardinals, the Gashouse Gang. This squad was composed of personalities like Dizzy

Dean, Pepper Martin, Leo Durocher, Ducky Medwick, and was managed by umpire-baiting Frankie Frisch. With all of these achievements, it can easily be seen why Branch Rickey's name will long be remembered in baseball folklore.

George Weiss

George Weiss was born on June 23, 1895 in New Haven, Connecticut. Weiss was well educated, receiving a degree from Yale University. He first captured the public eye when he started promoting semi-pro baseball in his native New Haven.¹⁶ From there he was hired by New York Yankee owner Jacob Ruppert, in 1932, to build the Yankee farm system. Weiss did not take the glorious road to the majors, for he operated the Yankees' Kansas City farm club until 1948. He built the Yankees' farm club into a power, producing Yankee stars Yogi Berra, Phil Rizzuto, Mickey Mantle, and Whitey Ford.

Weiss took over the reins of the General Manager's position for the Yankees in 1949, and continued in this role until 1960. Weiss constructed the "unbeatable" Yankee dynasty. His teams won nineteen pennants and fifteen World Series in his twenty nine years in the Yankee front office.

¹⁶ "Transition," Newsweek, August 28, 1972, p. 55.

Weiss' talents were often ignored due to the Yankees' domination of the game. The Yankees were the best, and at that time, were often taken for granted.

However, his talents cannot be overlooked. Weiss formed the Yankees into a championship caliber team, and then achieved the hardest trick, keeping them on the top. Weiss' knowledge of the game can best be exemplified by a quote attributed to "Trader" Frank Lane, "I never made a single deal with him. He was too smart".¹⁷

Weiss and his predecessor, Ed Barrow, two aristocrats themselves, were serious and solemn, and wanted their Yankee players to be as undemonstrative and conservative as they were themselves. Despite his personal composure, one of Weiss' smartest moves was the hiring of the colorful Casey Stengel as manager of the Yankees in 1949. Weiss wanted a manager who would come to the park early and work with the kids on the Yankees. The Yankees' manager in 1948, Bucky Harris, was not this sort of man. Thus, out went Harris, and in came Stengel. Stengel's appearance was comical, and his previous antics as a manager supported this appraisal. However, Weiss had known Stengel for years, and although

¹⁷ Gene Karst and Martin J. Jones, Jr., Who's Who in Professional Baseball (New Rochelle, New York: Arlington House, 1973), p. 892.

Casey's coaching credentials until 1949 were not impressive, Weiss was wise enough to know that Stengel never had championship material to maneuver. Stengel also possessed two features that Weiss desired, the ability and interest to teach his players and work with them. Though not originally popular with the players, Stengel remained as manager of the Yankees until 1960. Weiss had truly created a dynasty, and it was Stengel who molded it for him.

Weiss was cast aside by the Yankees' youth movement in 1960. Whereupon, the fledgling New York Mets hired him to build their team. Weiss put together a team that was miraculous, but in the opposite direction from the Yankees. The Mets lost 120 games their first year, but in doing so their following was tremendous. The Mets were a bunch of outcasts led by Stengel, but they captured the hearts of New York fans. Although Weiss' Mets were far from being world beaters, he had garnered acceptance for his team.

Weiss retired from baseball in 1966, but not before supplying the Mets with the makings of the amazing world championship of 1969. Due to these achievements, Weiss was named to Baseball's Hall of Fame in 1971.

By looking at these two men before examining the growth and change in the game, a standard of excellence has been set that any owner could look for in his General Manager.

FOUR - THE START TOWARD BIG BUSINESS

Baseball continued to grow from the days of the Red Stockings. More teams turned professional, and along with that decision came more questions of financing, traveling, and competition. Attendance grew, leagues expanded, and the World Series started, as baseball evolved toward becoming the "National Pastime".

With this growth, front office staffs took a more prominent role in running the clubs. These staffs were led by owners who were close to the game, and actually participated in running and directing operations. Men such as Charles Comiskey of the White Sox, Clark Griffith of the Washington Senators, Connie Mack of Philadelphia, and Gary Herman of the Reds owned and ran the ball clubs themselves. These owners had one and only one interest - baseball. They added affection, humor, and business mismanagement to the game, and stories about them are legion. Men such as Connie Mack and John McGraw became the epitome of the manager-owner.¹⁸

Their type of ownership was soon superseded, however, by the business tycoon who made his fortune in commercial enterprises, then dabbled in sports ownership both as a means

¹⁸ James Michener, *Sports in America* (Greenwood, Connecticut: Fawcett Publications, 1976), p. 441.

of advertising his product and appealing to the community. Baseball was becoming big business in the 1920's. The beer barons - Jacob Ruppert with his New York Yankees and Augie Busch with his St. Louis Cardinals - were prototypes. They became famous across America, and the sales of their beer did not suffer in the process. When these men with the large bankrolls invested, they needed someone to oversee the club's day to day activities. This type of absentee ownership was one factor contributing to the origination of the General Manager.

Another contributor to baseball's movement toward big business was one of the game's greatest names, Babe Ruth. "The Babe" was a wonder man, a magnetic figure whether wearing the pinstriped uniform of the Yankees with the number three on the back, or tooling around town in a big roadster, wearing the familiar brown cap, camel's hair coat, big cigar, and bigger grin.

