

The Outsiders: No. 12, Shoeless Joe Jackson



By Joe Posnanski (/author/joe-posnanski/) Jan 11, 2021

237

This offseason, leading right up to the 2021 Baseball Hall of Fame announcement, we're counting down the 100 greatest eligible players (<https://theathletic.com/2202108/2020/11/27/the-outsiders-hall-of-fame-top-100/>) not in the Hall of Fame and ranking them in the order in which I would vote them in. Each player will receive a Hall of Fame plaque based on the pithy ones that the Hall used to use back at the start. We continue our essay series with No. 12, Shoeless Joe Jackson.

Joseph Walker (Shoeless Joe) Jackson

Philadelphia Athletics—Cleveland—Chicago White Sox, 1908–1920

One of the greatest pure hitters in baseball history, Shoeless Joe hit .356 in his career, third highest in baseball history behind only his great rival Ty Cobb and Rogers Hornsby. Babe Ruth copied his swing. Became a movie icon long after his death. “The thrill of the grass.” Took money from gamblers to throw the 1919 World Series.

In one of my early attempts to do the Baseball 100, I included Shoeless Joe Jackson. This is an updated version of the essay I wrote:

*Deep down in Louisiana close to New Orleans
Way back up in the woods among the evergreens
There stood a log cabin made of earth and wood
Where lived a country boy named Johnny B. Goode
Who never ever learned to read or write so well
But he could play guitar just like a-ringin' a bell
— “Johnny B. Goode,” Chuck Berry*

Joe Jackson could play baseball just like a-ringin' a bell. Nobody knows how he learned to play. Nobody knows who coached him. He shows up in his story a complete ballplayer, 13 years old, entirely unschooled, already a veteran of the Brandon Mill textile factory in his hometown of Greenville, S.C.

He can throw so hard the mill team makes him a pitcher — and he breaks a batter's arm by plunking him with a fastball.

He hits so well the people in town chant his name and throw coins at him.

He is so beloved a local artisan named Charlie Ferguson decides Joe Jackson deserves the grandest and most beautiful baseball bat ever made. He sculpts and whittles a perfect 48-ounce bat, then darkens it with tobacco juice. Joe falls in love with the bat and would use it for the rest of his baseball life, even after it broke (he sent it to a bat company to fix). Joe calls it “Black Betsy.”

This is a folk hero's story. I think that's why so many people are drawn to it even now, more than 100 years later. Joe Jackson's baseball life starts with the innocent exuberance of a boy who plays ball for the pure joy of it. Every minute on the field is a minute spent in the

sunshine and on the grass, far outside the dank and gloomy confines of Brandon Mill. He plays baseball with boundless talent; there is nothing he cannot do in the game. He swings Black Betsy with such force and rhythm — “I copied my swing after Joe Jackson’s, it is the perfectest,” Babe Ruth once said — that people come from all over South Carolina to see him play. They call his longest home run drives “Saturday Specials.”

And here’s the heart of the story: All of this was enough for Joe Jackson. He would always think of this as the best time of his life. He is getting paid \$2.50 a game — double his pay sweating at Brandon Mill — and opportunities are endless. Other mills hire him to play ball, too. Crowds chant his name. He plays ball and drinks corn whiskey and lives a bigger life than he ever could have hoped for, a bigger life than his father, George, who toils unhappily in the factory every day with no baseball to brighten things.

Three days after his 21st birthday, Joe Jackson marries Katie Wynn, and for the rest of his life, Katie will read to him, write for him, protect him, defend him. It would have been enough for Joe.

But you couldn’t play ball like Joe Jackson and stay a secret. Even before he marries Kate, a man named Tom Stouch — who had played ball for almost two decades from Philadelphia to Atlanta, Providence to Selma — offers Jackson a joy playing baseball full time for his team, the Greenville Spinners. Jackson turns him down. He is making 45 dollars every month playing for all those factory teams, more than he ever expected to make, and he is blissfully happy.

“I will pay you \$75 a month,” Stouch said.

You can imagine Joe Jackson’s eyes opening wider than they ever had before.

“I’ll play my head off for \$75 a month,” Jackson said.

He signs the contract with an X.

And that’s when the story of Johnny B. Goode ends and the story of Shoeless Joe begins.

Joe Jackson insisted all his life he only played one game without shoes, and that was when he played for Tom Stouch's Greenville Spinners. Jackson developed agonizing blisters while wearing a new pair of cleats. He asked to sit out a game in Anderson, S.C., so his feet could recover. Tom Stouch wasn't paying Jackson 75 bucks a month to sit, and he reminded Jackson of his promise to play his head off. So Joe Jackson played in his stocking feet.

"You shoeless bastard, you!" one fan shouted at him as Jackson slid into third for what might be professional baseball's only shoeless triple.

Jackson hated the Shoeless Joe nickname for the rest of his life.

Tom Stouch knew before anybody else just how good a baseball player Joe Jackson was; he knew Jackson was destined to become a big-league star. He almost immediately began writing letters to the biggest man in baseball, Philadelphia manager Connie Mack himself, and described Jackson's greatness. Mack was intrigued enough to send two scouts to watch Jackson play, and they both immediately wired back: Sign Jackson no matter the cost.

Connie Mack paid Stouch \$900 — about \$25,000 in today's money — for the rights to Joe Jackson. Stouch was thrilled, not only for the money but because he loved Joe and believed he was fulfilling the young man's dreams.

But he was wrong: Joe Jackson was already living his dream.

And he wasn't going to Philadelphia.

"I hardly know as how I'd like it in those big Northern cities," Jackson told Stouch. Joe had never left South Carolina. He had no interest in leaving South Carolina. He had no interest, as the newspapers reported, going up North and "bumping into strangers by himself."

