

The Arrival of the Hot Dog at Baseball Stadiums

Other Baseball Promotions

The Song “Take Me Out To the Ballgame”

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 of the book introduced the basic concepts of statistics by using a hot dog promotion. How did the hot dog arrive at baseball stadiums? What are some of the other promotions used to lure people to the ballpark? What is the history of the song “Take Me Out to the Ballgame”? All of this is discussed next.

Hot Dog Trivia

- The National Hot Dog & Sausage Council polled concessionaires at Major League ballparks estimate that an average of 862,702 hot dogs is eaten per ballpark per year in the U.S.

The Arrival of the Hot Dog in Baseball Stadiums

- Coney Island vendor Charles Feltman devised a charcoal stove and invented the idea of enclosing a sausage in a roll. At that point in time, the frankfurter was only 12 years old. German butchers in Frankfurt first produced them in 1852. Some researchers claim the hot dog first appeared in baseball stadiums in 1867. Harry M. Stevens was a veteran ballpark vendor. The brochure of the modern Harry M. Stevens Company explains what happened: “One cold spring day at the old Polo Grounds, around 1901, ice cream was not selling. Harry M. Stevens went out for sausages, boiled them, slipped them lengthwise into rolls, and sent his hawkers through the stands shouting ‘Get ‘em while they’re hot!’” Cartoonist Tad Dorgan supplied the name “hot dog” to Stevens’ 1901 activity. In Columbus, Ohio, Stevens is credited with developing an improved scorecard and hired hawkers to yell, “You can’t tell the players without the scorecard!” What does this term mean when used in today’s everyday language?

Other Promotions

The two greatest promoter/owners in the history of baseball were Bill Veeck and Charlie Finley.

Bill Veeck

Bill Veeck, at the age of 30, bought the Cleveland Indians in 1946. He bought a total of four teams during his career. Veeck is credited with integrating the American League by bringing Larry Doby and Satchel Paige to the Cleveland Indians. In 1959, Veeck bought the Chicago White Sox from the Comiskey family. Some of his promotions were:

- In 1960, he introduced the exploding scoreboard to celebrate a home run hit by a White Sox player. Multicolored rockets were shot off.
- Bill Veeck was considered the P.T. Barnum of baseball. He had a promotion in 1979 called the “Anti-Disco Night”. The idea behind the promotion was between the first and second game of a doubleheader fans would assemble in the outfield and burn disco records. The unruly fans got out of control and ruined the outfield. His Chicago White Sox team had to forfeit the second game of the doubleheader.
- Another stunt arranged by Mr. Veeck was to add to the roster of the St. Louis Browns a 3 foot 7 inch midget, Eddie Gaedel. He made one plate appearance in his career and walked on four straight pitches. It happened in 1951 to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the American League. Eddie came out of the dugout waving three little bats. The manager showed the umpires Eddie’s contract and papers which had him added to the active roster. The rest is history.
- He is credited with getting Harry Caray, the long time broadcaster for the Chicago White Sox and then the Chicago Cubs, to sing “Take Me Out to the Ball Game” during the seventh inning stretch. The legend was that Caray would sing it in the booth when it was played on the organ during the seventh inning stretch. Veeck secretly installed a microphone in the booth. Without knowing it, Caray wound up singing to all the patrons

at the game. Thus began a tradition that lasted until Mr. Caray passed away.

- In 1960, Bill Veeck was the first owner to put player names on the back of uniforms.
- In 1980, Bill Veeck brought Minnie Minoso out of retirement at the age of 57. He went 0-for-2. However, he became the first player to be a five-decade performer in the majors.
- Bill Veeck, when asked about his trading strategy, said, “You just don’t walk up to another ballclub and tell them you want their shortstop. If you did that, the price would automatically go up another \$50,000. So you begin by talking about their second-string catcher.”

Learning Statistics with Baseball

Charley Oscar Finley

Charley Finley, a wealthy insurance broker purchased the Kansas City Athletics in 1960. Finley made it clear his view of baseball by stating in an interview, “We’re in the entertainment business and we should entertain the people.”