He was the number one box office attraction in baseball history,¹⁹ the greatest home-run hitter, one of the best pitchers, and a hero to the world of kids. Ruth with his home run swing and exuberant personality, brought people out to the park in record numbers.

19

Bob Broeg, Super Stars of Baseball (St. Louis, Missouri: The Sporting News, 1971), p. 209.

Despite Ruth's slugging, baseball officials insisted that their game had not changed, although it obviously had, and moreover, they seemed to have had a hand in it. Perhaps the cover of the ball was thinner, or a lighter yarn was being used. Maybe the yarn was wound tighter, or the rubber core was enlivened. The difference in the ball was hard to isolate, but it could not be missed. The ball did "jump off the bat" faster and fly farther. The American League batting average, .248 in 1916 rose to .292 by 1925. Home run production more than tripled in those years, from 142 to 533, and the composite earned run average of pitchers soared from 2.82 to 4.39.²⁰

Babe Ruth, the lively ball, the home run, and absentee ownership all contributed to baseball's movement toward being big business, and to the eventual development of the position of General Manager.

The General Manager's position was officially created in November of 1927, when Hall of Famer, Billy Evans, was hired by Cleveland owner, Alva Bradley, to direct the Indians. Earlier in the year, Bradley had led a syndicated group that purchased the Cleveland franchise. He exemplified the absentee owner, as his primary interest was in the real

²⁰Twombly, p. 137.

estate development of downtown Cleveland property that he owned, with his only involvement in baseball matters being his yearly attendance at the winter meetings.²¹ However, Bradley was smart enough to know that he needed a knowledgeable man to run his club for him, and he achieved this by hiring Evans.

Before his appointment to the General Manager's position, Evans was employed as a major league umpire and sports editor for Newspaper Enterprise Association (NEPA), with his total salary being around \$25,500.00.²² After a mutual friend introduced Evans to Bradley, Bradley was immediately impressed by Evans' baseball ability and knowhow, and quickly offered him the job of General Manager. Evans accepted the owner's offer, despite taking a cut in pay from his previous jobs. In his new role, Evans would perform many of the duties previously executed by former Indian President, E. S. Barnard. He would be executive head of the club, and although the manager would direct the team on the field, Evans would work with him in making deals

²¹ Edgar Munzel, paraphrase of interview held on August 5, 1977.

²² Cliff Kachline, paraphrase of interview held on July 19, 1977.

for players. Along with these duties, Evans would direct the activities of scouts in the organization.²³

Although Evans was the first man to hold the title of General Manager, it must be remembered that before 1927, there were other men who ran ball clubs for absentee owners in the 1920's, although they were not called General Managers. William Wrigley, owner of the Chicago Cubs, had Bill Veeck Sr., President of the Cubs, run the club, and operate like today's General Manager. Tom Yawkey, multimillionaire owner of the Boston Red Sox, had Eddie Collins and Bucky Harris run his team.²⁴ Thus, although Evans was the first person to hold the official title of General Manager, he was not the first person to operate in that capacity.

After the original formation of the General Manager's position, many features evolved in the game that caused the development of the position.

²³ "Billy Evans Named Cleveland Club Head," New York Times, November 29, 1927, p. 23, col. 3.

²⁴ Edgar Munzel, paraphrase of interview held on July 19, 1977.

FIVE - EVOLUTION AND PROGRESS

Baseball continued growing, developing, and changing after the lively ball was introduced. Names like Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Rogers Hornsby, Jimmy Foxx, and Mel Ott became household words across America. These stars, along with the lively ball and the home run, helped stimulate new interest in the game. Attendance grew, salaries increased, front office staffs were expanded, and the development of the General Manager's position continued. Baseball's movement toward big business was in full swing.

As more absentee owners bought baseball franchises, the need for a day-to-day leader of their clubs was apparent. The General Manager became a man who ran the team and directed all club operations. He was the overseer of the smallest detail, or the most complicated trade. The General Manager ran stadium operations, headed the farm system, constantly checked with minor league managers, kept current progress of every player in baseball, checked ticket sales, and performed many other functions.²⁵ Most questions dealing with club operations sooner or later fell into the lap of the General

²⁵ Bill Veeck, paraphrase of interview held on May 10, 1977.

Manager. The position's increased responsibility produced leaders like Branch Rickey and George Weiss. These names were associated with success, and appropriately so.

Certain events in baseball history contributed to the increased responsibility of the General Manager, and magnified the burden of his job. In 1921 one of these events occurred when radio was introduced on the baseball scene. From the Polo Grounds in New York City, Graham McNamee broadcasted the first game, a World Series clash between the New York Giants and Yankees.²⁶ In 1924, Hal Trotten was the first to broadcast daily games from the ball park, over WMAQ, Chicago.²⁷ However, the adoption of radio broadcasting by baseball was not a quick process, as traditional owners feared the impact upon attendance. Not until the early 1930's was radio utilized to its fullest extent, and by bringing live play-by-play accounts of a game into the home, new fans were brought into the ball park.

Radio ultimately led to the introduction of television on the major league level. In 1939, five years after the invention of television, major league baseball was seen on the "tube" for the first time. However, before the introduction

²⁶

Frank G. Menke, The Encyclopedia of Sports (Cranbury, New Jersey: A. S. Barnes & Company, 1969), p. 110.