Stouch remained adamant Jackson was just having a little stage fright. He'd get up to Philadelphia and realize he had made the big time. Stouch even took the train up North with Jackson. As David Fleitz wrote in his book "Shoeless," they met at the train station. Stouch made sure Jackson got on. Stouch made sure Jackson got seated comfortably. Stouch explained the plan a few times: When they got to Philadelphia, he would take Jackson to the ballpark and personally introduce him to Mack, and make sure he was settled.

Then, Stouch left Jackson alone to enjoy the ride. When the train reached Philadelphia, Joe Jackson was gone.

Stouch rushed to the ballpark in a panic; he worried Jackson had been kidnapped or worse. Mack shook his head and showed him the telegram he had just received.

“AM UNABLE TO COME TO PHILADELPHIA AT THIS TIME. JOE JACKSON.”

Joe Jackson had jumped the train in Charlotte and returned home.

Mack was outraged. He sent an injured ballplayer, Socks Seybold, down to South Carolina with the orders of bringing Jackson to Philadelphia even if it meant “his whole family to come back with you.”

Jackson did go to Philadelphia with Seybold ... and he immediately showed off his great talent ... and he hated every minute of it. Jackson’s teammates cruelly mocked him for being Southern, for being odd and, mostly, for being illiterate. Of all the Shoeless Joe images, the one I find most touching and haunting is of him pretending to read magazines on the train, sometimes even shouting out, “Wow, that’s some story!”

In all, Joe Jackson tried three times to sneak on a train and go back to the safety and warmth of his South Carolina home.

“Shoeless Joe Jackson has returned to his home in Greenville,” The Washington Post reported. “Big league life wasn’t just to the young man’s liking. ... Joe had just about one week of mingling with city folk when he concluded he was never cut out for the Major League. He told Connie Mack so, and added that he’d rather be a star in the bushes than struggle for a regular place on a big-league team.”

Mack tried to win over Jackson. He offered everything he knew to offer, including a chance to go to school and learn how to read and write. “But the boy refused every inducement,” the Post wrote. “Promises of big salary, education, fine clothes for his girl wife and many other things were ignored.”

In the end, Joe Jackson played only 10 games for the Athletics and wasn’t about to play any more. Mack, at a loss, traded Jackson to Cleveland in 1910. It altered Joe Jackson’s baseball life, but Mack never quite got over it. In 1941, Ted Williams entered his final games against the Athletics in position to hit .400. He famously went 6-for-8 in a season-ending doubleheader to finish at .406, and Mack watched from the other dugout thinking of another lefty hitter.

“I wish I had a Williams,” Mack said. “I had one once. And I lost him.”

I keep him because he reminds me of something.

What?

Something that I don't want to forget.

What's that?

That when they come to you sweet-talking, you better not listen to anything they say. I don't aim to forget that.

— *The Boss in “All the King's Men”*

Shoeless Joe Jackson never forgot that they came sweet-talking him. Once he accepted he couldn't go back to South Carolina, that he was going to be a big-league ballplayer, he focused on two things: One, playing extraordinary, even unprecedented, baseball; and two, keeping an eye on the bastards to make sure they weren't cheating him.

He hit .408 in his first full season with Cleveland. His friend and nemesis, Ty Cobb, won the batting title by hitting .420. Cobb used his fellow Southerner as a muse to bring out his own best baseball. Cobb had never before hit .400, but faced up against a new rival, he set career highs in doubles, triples, runs, hits and RBIs.

Even though their numbers look similar, Jackson and Cobb played the game differently. Cobb was a man of his time. He hit with hands held apart, and he bunted, slashed, intimidated, and willed his way forward. He had no use for Babe Ruth's slugging baseball when it was thrust upon him, and he never stopped railing against it. He saw baseball as a sweet science, much in the same way pugilists of the time saw boxing.

Jackson was a man of the future. It's no accident Ruth copied his swing. Jackson kept his hands together, his stroke was fluid and powerful and, yes, modern. As Fleitz wrote, people heard a different sound when the ball came off Joe Jackson's bat. If Ruth was Elvis, Joe Jackson was the country blues singer who got there first.

Jackson hit .395 and led the league in hits and triples in his second year. He hit .373 and led the league in hits and doubles in his third.

But make no mistake, he wasn't happy. Years later, in the movie "Field of Dreams," Shoeless Joe lamented his life and talk about how he loved baseball so much he would have played it for free. This was probably never true of the real Joe Jackson, but it certainly wasn't true after he made it to the major leagues. By 1913, he was entirely convinced the bastards were cheating him. Cleveland's owner was a man named Charles Somers who had spent a lot of his money just keeping the American League afloat in its early years.

Jackson felt sure Somers was underpaying him. Cobb was making more. The owners were making more. Everybody was making more. He'd had enough.

Jackson threatened to quit baseball to go into vaudeville. He threatened to quit the American League and go play in the Federal League. Finally, he demanded Cleveland deal him to a winner so he could get "some of that sweet World Series money."

Somers, who once was among the richest men in America but had lost everything, had no choice but to give in and trade Jackson to the Chicago White Sox.

And now, the story starts to become familiar, right? The White Sox owner was that famed cheapskate, Charles Comiskey, and everybody knows he treated his players poorly, backed out of giving them bonuses they were promised, made them launder their own uniforms, etc.

Only ... it's not clear any of that is quite right. In studying the Black Sox scandal, and uncovering countless myths about it, the Society for American Baseball Research discovered Comiskey was actually among the highest-paying owners in baseball (<http://sabr.org/eight-myths-out>) (his team had a significantly higher payroll than the Cincinnati Reds, who they faced in the World Series). This is not to say he wasn't cheating the players; of course, he was. He just wasn't cheating the players any more than other owners.