Some of his promotions were:

- In 1964, Finley staged a Farmer’s Night promotion in June, in which fans received livestock giveaways.
- Finley ran a regular petting zoo at the ballpark, featuring sheep and monkeys.
- A mechanical rabbit named Harvey would appear from a hole to deliver new baseballs to the umpire. Air vents blew dust off of home plate.
- Finley introduced a mule, called Charley O. The mule traveled in a train on road trips. The mule appeared in all the ballparks.
- Finley instituted a flashy new dress code. The uniforms became sleeveless with distinctive colors such as gold and green. Along with their new all white shoes, his team became visually unique from the other teams.
- Finley also tried to change the rules of baseball. In 1971, he experimented with three-ball walks in spring training. However, this idea failed. In one spring training game there was 19 walks. Another idea of his was an orange-colored ball. He reasoned the fans could follow the flight of the ball better with an orange ball. This idea also went nowhere.
- In 1974, Finley introduced the concept of the “designated runner.” He signed a Herb

Washington, a track star who held several world records for sprinting. In two seasons with the A's, stole 31 bases but was thrown out 17 times. By any standards this is a poor stolen base result. Washington had no plate appearances and never played in the field.

- In 1969, Finley was the first owner to propose interleague play and the “designated hitter”. In that same year he proposed having World Series games at night. All of these ideas were implemented in later years.

Finley, as a showman, came up with all these ideas in an attempt to increase fan interest.

The Oldest Promotion

- The oldest promotion in baseball is “Ladies Day”. The tradition began in baseball in 1889, in Cincinnati. Women were admitted free to a ballgame as long as they were accompanied by a male paid escort.

The traditional song sung at all ballparks during a game is “Take Me Out to the Ball Game”. A brief history of this classic song is presented next.

The Song “Take Me Out to the Ball Game”

The song “Take Me Out to the Ball Game” turned 100 years old in 2008. The song’s popularity has increased over its 100 year life. The song ranks third in most sung songs, behind “Happy Birthday” and the “Star-Spangled Banner”. It is estimated that there are over 400 versions of the song with sales of over 10 million copies.

Originally, the song was written by Jack Norworth in 1908. Legend has it that, that while riding on the subway in New York, seeing a sign saying “Baseball Today, Polo Grounds”, inspired him to write the lyrics on a piece of scrap paper. The actual music was written by his friend Albert Von Tilzer.

What many people don't know is that what is sung today is actually just the song's chorus. The song is about a woman who was mad about baseball. When her beau asks her out on a date to a show, she responds "yes, only if you take me to the ball game." The full song appears below.

Katie Casey was base ball mad.

Had the fever and had it bad;
Just to root for the home town crew,
Ev'ry sou Katie blew.

On a Saturday, he young beau

Called to see if she'd like to go,

To see a show but Miss Kate said,

"No, I'll tell you what you can do."

"Take me out to the ball game,

Take me out with the crowd.

Buy me some peanuts and cracker jack,

I don't care if I never get back,

Let me root, root, root for the home team,

If they don't win it's a shame.

For it's one, two, three strikes, you're out,

At the old ball game."

Katie Casey saw all the games,

Knew the players by their first names;

Told the umpire he was wrong,

All along good and strong.