²⁷

Ibid., p. 110.

of television, night baseball was introduced on the major league level. In May, 1935, before a crowd of 20,422 fans in Cincinnati's Crosley Field, the Reds defeated the Philadelphia Phillies in the first night game.²⁸ Immediately, night baseball proved a success.

Originally, night baseball was not an agreeable topic to baseball traditionalists. But, through the urging of Cincinnati's newly appointed General Manager, Larry MacPhail, a limited night game schedule was adopted.²⁹

MacPhail had previously experimented with night baseball at the minor league level in the early 1930's, and had experienced a positive reaction to these night games. Attendance showed a definite upswing at these games, and MacPhail knew that in order to save the Cincinnati franchise, he would have to increase attendance.³⁰ With the help of Powell Crosley, Jr., owner of radio stations and manufacturer of radio receivers and electrical appliances, MacPhail immediately began to liven things up in Cincinnati after his appointment to the General Manager position. MacPhail

²⁸ Hy Turkin & S. C. Thompson, The Official Encyclopedia of Baseball (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1977), p.33.

²⁹ John Drebing, "Rule Permitting Night Baseball With Restrictions Passed By National League", New York Times, February 6, 1935, p. 25, col. 1.

³⁰ Edgar Munzel, paraphrase of an interview held on August 3, 1977.

persuaded the National League to let him install lights in renamed Crosley Field. Then he pulled some strings in Washington that allowed President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to push the button that inaugurated the first night game in history.

MacPhail originally convinced the traditional baseball people to let each team play seven night games a year. This permitted every team to schedule all visiting clubs once a year in the eight team circuit. Although their initial reactions were heavily against the night game, owners quickly realized the profitability in these games, and the possibility of introducing new fans to the sport.

Soon those non-supporters turned into supporters, and the limited night game schedule was quickly expanded to fourteen games, and then twenty-one, before completely opening up in 1944.³¹

Until the early 1940's, baseball's audience increased, but all progress was stymied by World War II. Unlike the "work or fight" order of World War I, which curtailed the 1918 season, baseball was encouraged to continue by President Roosevelt who felt that it would contribute to the morale

³¹Cliff Kachline, paraphrase of an interview held on August 5, 1977.

of the country.³²

This was just the break that baseball owners hoped would happen. Roosevelt's statement allowed baseball owners to totally open up night baseball, without offending baseball traditionalists. It appeared that the owners would be serving the public best if they played as many night games as possible, thus allowing more working people to watch baseball. Owners would only be doing their duty for their country by helping build the morale of the American public and playing an expanded night schedule. Baseball could now make a move to night games and realize the unlimited potential increase in profits, yet claim it was for the good of all America.

These night games added to the already growing importance of the General Manager's position. Baseball now reached new fans, and attendance, ticket sales, and public relations all grew. Baseball was booming, and so was the General Manager's work load.

Before the invention of lights, and playing of night games, baseball's front office personnel, led by the General Manager, worked a normal day. The General Manager would arrive at the park at about nine o'clock in the morning,

³² The Baseball Encyclopedia (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1976), p. 15.

hold his meetings, and make as many decisions as possible before attending the 1:30 game. At the game, the General Manager would closely observe the team's showing, while evaluating and judging player performance. This duty was mixed in with some public relations work, which meant meeting and talking with club supporters while at the game. This was done until the game was over, at about 4:00 or 4:30, and was followed by about an hour of post game tidying up, allowing the General Manager to return home at about 6:00 at night.

This nine to six schedule was quickly erased by the night game. An owner still had to be at the park early enough to take care of morning business, but now his afternoon schedule was pushed back until night time. His goodwill and public relations work would still have to be done at the game, as would his player critiques. This permitted the General Manager to increase his work load in the afternoon, taking on more tasks, and increasing his authority.

Previously, other front office personnel were forced to make decisions due to the unavailability of the General Manager. His morning schedule was loaded, and if he was not present to be consulted, the other front office people had to make a decision. His availability was increased as the General Manager's day expanded. His presence at the ball

park from nine in the morning until eleven at night left him open to answer more questions. The General Manager became the final decision maker on almost all matters. More and more decisions were thrust upon him, and often a club's success depended on the knowledge and performance of the General Manager.

This added responsibility and expanded work load quickly professionalized the General Manager's position. All clubs were soon run by interested and dedicated men. Working a twelve to fourteen hour day was too much for a non-baseball man. General Managers soon became men with not only baseball interest and knowledge, but devotion to the game as well. Then, television entered the game and proved to be just as influential on the General Manager as night baseball had been.

Television too was not favored by the owners at the time of its introduction. They felt that if television was introduced into baseball many fans would stay home and watch the game rather than attend the game in person. Television was feared, but the urging of Cincinnati's Larry MacPhail and New York's Ed Barrow resulted in the adoption of television broadcasting. MacPhail and Barrow felt that television's effect would be in the opposite direction, and help stimulate attendance. Once again, MacPhail proved to be a prophet.

The first game to be telecast (though a limited number of sets were in use) was the Brooklyn-Cincinnati doubleheader at Ebbets Field, on August 26, 1939, with Red Barber as announcer, over W2XBS, New York.³³ Baseball's adoption of television was gradual, but by the late 1940's, television started to take over from radio, and many people were given the opportunity to see major league baseball for the first time. Attendance was booming, and so was the General Manager's sphere of operations.