In any case, Comiskey was extremely popular in the press. So when Jackson got into those now-familiar battles with Comiskey over salary, back pay, and other things, reporters sided with Comiskey. They played up Jackson's greed, his ungratefulness and, just to add color to the story, his inability to read. In 1918, with World War I raging on, Jackson — as the sole support for his wife and mother — was given the option to work for a shipbuilding company rather than going to fight.

Comiskey cruelly called Jackson a coward. “There is no room on my club for players who wish to evade the army draft by entering the employ of ship concerns,” he snarled. It was the harshest insult imaginable, and Joe Jackson would not forget.

Then came the end. Jackson, feeling cheated and betrayed and angry, took \$5,000 from gamblers to help throw the 1919 World Series. There is no question he took the money. Not only that, but he admitted later he threatened to reveal the whole plot unless he got paid. He famously hit .375 for the series with a homer and did not commit an error, but a close look at the play-by-play showed he went hitless with runners in scoring position and didn’t really start hitting until after gamblers failed to come up with the money and the White Sox players decided to try to win.

Jackson always insisted he did not do anything to lose the actual games — which is dubious considering his insistence on getting paid later — but even if it’s true, his agreement was a big reason the fix ever got going in the first place. Once they had the team’s best pitcher in Eddie Cicotte, and the team’s best player in Jackson, the gamblers had what they needed to inspire faith the White Sox were going to lose.

Jackson returned to play ball in 1920 and even while the Black Sox investigation raged on, he had his best season in years. He hit .382, slugged .589, and led the league in triples at age 32.

And then he was banned for life.

After he was banished from the major leagues, Joe Jackson returned to the small Southern towns where his baseball life began. He played ball until he was almost 50. This has been played off as sad — a larger-than-life figure, now out of shape, playing in the sandlots against townfolk.

But the truth is, those sandlots, that’s where he was happiest. He had known that instinctively, right from the start, even while supposedly smarter people had told him what he wanted. Jackson opened a liquor store a few blocks from where he grew up. He and Katie never had any children, but Shoeless Joe would spend much of his later years teaching the kids in the neighborhood how to play ball. Sometimes he would buy them ice cream.

Late in his life, Cobb and Jackson crossed paths. The story is quite famous, an older Joe Jackson looking away as the legend approached.

“Don’t you know me?” Cobb said.

“Sure I do, Ty,” Joe Jackson said. “But I didn’t think you knew me.”

My favorite part of the story, though, is less known. At one point, Ty Cobb told Shoeless Joe: “Whenever I got the idea I was a good hitter, I’d stop ... and take a good look at you.”

Joe Jackson died four years later. He was 63. Nearly four decades later, Ray Liotta played Shoeless Joe Jackson in the movie “Field of Dreams.” In the movie, he threw left-handed and batted right-handed, the opposite of real life. All of it was the opposite of real life, though.

Should Joe Jackson be in the Hall of Fame? Like with every player in this list, it depends on what you think the Hall of Fame represents. If you are one who believes all the greatest players, regardless of their more human flaws, regardless of how they might have hurt the game, belong in the Hall, then yes, Jackson should be in there.

If you believe the Hall of Fame is, instead, an honor meant for those great players who are, above all else, a credit to the game, then no, you can’t vote for him. Joe Jackson helped throw a World Series and, along the way, endangered the game’s very future. There aren’t many things you can do on the field that are worse than that.

My own view is Joe Jackson is an integral part of baseball history. There are others I’d put in first. But, eventually, yes, I would get to Shoeless Joe.

“If I had been the kind of fellow who brooded when things went wrong,” Jackson said, “I probably would have gone out of my mind ... I would have been bitter and resentful because I would have felt I had been wronged. But I haven’t been resentful at all. ... I gave baseball my best.”

(Photo: B Bennett / Bruce Bennett Studios via Getty Images)

Joe Posnanski ([/author/joe-posnanski/](#)) is a Senior Writer at The Athletic. He has been named national sportswriter of the year by five different organizations and has won two Emmys as part of NBC’s digital Olympics coverage. He is the author of five books including “The Life and Afterlife of Harry Houdini,” released in October of 2019.



237 COMMENTS

Add a comment...

Andrew M. Jan 11, 12:19pm

"It said the man's done enough. Leave him alone."

Another line from Field of Dreams that I think applies to Shoeless Joe quite well. Even though it wasn't applied to him in the movie.

He should be in. It's been over 100 years since the Black Sox scandal.

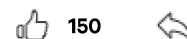
Landis' rule is now archaic. Back then, ballplayers made good money but they didn't make anywhere close to what they make today compared to regular working people. Many ballplayers back then had jobs in the offseason and Jackson operated a pool room and a dry-cleaning business at home in the winter. It would be much easier to sway a ballplayer to have him throw a World Series then; it would be practically impossible today. These guys today make too much, it's not worth the risk.

People can say "It's the worst thing you can do to the game," blah blah blah.

Oh really?

Landis was the one who played a lead role in keeping Blacks out of baseball. And no one talks about the owner's collusion in the mid 1980s when they banded together in order to drive down free agent salaries. Owners collecting together and intentionally not making their teams better sounds a lot worse than what an illiterate ballplayer did in 1919.

I don't understand why anyone wouldn't want to let Shoeless Joe in.



150

Alexander D. Jan 11, 1:05pm

@Andrew M. i'd say it's because that poor old ignorant joe we all heard about for so long just isn't true. illiterate doesn't mean he wasn't sharp, and since he ran successful vaudeville shows (yes, multiple...and once, he fell in love with a woman and refused to go back home to his wife til his wife showed up with a cop and kinda forced him)...had many many endorsements during his career....and successfully ran bowling alleys and liquor stores....no. he wasn't stupid. and he was certainly paranoid and awwwwfulllly concerned with money. so. he agreed to throw the series for money....took the money and kept it. because his owner insulted him? not enough. because he didn't understand? obviously untrue. i don't want him in because i don't feel sorry for him based on BS and

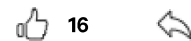
myths. the book joe mentioned in the article? you shud read it...



