

# Communications

To the Editor:

In a recent issue of this Journal,<sup>1</sup> Professor Fair undertakes the task of explaining the rise of American weightlifting in the postwar decade. Overall Professor Fair should be commended for his recognition of the role played by Bob Hoffman and Hoffman's York Barbell Company. However, I feel that Professor Fair missed one critical facet of Bob Hoffman's character, his fascination with the appearance of the male physique.

Professor Fair repeatedly makes the point that Hoffman was dedicated only to weightlifting. In my opinion, this simply is not true. Instead I believe that Bob Hoffman viewed weightlifting primarily as a means to an end, namely, the creation of a virile and attractive physique. Moreover, in my opinion, Hoffman's financial success can be attributed to his realization that America was a land of nascent narcissism, i.e., Hoffman had the genius (or good fortune) to anticipate early on the cult of eternal youth and to help propagate it long before others of his era. For example, p. 177 ". . . In Russia the stress is on [weightlifting] records and titles in lifting and not on muscles for the sake of appearance." This statement (and others like it that appeared in *Strength and Health* during the years 1957-1960, while I was a subscriber and an avid bodybuilder) suggests to me that Bob Hoffman cared more for physical appearance than Professor Fair would lead us to believe.

Professor Fair is correct when he portrays Hoffman as a fatherly figure, coach, and elder brother to his "York boys." Still, to me this is more easily explained by the fact that their winning weightlifting meets was proof of sorts that Hoffman knew what he was doing. This in turn helped to sell York barbells and other products advertised in *Strength and Health*. However, look carefully at the attire and poses struck by the "weightlifters" on pages, 168,170, and 173. Now contrast those early photographs with the page 178 photo of actual weightlifters.<sup>2</sup> To my eyes, these photos are evidence of Hoffman's fascination with the appearance of muscles, not with lifting heavy barbells.

Finally, Professor Fair correctly documents the acrimony between Hoffman, and Joseph Weider, a Canadian who published magazines with articles on "French curls" and other naughty sounding bodybuilding "secrets." However, on reflection, when one contemplates Hoffman's *Strength and Health* editorials, versus Weider's *Muscle Power* "beefcake" photographs, one is led

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1. John D. Fair, "Bob Hoffman, The York Barbell Company and the Golden Age of Weightlifting 1945-1960," *Journal of Sport History* 14 (Summer 1987): 164-188.

2. Note also the purported date of the publication of the photograph.

inexorably to the conclusion that Bob Hoffman was much more enamored with the male physique than was Joseph Weider.

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Barry B. Schweig

To the Editor:

In response to Professor Schweig's letter it should first be noted that development of muscles for strength, athletic agility, and fitness, rather than for the sake of appearance, was the norm when Bob Hoffman entered the iron game in the 1920s. This emphasis is indicated in the very names of the two most prominent muscle magazines of that era - *Strength*, published in Philadelphia by the Milo Publishing Company, and *Health and Strength*, the grand-daddy of all modern muscle mags, published in London. When Hoffman took over the former in 1932 he changed its name to *Strength and Health* and retained its overall emphasis on strength and fitness. Physique development, with scant exception, was never a serious consideration at the time when Hoffman cut his teeth in weightlifting, and it remained for him only a welcome by-product of strength and fitness and never an end in itself. The eye-catching pictures of well-developed physiques of men (and later women) that graced the pages of *Strength and Health* were meant merely to illustrate the external benefits of physical training and healthful living. Even the commercialism, so evident in the later history of the magazine, was absent in the earliest issues, where a perusal of the text reveals Hoffman's almost total fascination with the development of the strength athlete. Showy muscles were only valued to the extent that they were useful in some other more purposeful physical endeavor.

