

# Crime and Punishment: The Marichal-Roseboro Incident

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The third and concluding paper of a session devoted to the famous Juan Marichal-John Roseboro incident of August 22, 1965, examined the varied responses of baseball administrators, the press, the public, and players to what was and remains the most malicious overt act of violence committed by one player against another during a baseball game. The incident was a pivotal one in baseball history, for it required officials to deal forthrightly with the issue of violence in America's "pastoral" sporting pastime; thus the punishment accorded or not accorded the participants in the brawl as well as the reaction of press and public not only reflected attitudes toward violence in sport but also influenced the handling of future acts of on-field violence in baseball. The paper fell into three distinct sections.

1. The primary focus of the paper was the response of baseball officials, principally National League President Warren Giles and Commissioner Ford Frick, to the incident and their determination of disciplinary action against the participants. (Also considered is the immediate response of the game umpires, particularly home-plate umpire Henry "Shag" Crawford.) While it was clear that Marichal would receive a penalty for hitting Roseboro in the head with a baseball bat, the Lords of Baseball were undecided about what penalties, if any, should be meted out to Roseboro and the leading participants in the ensuing 14-minute brawl on the diamond. The paper related how the opinions of the press and public, baseball tradition, and intraleague politics influenced Giles to impose an 8 day suspension and \$1,750 fine on Marichal while exempting all others from punitive action.

2. The second part of the paper discussed the reaction of press, public, umpires, and players to Giles's decision re punishing Marichal. The examination of the reaction to the penalty includes, among other things, local vs. national journalistic and public opinion, racial and ethnic view points, and the question of whether personal assault in sport is subject to civil law, the jurisdiction of private associations (Major League Baseball), or both. Also included was a consideration of Roseboro's suit against Marichal, legal action which ended seven years later with an out-of-court settlement. The disposition of this case, a pioneering effort to apply civil law to the sports arena, had an important effect in reinforcing the notion that sport's exemption from "the law" extended far beyond anti-trust and interstate commerce legislation.

3. The final portion of the paper assessed the long-term significance of Marichal's action and Giles's reaction (and responses thereto) in terms of setting precedence for handling future acts of violence in baseball. As a corollary, the paper will discuss how baseball historians have treated the Marichal-Roseboro incident and the reasons for their failure to accord due attention to the episode, especially questions related to the appropriateness of the disciplinary action, the nature of on-field violence, and the applicability of personal liability to sporting events.