Radio and television's initial effect on the role of the General Manager was limited. However, once radio and television were fully adopted by baseball, they were very consequential for the General Manager. It became the General Manager's responsibility to see that stations were found to broadcast and telecast the games. Once that was completed, announcers had to be hired. When radio and television were first introduced, baseball teams had complete control over the announcers employed. Teams could not be too careful in finding the right commentators that could contribute to the team's public relations, and make the ball players and team's performance as exciting as possible. General Managers were given this task of hiring and firing broadcasters. Sponsors were needed for broadcasting time, and contracts had to be

³³ Menke, p. 110.

written involving commercial time and expense.

By the late 1940's, another new feature, air travel, impacted upon baseball and the realm of responsibility of the General Manager.

Before air travel entered the baseball world, teams journeyed from city to city by train, with trips often lasting the whole day or night. Ball players, writers, broadcasters, and the General Manager moved freely throughout the train, as card playing, eating, and socializing occupied the travelers' free time. A feeling of camaraderie developed among these men, and eventually the "baseball family" evolved. The "family" was a close and trusted group that could offer it's members helpful information.³⁴

However, when air travel was introduced into baseball in the 1940's, this sense of community disappeared. With trips no longer lasting the whole day, but only a few hours, the socializing quickly narrowed down. Smaller groups of friends were formed, and the "baseball family" rapidly dwindled in size. The General Manager no longer had spare time on trips to gossip with the writers and broadcasters, and his closeness with them vanished, as did his ease of consultation. Now, the General Manager sometimes had to

³⁴Edgar Munzel, paraphrase of an interview held on August 5, 1977.

search for hours to secure information that he previously acquired in a few minutes from a helpful writer.

The General Manager's informal contacts with players also vanished. No longer were the feelings of the players toward the General Manager feelings of comradeship. He had become an outsider. This increased the difficulty of the General Manager's task in dealing with players. Problems were no longer discussed on the long train ride where care-free attitudes existed, but in the tense office of the General Manager, where conflicting opinions were easily brought out.

Air travel, radio, and television combined to form the final link in baseball's movement toward big business. With air transportation increasing in speed, and the guarantee of large radio and television markets, the attempt to relocate franchises became less hazardous. Two of baseball's oldest teams, the National League's Brooklyn Dodgers and New York Giants, saw this opportunity and moved their franchises to California before the 1958 season started, satisfying one portion of the population and disappointing the other.³⁵

The public also began to demand growth. Once again baseball was slow to change, but in 1960, Branch Rickey proposed the Continental League, an attempt to form a third major league. Rickey's idea precipitated the first expansion

³⁵Menke, p. 16.

of the major leagues in sixty years, as the American League increased to ten teams in 1961, followed by a similar increase of the National League in 1962.³⁶

At the same time, a new type of ownership came into the game. The corporate manager bought a club not only to publicize his business enterprises but also to take advantage of a curious development in federal tax laws. This new owner could afford to pay \$20,000,000.00 for a franchise, ostensibly lose \$1,000,000.00 a year in its operation, meld his sports activity in with his other businesses, applying his "paper" sports losses against his business profits and actually earn a profit on his sports team. This was a wonderland of juggling not open to the non-millionaire who might want to run a sports franchise and nothing else.³⁷

Television revenues and gate attendance increased, indicating the intensified interest in the game. Other traditions of baseball also began to change. Spring training, previously confined to Florida, expanded to the West. Winter baseball became increasingly popular in South American countries because of the growing number of Latins in the

³⁶ Ibid., p. 16.

³⁷ Michener, p. 441.

game, and in turn, aided in the development of young players.³⁸

In 1969 the major leagues expanded into Canada for the first time, placing a team in Montreal. In 1977, Toronto began play, adding to baseball's growth on the international level. Baseball reached new heights of interest in other Latin America countries. Representatives of Puerto Rico, Nicaragua, and Venezuela began discretely inquiring about major league franchises for the future. Japan expressed interest in playing a real "World Series". Cuba opened relations with the United States, inviting the New York Yankees to play Cuba's best, and permitting front office personnel from the Yankees and Chicago White Sox to visit Cuba.

Baseball was big business, and with the increased burden on the General Manager, baseball front office staffs had to be expanded. Previously there were five to ten members on a front office staff, now there are at least twenty-five or thirty.

These changes were too much for the General Manager to handle by himself. The General Manager began to delegate more and more authority - he just could not perform all the functions by himself. The General Manager, although still

³⁸ Menke, p. 16.

sitting on top of the organization, had to entrust a greater amount of his responsibility to fellow workers. However, another factor loomed even more important in the future of baseball, as the players suddenly became aware of the business aspects of the game.

SIX - THE PLAYER MOVEMENT

Many of baseball's owners had seen the game as a commercial enterprise for a long time. Increased attendance, inflated television revenues, night games, and lengthened travel all complemented one another in the sport's movement toward big business. But, the entrance of the corporate owner into the game to publicize his business and take advantage of tax laws seemed to push the game into the business world permanently.

However, the players' knowledge of the business aspect of the sport was not as extensive as the owners' until one incident magnified the players' awareness. This event occurred in 1966, when Marvin Miller resigned from his post as assistant to the president of United Steel Workers of America, to become the Executive Director of the Major League Players' Association.³⁹

Miller took over the position from the incumbent, Judge Robert Cannon, and gave the players their first full-time leader. With Miller's appointment, a shift toward equality between the owners and players in their business relationship

³⁹ Robert Boyle, "This Miller Admits He's a Grind," Sports Illustrated, March 11, 1974, p. 25.

was imminent.