Hoffman propagated this basic philosophy throughout his entire career. Contrary to Professor Schweig's contention, he never viewed weightlifting as a means to the greater end of "the creation of a virile and attractive physique." And his citation of a sentence from my article to support this erroneous view was taken, it would seem, out of context with Hoffman's original editorial. However much Hoffman despised the Soviet political system and ideology, he envied the priority the Russians, as a people and state, placed on strength. Americans, notwithstanding his pleas from York, were misplacing their priorities on physique development-or "nascent narcissism" as Professor Schweig calls it. Indeed later in the same article Hoffman makes some disparaging remarks about the 1951 "Junior Mr. America" contest and generally regrets the loss of potential lifters of international calibre to physique competitions.

With regard to the photographs reproduced on pages 168,170, and 173, none were taken by Hoffman himself. They were probably selected by his managing editor, either Gord Venables or Ray Van Cleef. The one on page 168 is made up mainly of local bodybuilders, not weightlifters, and was published with an article explaining the benefits of weight training for physical development and

overall health and fitness. Most youth, contrary to Hoffman's ethos, were being lured into weight training after World War II by the prospect of muscular development alone. I used the picture merely to illustrate the ethnic make-up of many young people entering the iron game, some of whom became actual weightlifters. In the photos on pages 170 and 173 only Stan Stanczyk is seen striking a pose. Hoffman always chided Stan for his interest in bodybuilding and his occasional entry in physique contests which it was believed detracted from his weightlifting. That any of the others might appear to be posing is probably a reflection more of their naturally well-muscled frame and good posture induced by weight training than any special fascination with physique development. Likewise the attire featured in the pictures seem altogether appropriate for the kinds of activities being performed—Olympic lifting and swimming—both of which require freedom of movement. It does not necessarily reflect any intent or preoccupation by Hoffman or the lifters to display their physiques. It is worth repeating that for Hoffman and most of the lifters of the "golden age" a handsome physique was no more than a pleasing by-product of lifting heavy weights, not an attribute that was flaunted for its own sake.

A survey of successive issues of *Strength and Health* in the period coinciding with my article reveals numerous examples of Hoffman's emphasis on strength and lesser concern for appearance.

In November 1945 (p. 40) he boasted that after organizing and lifting in the "first organized contest in the country" in the 1920s he received "considerable publicity in the papers, the kids followed me around and a lot of girls wanted dates" not with a well-developed man but "with a strong man."

In September 1946 (p. 46) he noted that there were just two things he talked about in the early 1930s—"the success of his business of manufacturing oil burners, the other, *weightlifting*."

In April 1948 (p. 33) Hoffman stated that the "greatest honor our country could win would be, the Olympic weight lifting team prize, to prove that we are the *strongest* country in the world."

In June/July 1949 (p. 41) he complained that although "we still have good weightlifters in this country, we do not have enough of them to keep America continually ahead of the parade of nations. *The 'Mr.' contests are considerably at fault*, for, later in the Mr. America contest (at the 1949 Sr. Nationals), we were to see many former weight lifters, a goodly number of international calibre who had forsaken weight lifting competition to try to win in the physique contests. . . . *Our leading competitors, Russia, Egypt, Korea, and Iran do not have a 'Mr.' in the lot.*"

In December 1949 (p. 5) he stated that "*We have little or no admiration for the man who tries only to build nice to look at muscles and can't do anything with them. We must remember the old adage, 'Handsome is as Handsome does.'* We admire and seek to help develop the fine appearing physique which is not only capable of good performances in regular sports and games, but is possessed by a man of super health and all around ability too." He did "not see eye to eye" with other publishers who "*put too much emphasis on the building of bulk, puffed up muscles, rather than strong, athletic men of all around physical excellence.*"

In January 1950 (p. 3) managing editor Gord Venables underscored these sentiments, writing that *"too many young men are only interested in building muscles for their personal glory instead of building strength to bring glory to America."*

In January 1952 (p. 9) Hoffman attacked the Weider system, saying that contrary to his rival *"Bob Hoffman has always said that big muscles aren't much good unless a man can do something with them. The York courses build useful muscles-in more ways than the ability to lie on a bench and press."*

In November and December of 1954 Hoffman even published a series of articles, aimed perhaps at luring bodybuilders into weightlifting, entitled "The Best Form of Bodybuilding." Citing examples of Steve Stanko, Chuck Vinci, Yas Kuzuhara, and Tommy Kono, he claimed that the ideal physique comes from Olympic Weightlifting! "Weight lifting champions who win physique contests do so because they are symmetrical, well balanced."