When the score was just two to two,

Katie Casey knew what to do,

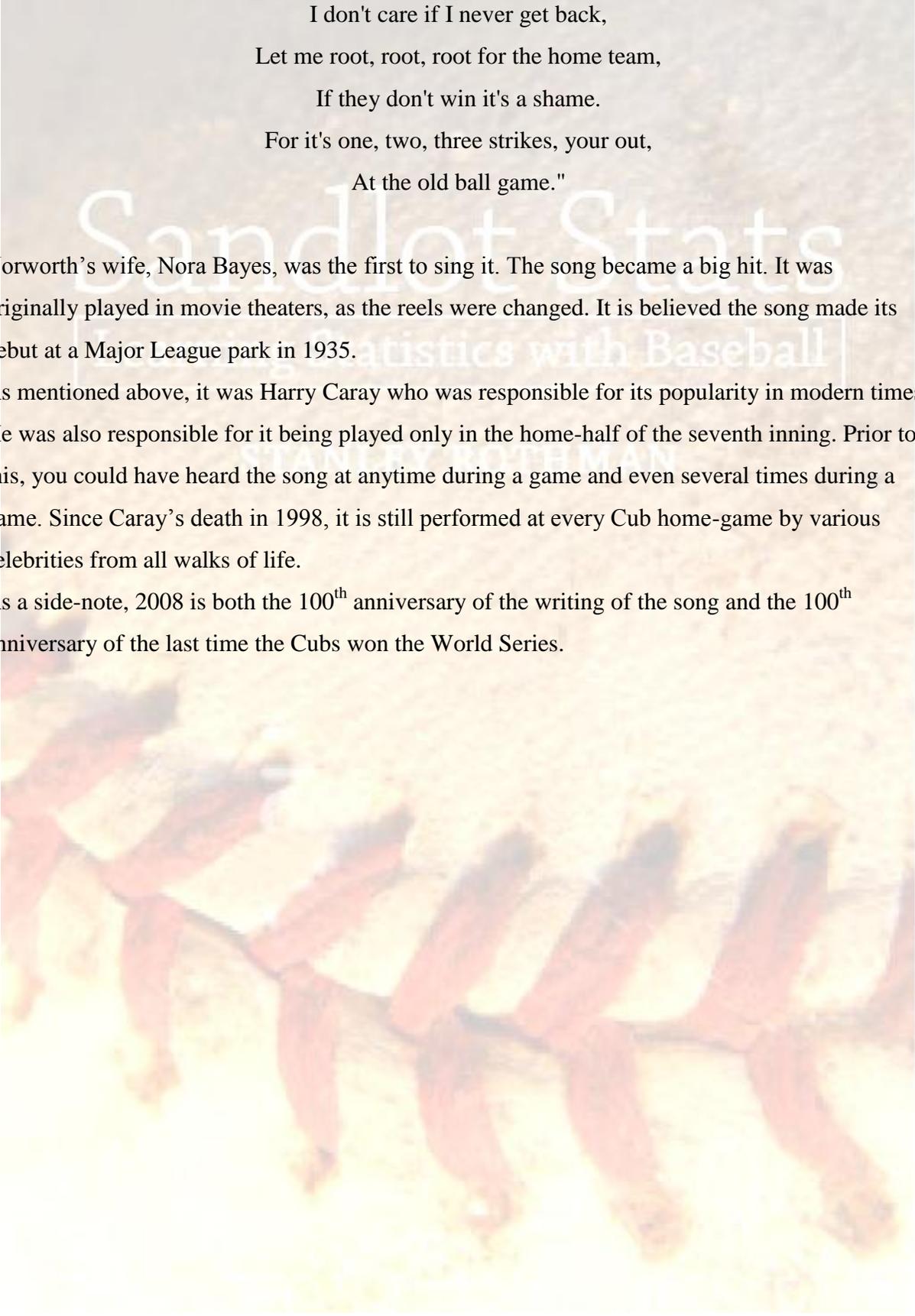
Just to cheer up the boys she knew,

She made the gang sing this song:

"Take me out to the ball game,

Take me out with the crowd.

Buy me some peanuts and cracker jack,



I don't care if I never get back,
Let me root, root, root for the home team,
If they don't win it's a shame.
For it's one, two, three strikes, your out,
At the old ball game."

Norworth's wife, Nora Bayes, was the first to sing it. The song became a big hit. It was originally played in movie theaters, as the reels were changed. It is believed the song made its debut at a Major League park in 1935.

As mentioned above, it was Harry Caray who was responsible for its popularity in modern times. He was also responsible for it being played only in the home-half of the seventh inning. Prior to this, you could have heard the song at anytime during a game and even several times during a game. Since Caray's death in 1998, it is still performed at every Cub home-game by various celebrities from all walks of life.

As a side-note, 2008 is both the 100th anniversary of the writing of the song and the 100th anniversary of the last time the Cubs won the World Series.