Miller wanted to establish a players' organization that existed not only on paper, but that would bargain for improvements in salaries, pensions, hours, and working conditions. He saw the "paternalistic type of relationship that existed between the owners and players, rather than a meeting of equals. Miller wanted a dignified and mutually respectful relationship between the owners and players."⁴⁰ But, the owners could see the dangers in this type of relationship.

The owners withheld approval of a \$150,000.00 annual appropriation to the players' fund for Miller's \$50,000.00 salary and office expenses for full time players' representatives.⁴¹ This rejection by the owners was quickly rescinded, but this event served as a prelude to a sequence of events that soon unfolded.

In 1969, the Players' Association threatened to boycott spring training because of a dispute over the pension fund and television revenues for the fund.

In 1970, Curt Flood, star centerfielder of the St. Louis Cardinals, objected to his trade from the Cardinals to the

⁴⁰ David Jones, "New Era Looms in Baseball Player-Club Relations," New York Times, February 12, 1967, sec. 5, p. 1, col. 3.

⁴¹ Leonard Koppett, "Club Owners Balk at Authorizing \$150,000.00 for a Player Adviser," New York Times, May 4, 1966, p. 55, col. 5.

Philadelphia Phillies, and filed suit against baseball under anti-trust law.

Flood's argument focused on baseball's reserve clause, although the clause had twice before been ruled exempt from Federal anti-trust legislation. Flood contended that he was not a piece of property to be bought and sold irrespective of his wishes. He believed that any system which produced that result violated his basic right as a citizen and was inconsistent with the laws of the United States and of several States.⁴² Flood's case was fully supported by the Players' Association, as the players' attack on ownership had now come to full force.

Although Flood's case was finally defeated by the Supreme Court in a five to three decision,⁴³ his crusade against the reserve clause made the owners take notice of the players' interests. The owner-player dispute was no longer weighted heavily toward management, as the owners now had to talk in such unfamiliar terms as compromise and arbitration.

In 1972, the Players' Association established unity and staged a thirteen day strike that caused the cancellation of eighty-six regular season games. This strike developed

⁴² Curt Flood, The Way It Is, (New York: Pocket Books, 1972), p. 163.

⁴³ Flood v Kuhn, 92A U.S. 2099 (1972).

over player pensions and benefits.

It was management's turn to act in 1973. The owners locked the players out of training camp until the round of collective bargaining was completed. This was the first time in eighty-seven years that spring training had not begun on time.

In December, 1975, the biggest step to date was achieved by the players in their search for equality in bargaining with the owners. Baseball's three man arbitration panel ruled in favor of the player's attack on baseball's reserve clause. The clause, which is contained in paragraph 10-A of the standard player's contract, allowed an employer to renew an unsigned player's old contract "for a period of one year on the same terms." The Players' Association contended that once this option year is up, a player should become a free agent. The owners, however, insisted that they could keep on renewing a players' old contract in perpetuity - even if he refused to sign after the option year.⁴⁴

Pitchers Andy Messersmith of the Los Angeles Dodgers and Dave McNally of the Montreal Expos were the first players in baseball history to mount a challenge against paragraph 10-A from a collective bargaining angle, and Peter Seitz,

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Newsweek, January 5, 1976, p. 51.

impartial member of the three man arbitration panel, took the players' side in the dispute. Seitz's ruling forced the owners to bring Messersmith's and McNally's contentions to court, where the courts upheld Seitz's ruling, dramatically changing today's clause.

The court's ruling forced the owners and players to seek a compromise on a new clause. But, their differences were so great that the clubs did not proceed with the opening of training camps as scheduled in the spring of 1976.⁴⁵

Camps were finally ordered opened by Commissioner Bowie Kuhn on March 18th, but the bickering continued. Finally, on July 13th, 1976, a four year pact was agreed upon. Under the new agreement, players could become free agents after six years of service in the major leagues, or after playing one year without a contract. Other provisions were a free agent draft and increased minimum salaries.

The impact of these events on the game of baseball, and the position of General Manager was immense. The players' movement for equality opened the doors for the emergence of lawyers and agents into the game. Player's contracts had become so complicated that the players had to seek men who were astute in the law and who were able to represent them

⁴⁵ Murray Chass, "Baseball Owners Delay Spring Training Start", New York Times, February 24, 1976, p. 43, col. 7.

on even terms with front office management. This meant that the General Manager was no longer directly meeting a player when discussing contract terms, but instead dealt with his agent or lawyer. This association forced the General Manager to move even further away from his players and a bit closer to the ownership of the team.

The complexity of the players' contract and the reserve clause often proved too difficult for the General Manager to fully comprehend and frequently clubs were forced to seek legal consultation in order to avoid litigation. The General Manager now had to work with the consulting lawyer, and at the same time develop his own legal knowledge.

Today's reserve clause obviously has led to many problems for the General Manager in putting together a ball club. Players can now be bought on the open market by the club willing to bid the highest for the player's services. Trades are often forced upon the General Manager by players playing out their option, and players' contracts are now being negotiated on a long term basis to prevent complete player movement.

The full force of the players' movement toward equality in bargaining with the owners has not yet been completely felt. The role and function of the General Manager has certainly changed, in part due to the players' movement.