In April 1955 (p. 4) he complained that "We have had little help from other magazines" in developing the right approach to weight training. *"Almost without exception they have been devoted to building big muscles, with no thought to whether those muscles could be put to use."*

In August 1956 (p. 55) he expressed outrage at the "manners and morals of muscle-worshippers" at the recent Sr. Nationals and Mr. America contest at the Palestra in Philadelphia. "The place was in shambles. It is not likely the University will care to rent to us again, yet if only a weight-lifting event had been contested, we would have had no trouble. *Boobybuilding must encourage trampling on the rights of others and certainly would seem to be conducive to moral decay as well as physical distortion.*"

In September 1956 (p. 50) Hoffman warned that *"physique contests are killing weight lifting all over the world, except Russia, where they are getting a good laugh at all of us, all of their men put their efforts back of lifting, an event which brings them worldwide acclaim and respect, an event which helps them score points at the Olympics. If our wonderful men who are trying to produce lumps, were lifers, we could easily outscore the Soviets."*

In October 1956 (p. 62) he reiterated his theme that *"Muscles are made to use. Physique men who use their muscles only to be mirror athletes do harm to our great sport."*

In July of 1957 (p. 3), perhaps realizing that he had gone too far in criticizing bodybuilders and that by so alienating this segment of his readership it might be bad for York's image and business, he stated that *"contrary to the opinions expressed by certain misguided individuals, this publication has done more for the promotion and growth of physique competition than any other organization in America."*

Hoffman could hardly have been more emphatic than in these statements (with my italics added to some) that weightlifting, not bodybuilding (or "boobybuilding"), was paramount in his outlook.

That this bias was a natural outgrowth of Hoffman's early experience in the iron game is evident in the memoir written by John Grimek in 1982, called "Looking Back at the Last 50 Years," to commemorate a half century of the

publication of *Strength & Health*. The old timers “didn’t develop muscles ‘for show’ because that type of thing wasn’t popular in their day. Rather, they worked to improve their health and their athletic ability. . . . Only the great Sandow ‘posed his way to fame.’ ” Even Grimek, whom many would argue possessed the classic male physique from which all subsequent bodybuilders have taken inspiration, was a remarkable strength athlete and member of the 1936 United States Olympic weightlifting team before he became Mr. America or Mr. Universe. Inertia from the past was difficult to overcome and acceptance of modern trends towards bodybuilding came not by radically changing the format of *Strength and Health*, but by the establishment of *Muscular Development* in 1964 under the separate editorship of Grimek.

Further and even more conclusive evidence of Hoffman’s emphasis on muscles for strength, not appearance, is furnished by the man who worked most closely with Hoffman as an athlete and business associate over a fifty year period. John Terpak, General Manager of York Barbell Company, confirmed to me in a letter on January 20, 1988, that

Bob Hoffman’s interest was 95% in strength, which he measured in Olympic weightlifting, and 5% in physique. I travelled with Bob more than 40 years to weightlifting meets. From 1940 ’til the early ’70’s most physique contests were on the same program with Olympic lifting, but in all cases followed the lifting. Often Bob and I (and others in our party) would start for home immediately after the lifting prizes were presented, and before the muscle contests got under way . . . a clear indication of his (Bob’s) lack of interest in the physique contests.

However correct Professor Schweig might be about “nascent narcissism” as a general phenomenon in American culture of the mid twentieth century, stressing muscles for the sake of appearance, he could hardly have been more wrong about Hoffman’s personal encouragement of it.