Andrew M. Jan 11, 1:08pm

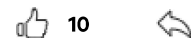
@Alexander D. I think it's understandable as to why he was awwwwfulllly concerned with money, seeing where he came from.

Fine, you don't feel sorry for him. Is his career not enough?



David M. Jan 11, 7:55pm

@Alexander D. This was a great treatment of a complex subject, thoughtful, considerate, and, I think, capturing a clearer picture of a great player than I previously had. if you love baseball and baseball lore, you gotta love this piece on Joe Jackson.



Forrest B. Jan 11, 8:22pm

He participated in throwing games. You can't have anyone like that in the hall. The whole point of this game is everyone trying their hardest to win, or at least doing their best to collect their stats. That would be terrible to let someone who actually tried to lose in. That ruins the point of sports, also using race in this debate to justify if just ridiculous. Those are two separate issues completely.



Andrew M. Jan 11, 9:08pm

@Forrest B. Sure you can. And no, it's not. I'm not sure if you think I'm using race in this debate to justify anything, maybe I should be clear:

To use your point about trying their hardest to win...were MLB owners trying their hardest to win when they weren't letting blacks play baseball? Could an MLB team have gotten better by signing Satchel Paige, Josh Gibson or Cool Papa Bell?

Were MLB teams in the mid 80s doing their absolute best to win when they colluded together to beat down player salaries and not making their teams better? How'd Steinbrenner get away with offering Carlton Fisk a contract and then withdrawing it after Jerry Reinsdorf called him to complain about it?

If you think the whole point of this game is everyone trying their hardest to win, there are plenty of clear examples outside of the Black Sox where that's not the case and the people involved retained eligibility.

I would argue that both instances were more of a hurt on MLB than what Joe Jackson and the rest of his crew did. After all, every major league team was complicit in keeping blacks out of baseball and every major league team chose not to be better in doing so. And teams in the 80's flat out did not try to get better in order to stick it to the players and their increasing salaries. Both examples were felt league wide at a minimum.

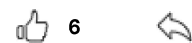
Joe Jackson and the Black Sox affected exactly two teams: The White Sox and the Reds, who they probably should have beat if they were playing straight up.

Let's not also forget that there wasn't any rule against what the players did in that World Series. Now I don't like that any more than you do, however that's worth noting here: MLB still didn't have a rule about throwing games and it took the Black Sox for the owners to get it together and get a commissioner who'd stick up for them.

So Landis throws down the hammer and retroactively bans the players who threw the Series when there weren't any laws in place. I guess he had to make an example out of someone to let everyone know he meant business.

But if your measuring stick is "the whole point of this game is everyone trying their hardest to win," then you can't have a Hall of Fame. It's impossible. Not every player has given 100% max effort all the time. Mickey Mantle wasn't trying his best when he was nursing a hangover. It's a simplistic take,

but then so again is the naive idea that everyone in the Hall of Fame tried their hardest to win all the time.



Josh H. Jan 11, 10:33pm

@Andrew M. Like pre-2003 PEDS, fixing games wasn't against the rules, but certainly it was illegal.

Fast forward 80+ years, and you can make the argument that Bonds and Jackson suffered similar fates - they were both caught up in something illegal, not against the rules, but definitely beneficial to owners. Then it wasn't.

Gambling, like PEDs, was most definitely prevalent before and after the Black Sox scandal (see Joe's batting title excerpt with Nap Lajoie as just one notable example.) and definitely a method for keeping fan's interested in the games (see NFL: the most popular sport includes a point spread next to every game that is played).

Seems like he should be in for no other reason that you can't be sure Nap Lajoie didn't throw a few games, but got a pass because he was so well liked - hmmm, kind of sounds like a large, smiling, teddy bear DH in Bahstun who was caught cheating, but appears to be headed to the HoF!



Andrew M. Jan 11, 10:51pm

@Josh H. as much as I can't stand Papi, he'll be in. My distaste for him doesn't have to do with his PED use, it's the fact that he's a douche. Although I've softened on him a bit from his time as an analyst on TNT.



Tom M. Jan 12, 2:38am

@Forrest B. And owners who are tanking?



June H. 20h ago

@Forrest B. As several have pointed out, the mid-80s owners and MLB executives colluded against players to restrict movement and hold down free agent values. The purported architect of the scheme, Lee MacPhail, as well as participating owners (Bud Selig) and other front office executives who were drunk with collusion power (Bobby Cox then Atlanta's GM) are in the Hall of Fame, to cite only a few. So, if it is okay to allow cheating owners and scumbag club personnel to be enshrined, it would not be "terrible" to just drop the farce that players must be excluded on grounds of character. And the issue of owners excluding players based on race should be part of this discussion. That goes to character regardless of whether being racist was fashionable at the time.



Chris H. 18h ago

@Andrew M. The notion that "there wasn't any rule" against throwing the World Series is so absurd it undermines everything else you've said. There probably isn't any rule against poisoning the other team's third baseman so he can't play for two weeks. The rulebook can't cover every possible action a player or team might take. That doesn't make actions that are obviously contrary to the spirit of the game justifiable.



Alexander D. 15h ago

@Andrew M so, folks from the poor south get a bye because of where they came from?

no, sorry. of course he was a great player. he decided to throw that shit away when he agreed to throw the series, took the money, and then kept it. i don't care if he didn't do a damn thing to actually throw the series, he agreed to for a price...accepted the payment for the agreement....and then kept the money and...i betcha....spent it, even.

he betrayed the fans, his contract, honor, decency, and the actual institution of baseball itself.

no, i don't think that guy belongs in the hall of fame. besides...he's more famous now being out than he'd be if he were in...