But, the impact and implications of this upon his position and the game itself are yet to be fully realized. Some of these complexities, and the impact of them on the game will be studied next.

SEVEN - TODAY'S ROLE

As the General Manager's duties became so complex and burdensome, there was a great need to segregate his tasks. Television can be used as a prime example of these complexities. Inherently, the idea of televising a game posed few problems for the team, but as a result of its explosive popularity, the General Manager suddenly found himself thrust into the role of television negotiator. He found he had to deal with the language of the broadcasting contract, commercial advertisers, and potentially huge sources of revenue. Complexities also developed in other facets of the General Manager's work. While it was still necessary for the General Manager to possess a keen awareness of the baseball scene in terms of scouting, public relations, minor league operations, and even ticket sales, many of these tasks had to be handed to other front office personnel to be performed.

The smooth running of a professional ball club includes many activities that are not the direct concern of the General Manager. New positions such as traveling secretary and director of public relations have been created to deal with these matters. Yet, while most clubs possess people with such titles, the extent to which each's responsibility is delineated, is left to the discretion of the individual

club. Therefore, while the duty of the traveling secretary on one club might be limited to the more mundane matters of flight accommodations and hotel reservations, that of another club might include the power to scout and even sign players while on the road. Just as this is true of these positions, so it is true of the General Manager himself. The diversification of his duties from club to club is considerable.

The complexities of the General Manager's duties force him to allocate more time to some jobs to the exclusion of others. This time apportionment is a function of three things: the goals of the particular club, the team's problems of the moment, and the season of the year.

Club Goals

Before examining the first determining factor, one must stipulate what goals are being considered, and indicate who decides the order in which achievement is sought. There are two basic goals in baseball for every team: to make money and to win. The person who plays the most significant role in deciding what goal is of the greater importance to the team, is the owner. Most owners feel making money is most important. Other owners put winning as the primary objective, with another meaningful goal being concerned with money. These owners, because of their extreme wealth, consider breaking

even as their chief purpose. But, whatever money making motive is decided upon, one can be assured there is a substantial interrelationship between making money and winning, although an assumption of complete interdependence would be erroneous. An examination of the New York Mets of the early 1960's, and the Oakland A's of the early 1970's, would justify the theory that a winning team does not necessarily mean a high profit, nor does a losing team assure a loss.

Income is received from a variety of sources - ticket sales, concessions, and parking, to name a few. The long range money making goal seems no longer to be the prime concern of the General Manager, but now appears to be the responsibility of the Business Manager, or Executive Vice-President of Business. But no matter what the title, this person has the chief responsibility for regulating the business aspects of the operation. Of course the General Manager is in continual contact with the Business Manager, and on many occasions works with him, but there is a separation of duties that can be drawn along these lines.

After delegating the profit end of the organization to the Business Manager, it now becomes the General Manager's duty to build a winning club. A team's performance on the field usually does contribute to the earnings of the club.

Winning teams generally do have higher attendance, which in turn sets off the whole chain reaction of concession and parking revenue. Though the General Manager's primary goal is to build a successful team, winning is a means to the end of making profit, or breaking even.

A General Manager can build through his own minor league system, through trades, or through the free agent market. These different sources of players contribute to the way a General Manager divides his time, but no matter what route the General Manager chooses the other means cannot be ignored completely. Thus, a major duty of the General Manager today is the procurement, development, and refinement of playing talent so that his ball club becomes a contender. This duty demands that the General Manager have the ability to judge talent on both his own and other clubs.

When building a club, the minor league system is very important. The General Manager must work continually with his minor league director and scouting department. The mediocrity or greatness of an organization lies in its "teachability".⁴⁶ Good instruction makes for good big-leaguers, and during his minor league days most of a player's apprenticeship and development occurs. Besides development

⁴⁶ Questionnaire response submitted by Al Campanis, Vice President, Player Personnel, Los Angeles Dodgers, 1977.

of players through the farm system, players can be acquired from other teams.

The acquisition of players from other clubs is done through two channels, by trading and by signing free agents. Trades are a major responsibility of the General Manager, but in most instances, this is not a sole responsibility. In most organizations, trades are not made by one man, but rather are the result of discussions among the owner, General Manager, field manager, coaching staff, and farm director. Such discussions enable an organization to see the complete picture of where changes are needed, from the major league to rookie level.

This chain of consultation exists on most clubs, with some teams seeking more people's advice, and some less. But on almost every club, the ultimate decision to be made on a trade rests with the General Manager.

Participation in the free agent market is different in the sense that partaking is essentially a team policy that is dictated by the owner. Many owners are against free agent signings, and refuse to bid in the open market for these players. But, once the final decision is made to enter the free agent market, a decision must still be made as to which players should and should not be drafted and signed.

These are the basic routes of player acquisition for

the General Manager. Different approaches, using various combinations of trades, free agent signings, and minor league development can be employed. A principal factor in determining what combinations should be utilized is the team's overall standing. A winning club generally has the upper hand in making trades. Winning teams play successful ball because of their player talent, and more teams are likely to seek these skilled performers. These winning clubs are not usually desperate to make a deal, for continued success is their primary concern, but losing teams often aim desperately at reaching the top.

Losing clubs sometimes possess players that very few teams covet. Frank Lane once became General Manager of a downtrodden Chicago White Sox team that had lost 103 of 154 games the previous season. He put his whole squad on waivers to observe what clubs were interested in his players, but much to Lane's chagrin, only two of the forty players were claimed by any team.⁴⁷ Under these conditions, it would be difficult for any General Manager to make a deal.