With all due respect for Professor Schweig’s own experience as a subscriber and bodybuilder from 1957 to 1960, I would suggest that he, like many avid readers of *Strength and Health*, derived a somewhat different interpretation towards weight training from what Hoffman was trying to convey. It seems ironic that the majority of young trainees read the magazine, purchased York products, and followed York courses mainly to improve their appearance, whilst Hoffman was preaching old-fashioned virtues of strength, health, and fitness, and the need to develop more weightlifters for international competition. As the above sampling vividly illustrates, Hoffman’s editorials did not stress muscles for the sake of appearance, and Professor Schweig’s contention that he was “more enamoured with the male physique than Joseph Weider” seems extremely doubtful. The very name of “Your Physique Company” for Weider’s early organization clearly suggests its orientation. It was, in fact, Hoffman’s virtual monopoly of American weightlifting that forced the Weider organization to exploit the growing interest in bodybuilding which eventually became far more popular and a source of far greater profits than weightlifting. Indeed, it seems remarkable in retrospect that York did as well as it did for so long by stressing the traditional values acquired by Hoffman in the 1920s. Clearly time

was not on his side and the world, as Professor Schweig's letter amply illustrates, was not turning in his direction.

Auburn University at Montgomery

John D. Fair

To the Editor:

As a third party, permit me to participate in the exchange between Melvin Adelman and Allen Guttmann regarding the class associations of baseball. (*JSH*, 14, No. 2).

While learning more precisely the socio-cultural characteristics of baseball spectators is certainly an important endeavor, I suspect that the employment of the traditional concepts of lower, middle, and upper class obscures more than it enlightens. Unless the terms are defined with some precision, the controversy may not be subject to resolution. Furthermore, the terms as used today simply may not be appropriate for earlier times.

A brief examination of what we know about the socio-cultural characteristics of baseball players in the 1850s and 1860s may illuminate these points. First, since the majority of ball players were probably not members of organized clubs, their names never appeared in newspapers or club records. Thus we know nothing about the socio-cultural characteristics of these players. Second, from the research of Melvin Adelman and George Kirsch (some of the latter's research will appear in a forthcoming monograph), we learn that some *two-thirds* of the players that do survive in public records could not be identified by occupation, wealth, or any variable except their love of baseball. Since they did not appear in city directories or other readily available sources, apparently these players were not the heads of households and probably had a lower class standing than the identified players.

Of the players who can be identified, large percentages were young and, by occupations, either artisans, "the aristocracy of labor," or clerks, persons at the bottom rung of the white collar workers' hierarchy. At mid-nineteenth century neither artisans nor clerks fit neatly into the lower or middle class category. Rather than try to force them into modern class terms, I think it more fruitful to examine the relationship between the experiences of the persons in these occupations and their interest in baseball.

The recent research on artisans (Francis Couvares, Susan Hirsch, Sean Willentz, and Steven Ross, for example) and clerks (Allen Horlick, Peter Decker, and Margery Davies, for example) suggests important possibilities for explaining the motives of the baseball fraternity. During the nineteenth century the status of both occupational groups appear to be rapidly declining. In many sectors, small artisan shops gave way to larger shops, or factories (though the pace of change varied widely among the crafts); the factories required artisans of fewer skills or workers with practically no skills; and the factories more sharply segregated the roles of employer-employee. During the same era, the

clerk as apprentice-businessman increasingly gave way to clerking as a dead-end occupation. In fact, by the end of the century, women office workers assumed many of the tasks earlier performed by male clerks.

Given these circumstances, can participation in the baseball fraternity by the clerks and artisans be understood as a way of coping with a recognition-consciously or unconsciously-of changes in the workplace? And if so, precisely how did the mid-nineteenth century baseball experience satisfy needs arising from changes *in the workplace*?