Simon J. 12h ago

@Alexander D. This piece gave me a fresh idea about Joe Jackson and the Black Sox. Why are those owners so deserving of unconditional loyalty? What about Jackson indicates he gives a damn about them or the league other than taking home a tasty cheque? He sees them getting fat and rich and looks at what he's getting and sees that it doesn't add up. So long as the money is coming in, what does he care if it's from Charlie Comiskey - who he doesn't respect or like - or Arnold Rothstein. Remember the period of time we are observing: Jackson first played in 1908 at age 20 for the Philadelphia Athletics of the American League. In 1908, the Athletics and the American League are both in their eighth season. Eighth. 8th. (2020 was the ninth time that Mike Trout has finished top 5 in the MVP voting.)

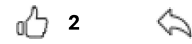
Defunct leagues: The American Association lasted 10 seasons. The National Association lasted 5. The Players League and Union Association (and XFL and AAF) each lasted just one. Jackson doesn't have any reason to believe that 100 years later, the AL and NL would still be the only game in town. In 1914, in the prime of his career, the Federal League appears. This is basically business as usual, upstart league, let's see what happens. This time, the AL & NL owners move quickly to kill that league, moves that led to baseball's antitrust exemption, after Jackson was banned. Baseball acted as a monopoly to prevent competition, but that's okay, it's baseball! It's wholesome! That move and decision also led to the perpetuation, until the 1970s, of the Reserve Clause. Owners essentially owned players, who could play for the salary offered - or not play. Clubs had a perpetual right to renew a player's contract at any terms. Today, the money is so overwhelming that there's not much sympathy for players having to stay with the organization who drafted them for several years. But in those days, the money is not so crazy that we should expect players to not consider other life quality elements in their decisions about where and how to play.

Imagine if your employer could legally block you from working anywhere else that was at all related to your current occupation? Do you think you would like it there and feel like you owed the owner your honor and loyalty? That owner is getting rich from your labor, by the way, and choosing to pay you far less than he would otherwise have to.

Hey Alexander D, I'll give you half your annual salary if you make sure your company's bid on that next project comes in 10% higher than it should, so that my company wins the bid and gets the

contract. Whaddya say*?

*Nobody will tell you this but it means that you will be banned from preparing any bids forever and will also be ineligible to get into the bid preparer hall of fame, which does not exist and will not exist until 2037.



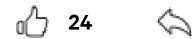
Paul F. 10h ago

The Reserve Clause was active collusion to depress salaries. Comiskey exploiting a little less is not much of a defense.



Bradford C. Jan 11, 12:25pm

Awesome stuff. Thanks for a great read. I'd put him in.



John M. Jan 11, 12:28pm

I agree, Joe. Others deserve to get in first (Minoso and O'Neil especially). However, treating the Hall of Fame with Puritanism ignores the history of the game.



Alex B. Jan 11, 12:30pm

People will note that Jackson's stats in the 1919 series certainly don't look like a man throwing games. That's true. Some make the case that, if you look closer, you can see he was quite strategic in choosing when and how to play poorly. I've linked a story from a SABR member who makes that case, below.

calltothepen.com/2020/01/21/shoeless-joe-jackson-play-win-1919-series/amp/2/

“ In the first five games, Jackson batted six times with men on base, got one base hit, and reached on an error once, without scoring or driving in a single run. That's a .167 batting average with men on base for that span. The White Sox ended Game Five in a 4-1 Series hole, and in the only win through that point, Shoeless Joe scored the first of the White Sox's three runs after leading off with a hit.

Then the White Sox played three straight elimination games and won the first two. Jackson batted ten times with men on base in those three games, got five hits, and reached on an error once. But in the

times with men on base in those three games, got five hits, and reached on an error once. But in the third of those games—the absolute last chance for the White Sox to stay alive—he went 1-for-4 with men on base and drove in two runs with that hit when the game was still far enough beyond reach.”

Of course, the sample size is vanishingly small, and sometimes people just hit worse with men on base over the course of several games.



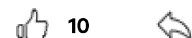
Philip M. Jan 11, 2:29pm

@Alex B. Look at the performance of Eddie Collins during that Series, and you'd swear he was in on the take. Even when we know too-small sample sizes are, well, too small, we still want draw inferences from them. I'd like to think Jackson was proficient enough with the bat to hit well whenever he really wanted to, but those Reds pitchers weren't all cupcakes. And I still think the Reds would have won a square Series: they were more superior to the rest of the NL than the Sox were compared to the AL.



Alex B. Jan 11, 2:50pm

@Philip M. Yeah, I don't have any strong convictions regarding the specifics of what happened, but I just wanted to get out in front of the "he hit 375, checkmate!" argument you always see when this comes up.



Alan K. Jan 11, 4:21pm

@Philip M. The Reds are an interesting team. Better record than the Sox. But they didn't sustain their success. The American League at the time had Ty Cobb, Babe Ruth, Tris Speaker, Walter Johnson, Joe Jackson, Eddie Collins. The National League had Pete Alexander, Rogers Hornsby, Frankie Frisch, Zack Wheat. The American League had taken the last four series. I think the White Sox were (outside the betting lines of course) favored because the American League was perceived as a better league. And the teams' respective records probably reflects their caliber of competition.



You Jan 11, 6:44pm

The White Sox advance scout was Fred McMullen...the co-conspirator! No wonder most White Sox batters struggled. He fed them false reports on the Reds pitchers.



Craig C. Jan 11, 12:32pm

Did Connie Mack really send a man named “Socks” to get Shoeless Joe?!? 😊



112



Michael P. Jan 11, 12:45pm

This is a bit off topic, but I am always fascinated by the heavy bats used back in the day. A 48oz bat! (I think Ruth's was 54) It just amazes me that they could hit with a bat that heavy.