Public relations is another duty that cannot be ignored by the General Manager. The community supports the team,

⁴⁷ Frank Lane, paraphrase of an interview held on August 17, 1977.

and without them no team could survive. Phone calls and letters from concerned fans offering their advice on club matters are constantly dialed and sent into a ball club. When time permits, the General Manager tries to answer as many of these concerned fans questions as possible. This shows the public that the club is concerned with their opinions, and on occasion, these fans can offer some good advice.

Public appearances must also be made. Banquets and speaking engagements are common on the General Manager's agenda. In performing his job, the General Manager must always remember that one important ingredient in his job is pleasing the team's followers, and showing his interest in them.

Existent Problems

Once a General Manager has constructed his ball club and performed his duties for the front office, he encounters another important time consuming aspect of his job - existent problems. The players' difficulties are one interest of the General Managers. Some clubs give advice to their players on how to invest and spend their money. Player's personal problems can be discussed with the General Manager, or in general, he may perform any function that makes the players content and willing to perform for the team.

Today, though, discussions along these lines are not performed frequently. With players' agents now providing advice for the players on investments, there is no longer a reason for the players to seek recommendations from the General Manager in this area.

However, this assumption cannot be drawn for all teams. Some General Managers work very hard at being close to their players, and a few have reached this goal. But, no longer is this an inherent function of the General Manager's job, so this type of relationship must be built. Because this closeness no longer naturally exists, many players have viewed the General Manager as having stepped aside from being a "middleman" in the organization, to being front office management.

When other difficulties disturb the smooth running of the organization, people often turn to the General Manager for advice. Since he is usually the most experienced man in the organization, he has dealt with a majority of problems that can occur at one time or another, and he is the one looked to for assistance. A scout may be having trouble deciding on a prospect and seeks the General Manager's opinion. Difficulties may be brewing between the team manager and his players. These are all issues that can, at one time or another, descend upon the General Manager.

This advice-giving role is similar in all organizations. When a perplexing difficulty exists, the General Manager is the man who is ultimately consulted for his opinion. On a winning, losing, or mediocre team, this indicates the leader of the front office, and if this man is not the General Manager, that club lacks the leadership it should have from the General Manager's position.

Another detail that cannot be overlooked, is that winning clubs usually do make more money for their owners. This allows the owner to hire more efficient personnel for front office positions, thus freeing the General Manager from more tedious tasks. Winning cannot be overlooked as a determining factor in solving many problems and difficulties in an organization.

While these difficulties originate from within an organization, many problems a General Manager deals with are generated from outside the organization. These problems are inherently present in the modern framework of the game, and cannot be discussed without mentioning the impact they have on the entire structure of baseball. The problems not only affect the General Manager in his attempt to build a successful club, but can affect the entire game of baseball in a much more significant way to the extent that the existence of some major league franchises may be in jeopardy.

Today, the greatest problem the game faces is its salary structure. Astronomical salaries are present throughout all baseball, and at least fifteen players earned more than \$300,000.00 for playing the game in 1977. Also, seven teams reported that their starters earned a combined total of over \$1,000,000.00.⁴⁸ But, how do these salaries influence the General Manager, and particularly, what are the long range effects on the game?

At the root of the whole salary problem is today's reserve clause. Ever since Marvin Miller entered baseball, the players have strengthened their bargaining position with the owners, and today, the players seem to have reached the stage of superiority in their relationship.⁴⁹ The players have bargained for a "reserve clause" that contains two specific clauses that give the players a chance for new found freedom and mobility, and influences the General Manager's ability to put together a successful club.

One of these clauses allows any player with six or more years in the big leagues, at the end of any season, to declare himself a free agent, and sell himself to the highest bidder.

⁴⁸ "Starting Players' Salaries," Chicago Tribune, April 10, 1977.

⁴⁹ Milton Richman, "Don't be surprised if some baseball clubs fold up," Chicago Tribune, December 7, 1976, sec. 2, p. 1, cols. 2-6.

The second clause is the so called "5-and-10" clause, that allows players with ten years in the majors and the last five with the same club, to have the right to approve or disapprove any trade involving them. These clauses have given the players a voice in their movement from team to team, and have greatly contributed to the increase in players' salaries. Players are now in a position to demand a higher wage from their team, and get it, or they can enter the free agent draft, and make themselves wealthy through the resources of another owner. But, while players demand these higher figures, many teams find it more difficult to meet the players' salary demands all the time.

A General Manager must now study what kind of contract a player has signed, and fully understand all its clauses. He has to be very careful in acquiring men with the ability to declare themselves a free agent or to disapprove a trade. At any time, a six year player could walk into the General Manager's office and declare himself a free agent, thus leaving the General Manager with nothing.

The players' ability to declare himself a free agent, or disapprove a trade, can often force the General Manager's hand when he is bargaining with other clubs about a particular player. The chance to acquire anything for that year-end free agent will look like the best course of action available

for the General Manager. Today, the General Manager is forced to gamble on his own ability, and a player's willingness to sign with his team. Because of this, multi-year contracts for "big dollars" seem to be the wave of the future. But, making players content by signing them for large amounts of money for many years, does not insure continued happiness and a willingness to perform. "Fat cats" can be bred this way, and some owners still look pessimistically at giving multi-year contracts to players.