Finally, what are we to make of the fact that the baseball players were young men? (Unfortunately neither Adelman or Kirsch were able to ascertain what percentage of the men were married). Were many of them lacking in close family ties? Perhaps participation in baseball represented for many a quest for excitement and a sense of belonging by young, unmarried, rootless men. Press reports of the time indicate that the baseball fraternity often engaged in some quite un-Victorian kinds of behavior—post-game drinking, feasting, and even “the indulgence of a prurient taste for indecent anecdotes and songs.” At the same time, the fraternity tried without complete success to establish baseball as a respectable Victorian leisure activity, that is to dissociate it with the Victorian counterculture of gambling, drinking, prize fighting, blood sports, and other forms of low entertainment. Apparently the early ball players had their feet in both camps. And insofar as the spectators are concerned, recall that newspapers reported that a riotous mob of some 15,000 persons disrupted the championship game between the Atlantics and Excelsiors in 1860—hardly fitting behavior for proper Victorians.

To carry this analysis beyond the 1850s and 1860s would require an inordinately long letter. Yet I would suggest that sport historians reread the memoirs of the players reported in Lawrence Ritter. Even in the early twentieth century, persons with evangelical Protestant, Victorian backgrounds continued to look upon baseball as a morally suspect activity.

Benjamin G. Rader

To the Editor:

I am grateful for the opportunity to respond to Benjamin Rader’s comments regarding the class associations of baseball. While I agree with his suggestion that it is difficult to use the traditional categories of lower, middle, and upper class to describe early baseball players, I disagree with several of his other points.

First, the majority of early ball players *were* members of organized clubs. But since these were mostly minor street, school, college, factory, business, or other amateur associations, most of their players’ names never appeared in newspapers or other records. Second, while it is true that I was unable to identify about two-thirds of the players whose names did appear in newspapers,

the main problems were the lack of first names and the frequency of common names. I am certain that there were many heads of households whom I could not identify because of those factors. Third, it may be that many artisans turned to baseball as a means of coping with declining social status, but it appears that their playing is more directly related to their need for some relief from the pressures of time discipline, the mechanization of factories, and the specialization of work into a series of boring, repetitious tasks. Fourth, I do not believe that the status of clerks was declining in the 1850's and 1860's. However, it does seem that the increased volume of business and the pressures of bookkeeping and copying documents motivated many men to seek recreation on playing fields. Fifth, there were many married men who played baseball well into their thirties and even forties, as is apparent from the newspaper accounts of intrasquad games between the "Benedicts" and the "Bachelors." Both bachelor and married ball players behaved in both respectable and disreputable ways during the sport's early years.

Finally, I agree with Prof. Rader's concluding statement concerning the moral standing of early baseball. There is plenty of evidence that baseball was an acceptable sport for the moral standards of Victorian America, but it also had its darker side of gambling, corruption, spectator disorders, and other abuses. Overall, baseball was viewed as a mass recreation for the middle and upper-middle ranks of society, but it also enjoyed great patronage from the lower orders.

Manhattan College

George B. Kirsch

To the Editor:

Ben Rader's letter is a most welcome addition if only because it adds much needed debate and dialogue into the pages of this journal. Yet it does much more. It raises some interesting questions of the recent research on the social characteristics of baseball players during the middle decades of the nineteenth-century. To continue this valuable scholarly process, I would like to respond to Rader's comments.

Rader's brief letter raises three themes. The first deals with the problem of defining the social class of baseball players; the second explores the limitations with the current analysis of their social class; and, the final one seeks to shift the focus from class to work place changes to understand the motives of ballplayers. While these themes are interrelated, for the purpose of analysis they need to be individually dissected.

It is relatively easy to applaud Rader's call for a more precise usage of the term "class," but it should be simultaneously kept in mind that the recent scholarship has moved away from a static defined view of class to one which examines class as process. Such a useful approach presents problems, however, for the historian seeking to understand the social backgrounds of sport participants at any given moment. The built-in limitations obviously mediate what can

be asked of the data. The objective of my research was to place baseball participants within the context of some sort of social ranking (maybe a better term than class but one which also contains its problems) in the belief that at least boundaries could be established in our effort to understand who did or did not participate in organized baseball. Since I do not feel that the traditional categories imposed the present on the past or obscured more than it edified, I remain convinced that baseball players in Brooklyn and New York between 1850 and 1870 were drawn largely from the middle and lower middle classes.