15



Nathan J. Jan 11, 1:15pm

@Michael P. If you see any of the limited video available of pitching motions there is no way anyone is throwing beyond 88/90 mph. What made Walter Johnson so special was not just that he threw harder than anyone but was able to sustain it over a game.

So if the typical pitcher you are facing is throwing 82-86 mph and likely less with runners on base one can envision using a heavier bat. Not like Jackson or Ruth or Home Run Baker were superhumanly strong relative to the players of today.

Just a different game.



26



Brad W. Jan 11, 1:20pm

@Nathan J. I would really love to see if there's a way to use the technology used in "They Shall Not Grow Old" to use neural computing to normalize that old film and then use that to try to get a real idea of things like pitcher speed, how fast guys really were, etc.

I know you're never going to get, like, launch angle or exit velo, but I've long suspected that you're right about guys not throwing anywhere near as hard as modern pitchers, guys like Ty Cobb not being fast-fast, just faster than his contemporaries, that sort of thing.



17



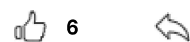
Alex B. Jan 11, 1:32pm

@Brad W. I wonder if speed might be the one thing that hasn't changed remarkably. Humans have been sprinting for as long as we've been humans; although we've thrown things for a long time too, pitching a baseball is a different, technical skill. (If we just go by sprint records, we have to account for the fact that spikes and track surfaces have made an enormous difference.)



Nathan J. Jan 11, 1:39pm

@Brad W. Folks have already been working that angle. But really one of the innovations in baseball that happened as part of the 'lively ball' was pitchers working to find ways to throw harder. More and more the motion moved away from what was basically arm and wrist snap to leveraging the lower body. But that was an evolution.



Larry K. Jan 11, 2:49pm

@Brad W. "They Shall Not Grow Old"

That is an amazing film.



Howard D. Jan 11, 3:04pm

Ruth was hitting 60 HRs when the next closest man was hitting around 12... so yeah, he was kinda superhuman...



Dave W. Jan 11, 4:19pm

@Howard D. What you said is kind of true, but not exactly. The year that Ruth hit 60 (1927), Gehrig hit 47 HRs. I get your basic point, in that Ruth did far surpass other batters in home runs the first few years that he was hitting a lot of them. By 1929, Ruth hit 46 HRs and three others had over 30. Ruth was often a man among boys, but there were also some players who somehow didn't like HRs for various odd reasons, like Cobb in the story above.

But, that does not invalidate what I believe to be your central point, that Ruth's exploits were a bit superhuman.



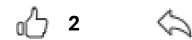
Ben T. Jan 11, 4:42pm

@Howard D. Along with what Dave W. said, the article above notes how Cobb (and many others) held the bat differently, and that Jackson's (and Ruth's) handling with the hands close together brought more power. So those first couple years of Ruth's dominance might not be about superhuman abilities, but the good fortune of being an early adopter.



Nathan J. Jan 11, 5:44pm

@Ben T. Correct. Ruth was a baseball innovator.



Alex B. Jan 11, 5:59pm

I think it might be fair to say that Ruth intuited the pull-heavy launch-angle revolution that Ted Williams would later explicate, and has now become common wisdom.



Joe H. Jan 11, 6:04pm

Babe Ruth was actually famous for bats that were surprisingly light. In an era where hitters would take tree trunks to the plate, Ruth's was a mere 32oz.



You Jan 11, 6:48pm

You dont think humans can run faster today than in 1915?



Alex B. Jan 11, 7:01pm

@Dan H. I think they can. But I think the difference might be less pronounced than compared to the more technical, skill-based aspects of baseball.



Doug G. Jan 11, 8:01pm

@Howard D. The year that Ruth hit 60, Gehrig hit 47 (as mentioned by Dave W.) but no other TEAM in the American league hit more than 56 (and three teams hit less than 30). In the National League the TEAM home run average tied Ruth at 60. I think "superhuman" is an apt description.

Imagine if a player had him 77 home runs during the abbreviated 2020 season (the team average) that would be similar to what Ruth did in 1927.

Also, in both 1920 and 1921 Ruth hit more home runs than the average MLB team, so superhuman was kind of the norm for him.

Oh, and he won 78 games as pitcher from 1915 thru 1918 (in 1918 he also tied for the MLB lead in home runs).

Let's all say it again : superhuman



Adam M. Jan 12, 3:01am

@Doug G. ok, so there are a couple explanations for this. One is that Ruth was so much better than any player who ever lived, had he been born in 1992-ish he would indeed have hit 77 homers last season.

Or, he dominated a game that was rapidly changing (he's the one who changed it) and it took a while for everyone else to catch up.




Simon J. 12h ago

@Doug G. Plus, Gehrig himself modeled his swing after Ruth and was quoted as saying something along the lines of "I would have been a slash and run hitter like everyone else until I saw Ruth"





George T. Jan 11, 12:47pm

Beautiful! I'm a big warts and all guy. I read this and think of Pete Rose. How can you have a baseball museum highlighting the best that ever played the game without Jackson, Rose and Bonds in it?

 16 



Mark P. Jan 11, 1:14pm

@George T. I agree. It is time for forgiveness. Put them in and tell their whole story.

 8 

Thomas M. Jan 11, 1:45pm

@Mark P. I certainly would forgive steroid cheats WAY before I would forgive Joe Jackson. Steroids were a too far extension of the time-honored baseball tradition of cheating to win. Jackson took money to lose on purpose. Unforgivable baseball sin, in my opinion. Of course his playing ability would merit induction, but I personally cannot get past this.

 31 

Dennis H. Jan 11, 3:33pm

@George T. This is not a persuasive argument. Their part in baseball history is addressed and highlighted in the exhibits. The Hall of Fame has just chosen not to honor them.