The impact of these large salaries, besides influencing the General Manager's ability to construct a team, can also affect the game of baseball in another way. Companies which continue to lose money year after year will eventually go out of business. Large auto establishments like Packard and Hudson are gone. Newspapers like the old New York Daily Mirror and Philadelphia Record stopped publishing, as did big magazines like Life, Look, and Colliers. They all went out of business for the same reason - they kept losing money.⁵⁰

Today, baseball clubs are not that much different from auto companies, newspapers, or magazines, at least in the sense that they cannot continue operating at a loss forever. The Houston, Atlanta, Cleveland, Oakland, and Chicago White Sox franchises have all reported financial problems in the past few years. Is there a solution?

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Richman, p. 1.

The solution seems to lie with the public - the fan who dips into his pocket to pay five dollars for a box seat. Here lies the key to the continued success of baseball. The owners have been forced to raise their ticket prices in order to meet the players demand for inflated salaries. Ticket prices have moved steadily up the past few seasons. But the ultimate question still exists. At what price will the public stop buying tickets to watch a game in person? This answer is not known at this time, but it appears that baseball is moving head-on toward the answer. If tickets reach a price level of ten dollars per person, it will cost a family of four at least fifty dollars to attend a game, which would seem to push the game out of the price level of the average family. Attending a game would become a novelty, and the average fan who is the true supporter of the team would no longer be able to afford the pleasure.

Baseball has reached an all-time attendance record, with only a few teams failing to attract the traditional goal of 1,000,000 people. But, clubs no longer set their break-even point at an attendance figure of 1,000,000, this figure now has risen closer to 1,500,000 people. Also, unpredicted early season showings by such clubs as the Chicago White Sox, Chicago Cubs, and Minnesota Twins all helped these clubs play before record breaking, or near record breaking home

crowds in 1977. But, the play-off teams came as close to being predictable as possible. Only one team, the Cincinnati Reds, did not repeat as division winners, and that was not a complete surprise, because a very strong Los Angeles Dodger club is in the same division with them. Will fans continue to attend games if pennant winners can be picked as early as spring training? Today, this question cannot be answered.

Season of the Year

The third factor considered in the General Manager's time allocation is the season of the year. During the off-season, or from mid-October until spring training, the General Manager performs his construction process. In this construction phase, the General Manager tries to put together the best team possible for the next season. Trade discussions, free agent bargaining, and contract negotiations highlight the period.

Once spring training starts, the evaluation and assessment phase of the job begins. Here the General Manager works together with his manager and coaches in evaluating the performance of his players, and putting what they feel is the best combination of talent available in their organization on the field. This process is performed throughout the entire

regular season - a continual assessment process is executed. It should be emphasized that when spring training begins, the construction process of a General Manager does not terminate, it only means that the evaluation and assessment phase begins to dominate the General Manager's time schedule.

The third phase in this process that the General Manager performs is one of integration. This phase continues throughout the year, and relates to the basic reason for the existence of any type of management personnel - to integrate his resources to accomplish goals. This part of the process seems to be taking on increased importance in the General Manager's job all the time. As organizations continue to expand, more and more of the previous duties performed by the General Manager are being delegated to other personnel. It is now these peoples' responsibility to perform the day-to-day aspects of the job, and it is the General Manager's task to see that the whole organization is running smoothly. In short, the office staff, coaching staff, and players must all work together to bring a winner to a city. His performance as a catalyst in this integration of forces is rapidly becoming one of the General Manager's most important functions. This increased responsibility in the integration phase of the General Manager's duties only serves to support the generalization, "the buck stops with the General Manager".

With all of these changes taking place in the role of the General Manager, it is interesting to look at where the game of baseball is moving, and the effects these changes will have on the General Manager.

EIGHT - THE FUTURE

With baseball becoming big business, more and more of its front office organizations have taken on the structural appearance of a business. One possible trend of the future may be taken from the example of the Toronto Blue Jays, who have decided to delegate authority throughout their organization through the use of an organizational chart. By using this chart, the roles and duties of all front office personnel are clearly defined, and everybody knows the function he is supposed to perform.

The Blue Jays' organization is divided into three different departments - financing, business, and baseball - and authority is delegated appropriately in each division. Each department has a man in charge, with the rest of the workers in each branch knowing exactly to whom they are supposed to report when complications arise in their work. Meetings are held twice a week between front office personnel, with one meeting focusing on present operations and the other discussing long range goals and objectives.⁵¹ The Toronto

⁵¹ Peter Bavasi, paraphrase of an interview held on June 23, 1977.

club has set this precedent in baseball by managing their team through the use of these charts and job descriptions, and because of the successful and efficient way their team is structured, it may not be long before other teams adopt this means of organization.

In this new system of organization, the General Manager would occupy the top position of the baseball department, and perform an integrative function so that his whole department would run efficiently. This is why the importance of this integrative function cannot be over-emphasized today. With baseball's front office staffs expanding rapidly, and more responsibility being delegated, the smooth performance of this staff is becoming a more difficult task all the time.

Baseball's future on an international level also seems to be blossoming. International relations between Japan, Cuba, and the United States have opened up due in part to baseball, and sports in general. This type of relationship could cast the General Manager into a role of diplomat, but no matter where baseball does go, one can be sure the General Manager will be there, in the middle of everything.

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