Rader also questions the current interpretation of the social class of baseball players. He accurately notes that the evidence does not account for those individuals who played the sport informally, but the absence of such data becomes problematic only if it is automatically assumed that the social backgrounds of organized players were the same as those who played on an unorganized level. While historians will probably never be able to identify this latter group, it does not diminish the significance of the effort to ascertain what people sought and/or were able to formalize their sporting behavior. Even among this latter group, Rader challenges the current view since he believes that the players who could not be identified were more likely to be drawn from the lower classes. In my book (see Appendix), I addressed the issue of the "missing" players and I explained why I doubted that socioeconomic considerations were largely responsible for why a high percentage of ballplayers could not be identified. As for the proportion of identifiable players (i.e., those for whom there exists a published first and last name) for whom no occupational data exists, I am not certain from where Rader achieves his two-third figure. More to the point, a variety of reasons exist why data on these players could not be ascertained, ranging from common names with multiple listings in the directory to the fact that several players on New York teams worked and resided in New Jersey. While I recognized that city directories did systematically discriminate against the lower class, I offered a couple of reasons as to why I strongly suspected that the impact of such bias was at best minimal. I further pointed to the difficulties that emerge from the fact that directories focused mainly on heads of households, thereby making it difficult to discover the occupations of young single ballplayers (possibly the major group of identifiable players for whom no data exists, although I am not certain of this point). However, this limitation appeared to be universal to this age category and not related to socioeconomic status.

Given Rader's belief that problems exist with categorizing the class of clerks and artisans (who comprised between 40 to 50 percent of New York and Brooklyn ballplayers between 1850 and 1870), he insists that their baseball involvement can be more productively understood by shifting the focus from class to the changes they were experiencing in the workplace. However, it may be stated that this orientation could be valuable even if their class status could or was categorized correctly. I don't believe that either Kirsch or myself maintained that class was the sole or even the major factor influencing baseball participation, but rather that it was one of a variety of interacting influences.

The major problem with Rader's treatment of how the changes in the work world of clerks and artisans impacted on their baseball involvement is that it is too general and sweeping. He is correct in contending that the status of clerk positions declined during the middle decades of the nineteenth-century as it served less and less as a stepping stone for entrance into the merchant world. However, the extent and rate of the decline should not be exaggerated since it was not at least until the 1870s that the full impact of such changes were fully felt. It is also questionable whether a clerk position was a "dead-end occupation" since the career patterns of these workers have not been studied. What is known is that the commercial expansion taking place in urban centers such as New York during this period produced a marked increase in the number of clerk positions. While the sons and relatives of the merchant class continued to fill some of these positions, the rising demand created new opportunities for young men from within the city as well as serving as a magnet to attract what Horlick describes as the "country boys." While no evidence exists on the social backgrounds of these newcomers, the skills required for this job and that they were generally native born strongly suggests that they were drawn from the middling ranks. Therefore, it is plausible that for these newcomers their jobs served as a way of maintaining their middle class position and that they did not experience status decline. Even more detrimental to the scenario Rader presents is that the day-to-day work world of clerks did not change dramatically in the mid-nineteenth-century from that of their predecessors. They continued to perform essentially the same tasks, still worked largely in small-scale operations and relations with employers, although changing somewhat, remained traditional and personal.

By the end of the Civil War decade, there were clerks from three different backgrounds—relatives of the merchant class, as well as new city and country boys. The current research does not indicate what percentage of the ballplaying clerks came from each of these groups, but my own suspicion is that they were drawn largely, although not exclusively, from the latter two if only because they were numerically dominant. To the extent that a fair proportion of these clerks originally came from outside the city, Rader is correct in describing them as rootless young men, and it is quite plausible that baseball functioned for them as a means of social bonding. However, it should be kept in mind that the integrating nature of sport was not unique to this social group and, even more importantly, it emerged more from the changing nature of the city than it was produced by changes in the workplace.