Jackson exists in a weird gray area because he committed his crimes before they were defined as crimes--everyone knew it was wrong and people (like Hal Chase) had been suspended before, but there wasn't a chapter and verse you could point to, like with Rose. But the fact is he took money to fix a Championship, and that's about the worst sin you can commit in sports. (Outside of sports, is of course, a different matter.)

 11 

Dave W. Jan 11, 4:23pm

@George T. I feel like too many fall into this argument/thinking. There is the story of baseball and then there are the enshrines. There is nothing that prevents the HOF from having any displays showing the exploits of Jackson, Rose, or Bonds. I have vet to make it there for a visit, so maybe

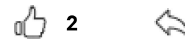
...they have some stuff on display. I would guess they have something about the Black Sox scandal, which likely includes Jackson.

But, telling the story of baseball can be done without honoring certain players with an induction into the elite. They are two different things, even if they are housed in the same building.



Neal T. Jan 11, 6:01pm

@Dave W. You need to differentiate the Hall of Fame from the Baseball Museum in Cooperstown. Yes, there are exhibits featuring Jackson, Rose, Chase, Bonds, Clemens in the Museum; it's a compendium of baseball in all of its manifestations. The HOF solely consists of the plaques honoring individuals chosen by various groups and committees. Its rules keep some individuals from winning that honor, no matter how important they may be in the overall story as displayed in the Museum.



Jewel B. Jan 11, 6:22pm

@Mark P. People can be forgiven but still have consequences for their actions. I don't think anyone in 2021 is still angry with Joe Jackson. But that doesn't mean there aren't consequences, such as being held out of the HOF, for his actions. Same with Pete Rose. Same even for the PED-users.



You Jan 11, 6:45pm

Because the museum DOES highlight those players. It's just that they don't have plaques. You ever been to Cooperstown???



Mark L. Jan 11, 10:41pm

@Jewel B. what are the consequences for the people who are already in the Hall who fought tooth and nail against integration? Do you think the extremes of racism are worse than throwing a game?



John A. Jan 11, 11:02pm

@George T. Jackson is well represented in the museum side of the HOF. There is zero need to ENSHRINE HIM in order to recognize his accomplishments and stature in that era.

On the flip side, a large harm will come of ENSHRINING a player who admitted TAKING MONEY TO MAKE SURE HIS TEAM LOST THE WORLD SERIES.

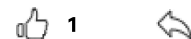
I am thoroughly baffled by anyone who would induct such a scoundrel.



Jewel B. Jan 11, 11:26pm

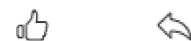
@Mark L. Throwing the World Series threatened to undermine the entire game, making potential integration a moot point. If MLB ceased to exist, there would be nothing to integrate. So from a moral standpoint, of course racism is worse than taking bribes. But from a business standpoint? Well, you can come to your own conclusions.

I will say that "racists" should not all be lumped together, though. Kennesaw Landis was a racist and his racism prevented amazing baseball players from having the opportunity to play. He is his own case. We need to be careful not to compare a guy like Curt Schilling (with his strange fascination with, shall we say "questionable", WWII artifacts) to a guy like Landis. We might not like Schilling for being an assclown but Schilling's personal views in no way negatively impacted the game of baseball like the views of Landis.



Paul S. Jan 12, 1:58am

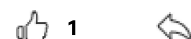
@John A. What harm will come if he's enshrined?



Adam M. Jan 12, 3:05am

@Mark L. In the context of baseball, throwing a game is about the worst thing you can do.

In the context of society, of course battling tooth and nail against integration is a far worse crime. But baseball punishments are generally doled out in terms of how badly they impact baseball, not society. Failing a steroids test will generally get you a longer ban than hitting your wife.



John A. Jan 12, 5:56am

@Paul S. Some people will think it must not be SO bad to throw a World Series, if you can still be given baseball's highest honor afterward.

That might seem simplistic, yet given what I've seen of history, I can't see how it won't happen.



Paul S. 13h ago

@John A. I don't think not making it into the Hall of Fame would really enter into someone's calculus when deciding whether or not to throw the World Series.

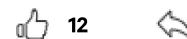


Bob W. Jan 11, 1:05pm

Another great story, thanks so much. Of all the possible 'crimes' against baseball I can't think of anything more egregious than purposefully throwing the World Series, and 100 years shouldn't change that. So no, I don't think Jackson should be in.

I have a question - I haven't been to the HOF, is there a section there that addresses the Black Sox scandal? If there is then that should be enough.

BTW I have a 'tie' to the Black Sox - I used to live in the same farmhouse as Eddie Cicotte in New Hudson MI. After he was banned he went back home to New Hudson, worked at Ford and died in Livonia MI in 1969

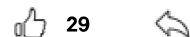


Jonathan S. Jan 11, 1:39pm

@ Bob W. Yes there is a Black Sox exhibit in the HOF. Joe Jackson is in the HOF. He does not have a bust.

He committed the worst sin of all - throwing the WS for money. His lifetime expulsion and HOF exclusion have served as a caution for future players tempted to do this.

I am not swayed by Joe's argument. To me Jackson and Rose are the two that should never get in. Their sins are mortal they attack the very heart of the game. Steroids are a venal sin, bad but not literally subverting the game itself.



John M. Jan 11, 2:55pm

It's been said above, but I think excluding whole races is worse than what Jackson did.



Thomas M. Jan 11, 3:05pm

@John M. There is no MLB if the games are not on the level. What Landis did was reprehensible, but what Jackson and the Sox did could literally kill MLB if not met with the most severe of penalties.



Jim M. Jan 11, 3:18pm

Yes, there is. In fact, the HOF museum shows the movie Eight Men Out periodically (at least the used to).



