
The Tramps in Semi-Pro Baseball: The End of an Era

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Family stories no doubt shape a child's future interests. Baseball in general and the Tramps in particular were common conversation in my family and the motivation for this research. The research combined historical material with an interview technique from sociology. The subjects were sixteen former Tramps who lived in or near Springfield, Ohio. Many of them were retired, predominantly from jobs in factories. The men were interviewed in June, 1976. The Tramps had played baseball from 1925 through 1933.

Research in sociology has identified "domains of life experience" such as work, marriage, non-work, friendships, and others. At the present time, only the work of Hutslar (1975) has addressed these domains in relation to sport. In this research the relationships between these domains (i.e., work, marriage, and sport) was utilized to determine if they were important in the demise of the Tramps baseball team, an event which the players could not specifically recall.

Bob Musselman organized the Tramps in 1925, and they played an independent schedule of games. At the beginning of the 1929 season, Paul "Boss" Lubbers assumed the managerial duties since there was a division among the players. By then, too, the players, who characterized their earlier period as one in which friendships were important if not a major reason to play, had become more concerned about other matters (i.e., domains) such as work.

In 1932, in the midst of the Depression, the team departed from its previous philosophy and joined the City League. In the last two years of the team, also, at least twenty-five men played for the Tramps. This era of change was attributed to the hard times, an influx of young players just out of high school, and the fact that many of the Tramps obtained factory work because of their better-than-average baseball playing ability. The domain of marriage did not contribute to the end of the Tramps, although several men who were not with the Tramps during the last two years had quit baseball for this reason. Other factors, also, contributed to the end of the Tramps. Thus, baseball which had drawn the men together in a bond of friendship also brought the association to an end when the players' better-than-average skills in the sport led to work opportunities in hard times.