Several additional points on this theme need to be made. The most significant is that clerks were members of baseball clubs generally comprised of other white-collar workers. In addition, Rader makes too much of the discrepancies between the behavior of ballplayers and Victorian ideology since such deviations were hardly unique to them, but prevailed most male-bonding social organizations, including those of the upper strata. Finally, fan behavior at the Atlantic-Excelsior contest while unruly was not riotous and flowed from the fact that the teams represented class and, even more importantly, ethnic differences.

Rader's thesis appears to be on more solid footing when applied to artisans since the literature clearly indicates that important changes in the nature of their work took place during the antebellum period. However, even here caution is required. My own research points out that about half the artisan ballplayers in Brooklyn and New York were employed in occupations in which traditional patterns remained and which were generally unaffected by what Sean Wilentz described as "metropolitan industrialization." The current research does not allow us to definitely say whether this trend held true for artisan ballplayers in other cities, although Kirsch's data on New Jersey seem to suggest that to a certain degree it was less the case there.

Even among those artisans who experienced changes in the workplace, questions, if not problems, emerge with efforts to link their baseball involvement to such changes, as well as to the perception of them as rootless young men. Like most ballplayers, those from the working-class tended to be young, but did they lack community ties? While again the evidence to answer this question is lacking, my own suspicion is that they did not. Two reasons are offered for this contention. First, a high percentage of the small group of New York and Brooklyn ballplayers from working class backgrounds for whom data exists on birthplace (those who went on to play in the professional leagues) were born in either of these two cities. Second, while urban centers also attracted large numbers of non-white collar workers, they were more likely to be of foreign descent than country boys. Since Kirsch's data reveals that ballplayers were overwhelmingly native born, it is likely that working class ballplayers were not rootless young men. This is not to deny that for these workers baseball functioned as a form of social bonding, but the performance of this role flowed from broader urban, economic and societal alterations rather than from shifts in their work experience. Ian Tyrrell has already suggested a more fruitful way of exploring this connection, by linking the rise of baseball among artisans to the increasing pressure urban and societal change had on the traditional recreations of artisans. He notes that for these workers baseball possibly served as an "alternative source of recreation" to previous social bonding organizations such as volunteer fire companies at a time when city government increasingly assumed control of fighting fires and as this activity became more specialized and disciplined.<sup>1</sup>

Tyrrell's thesis has a convincing ring to it, but it still leaves open the question of why baseball was selected as a substitute. A variety of explanations may be proposed, including that the team and representational nature of this sport could generate some of the same meanings, symbols and functions produced by corresponding types of traditional recreations. While the attraction of artisans to baseball was multi-layered, one explanation can be offered which supports Rader's desire to view their participation in terms of status decline but only at the expense of denying his perception of baseball as a sport which straddled the Victorian culture and counterculture. I have argued that one reason artisans found

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1. Ian Tyrrell, "The Emergence of Modern American Baseball c. 1850-80," in Richard Cashman and Michael McKernan, eds., *Sport in History: The Making of Modern Sporting History* (Queensland: University of Queensland, 1979). 205-26.

baseball appealing was that it enabled them to engaged in a sport that was socially respectable and favorably reported at a time when many of the sports (such as boxing and animal sports) in which segments of the artisan community engaged in were illegal, publically castigated and often conducted surreptitiously. Participation in the "national pastime" could offer artisans an arena to reassert and demonstrate that they were still part of the respectable community only because the sport had achieved quite quickly widespread middle class acceptance.

This is not to suggest that baseball lacked its critics. However, criticism of the sport continually centered around the issue of professionalism (and the concomitant influence of gambling) and/or that some participants demonstrated an excessive devotion to the sport at the expense of their business obligations. Despite these repeated charges, critics rarely sought to discourage participation in the sport and often pointed out that, engaged in as a recreational activity, baseball was a worthy and wholesome amusement. In light of the distinction between the objections to professional baseball and the general support of the sport itself, I believe that Rader's assertion that evangelical Protestants by the early twentieth century "continued to look upon baseball as a morally suspect activity" must be tempered. I strongly suspect that if historians would examine the numerous denominational evangelical colleges that existed by the latter part of the nineteenth-century they would discover that most fielded baseball nines.

Ohio State University

Melvin L. Adelman

From the Editor:

Ben Rader raises some essential and crucial questions about nineteenth century American sport historiography. If I may intrude into the debate, let me make a few brief comments. I think the use of traditional class divisions does have considerable merit. While the term "middle class" was an unfamiliar construct in the nineteenth century, according to Cindy Aron, author of *Ladies and Gentlemen of the Civil Service: Middle-Class Workers in Victorian America* (1987), not making its way into dictionaries until 1889, people generally knew who the middle classes or middling interests were. Aron identifies them as a group of people with middle level income, shared values, beliefs and behavior. They were white-collar workers who were oriented to self-enrichment, self-improvement, competition and strict morality who were consumer oriented, participated in voluntary associations, resided in particular neighborhoods, and developed family strategies to sustain a particular quality of life and provide opportunities for their children to keep that standard of living.

Aron's seminal study strongly revises the traditional historiography on clerical occupations by pointing out that there was a great deal of opportunity for male clerks and that they were not necessarily driven out by the introduction of female workers. Aron argues that in the late nineteenth century there was an enormous need for clerical workers with the rise of big business and govern

ment bureaucracy. The number of federal employees in Washington rose from 1,268 (men only) in 1859 to 25,675 in 1903, of whom 73.2 percent were male (which was actually an increase from 67.4 percent in 1893). Aron argues that while these clerks had less opportunity to advance compared to the mid-century clerk who was really an apprentice businessman, their wages were pretty good, they had security, and there was some opportunity for either advancement or to gain expertise that could be transferred to a new job in the private sector. These white-collar workers were among the leading baseball fans of the day. By the late 1860s businesses were sponsoring teams among their office staff to promote morale, teach sound values and advertise the firm's name, and in the 1880s commercial leagues sprang up in many major cities. Professional teams recognized the interest of white-collar men in their sport by setting the starting time of games by the work schedule of local clerks. Games in Washington at the turn of the century started later than anywhere else (4:30) to adapt to the 4 P.M. closing time of federal offices. These ballplayers and fans enjoyed baseball not merely for its excitement, but because its values were consonant with their own and congruent with their new working conditions. Baseball, like the workplace, emphasized teamwork and cooperation, yet suggested there was room for individual identity within the group effort. Furthermore, baseball was a manly activity which provided players with a sense of their manliness, very important in an era of cultural feminization, especially for workers whose jobs seemed to become feminized.

In regards to Rader's assumptions about the respectability of post-1860s baseball, I presume he is talking about professional baseball, because amateur baseball was quite respectable, and was originally the most important inter-collegiate ball sport. Evangelical criticisms of the game emphasized the evils of professionalism (the cash nexus and gambling) and sinful Sunday baseball. The annual minutes of national conferences of evangelical denominations is full of attacks on Sunday baseball, but I don't remember reading any criticisms of the sport itself. The occupation of ballplayer was not a high status job and was categorized with actors and boxers, and they were not regarded by the middle and upper classes as prime spouses for their daughters. However, the status of the occupations did improve in the early 1900s as has been demonstrated by the social origins of major leaguers. As I read the Ritter interviews, players like college graduate Harry Hooper were proud of their job and not embarrassed by their colleagues. Only cranks saw the national pastime as morally suspect.

While I disagree with my esteemed colleague on these matters, I am grateful for his effort to expand the dialogue on important issues. I welcome further comment on the issues Rader has raised and other historiographical concerns as well.

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