Andrew M. Jan 11, 3:57pm

@Bob W. I just saw a photo of Juan Marichal hitting John Roseboro with a bat.

So yes, there are things more egregious.



Stephen K B. Jan 11, 4:21pm

I was going to ask the same thing. I think the 1919 Sox team belongs there because of the story. But Joe, as great as he was, doesn't get a plaque. I do think Rose gets in as a player with specific mention that he's not there as a manager because he bet on baseball as a manager. Unless he bet as a player (can't remember if he bet as a player/manager).



Thomas M. Jan 11, 4:34pm

@Andrew M. For MLB, Marichal hitting Roseboro with a bat that is not even close to being as egregious as throwing a World Series game.



Andrew M. Jan 11, 5:26pm

@Thomas M. That's interesting. Physical assault isn't egregious as throwing a World Series game.



Neal T. Jan 11, 6:06pm

@Jonathan S. No, Jackson isn't in the HOF ... he's in the Baseball Museum. That the two institutions are housed together in Cooperstown seems to confuse and confound many of us.



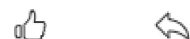
Thomas M. Jan 11, 6:21pm

@Andrew M. There are fights in baseball all the time. Marichal should have been arrested for assault, but it does not threaten MLB in the same way at all. If fans can't trust that the participants of a game are trying to win, you threaten the existence of MLB.



Patrick H. Jan 11, 6:22pm

Totally disagree. I'd explain why but I don't think you'd get it.



Patrick H. Jan 11, 6:23pm

Yes. But what does that have to do with anyone getting into the HOF?



Jewel B. Jan 11, 6:27pm

@Andrew M. Not in the bigger picture, no. Is throwing at a player worse than throwing a World Series game? Is charging the mound worse than a throwing a World Series game? Is Rougned Odor smashing Jose Bautista in the face worse than throwing a World Series game?



Andrew M. Jan 11, 6:46pm

@Jewel B. Throwing at a player, charging the mound, Rougned Odor (now a favorite player of mine for punching Jose Bautista) is not worse than throwing a World Series game.

But if you can't see the difference between those things and taking a bat to someone...well, there's not much to argue here.



Mark L. Jan 11, 10:41pm

@Bob W. is cheating worse than excluding every non-white player?



John A. Jan 11, 11:09pm

@John M. But the guilt for excluding races cannot be strongly linked to any individual except Landis. If you have a petition or other action going to get Landis out of the Hall, I'll gladly sign on. But I will not use other true evils to gloss over the true evil Jackson did.



1



Jewel B. Jan 11, 11:34pm

@Andrew M. So it's okay to assault someone using a baseball or your fists...but not using a bat? You realize that a player was killed by (unintentionally) getting hit in the head with a baseball, right?

Also, we're definitely in agreement about Odor, lol. I didn't care one way or the other about Odor before that incident. Now I quietly cheer for him. I'm not proud of it, but it's true.



John T. 5h ago

@Bob W How bout throwing 95 mph at someones head or going in spikes high and snapping a tibia in half or worse wrecking a knee beyond repair? Intentional physical harm is way worse than violating “the honor of baseball” by trying to stick it to you owner who doesn’t give a damn about Joe Jackson the person.



Nathan J. Jan 11, 1:25pm

The sentence has been served. Plus the player is not going to directly benefit financially from induction which is why the HOF and MLB fussed with the rules regarding Pete Rose. If that doofus had just kept his mouth shut he would have been inducted already. But jawing about how you are going to get into the HOF and then make a killing with a book and pushing stuff on cable TV did not help.

Anyway, Jackson did enough to be inducted as a player.



John A. Jan 11, 3:36pm

@Nathan J. So, Nathan ... How do you feel about Confederate statues?

And ... If you think the passage of time removes the reason for excluding Jackson specifically, are there any offenses you can think of that would not apply to?

Suppose Hal Chase had been a HOF-caliber player.

By most accounts, he was the most corrupt player in MLB history, perhaps the leading figure in the frequent game-fixing of that era -- and there's circumstantial evidence of that in his teams' records. Bill James said something like, I can't imagine that he ever really HELPED a team.

Would sins on that level move you to keep a ban in place forever?

Just curious.



John B. Jan 11, 6:24pm

By all means, let’s bring confederate statues into a baseball discussion. Add a “just like the nazis” to your next comment and you’ll have covered all the bases.



John A. Jan 11, 6:42pm

@John B. I was not bringing politics into the discussion. I think it's a valid analogy.



Nathan J. Jan 11, 8:22pm

@John A. I do not. I saw that query earlier and was taken aback on how after years of being a staunch "no 1919 crowd in the HOF" I offer a gesture of mercy and get branded as someone supporting traitors.

So no, I will not provide a response. I find the entire post both insulting and inflammatory

I understand you will likely brand me a 'snowflake' or similar. That's fine.

Good day



Paul S. Jan 11, 8:49pm

@John A. I'll take a swing at this. I think there is an analogy here, but a distinction you're missing.

I think all Confederate Statues should be torn down. It's unconscionable that people have to walk by symbols of oppression, especially of oppression of their ancestors. That said, if there's a Civil War museum, I have no problem with it housing confederate memorabilia and/or statues as I think it's important to educate about our history and how hate has been glorified long past the end of the civil war.

Joe Jackson being in the HOF is analogous to the civil war museum. To me, the HOF is a museum of baseball's history to help us learn of the greats of years past. It's incomplete without Jackson. My solution to the PED guys, Jackson, and Rose is to induct them when they're dead. They receive no glory, baseball's history is better told.

Also, so far as I know, Jackson didn't oppress anyone.



Jon A. Jan 11, 11:15pm

@Nathan J. I'm sorry that I didn't express myself more clearly. No branding was intended. It was meant as a sincere but rhetorical question.

I did not mean to insult you or impugn your character, so I'm sorry that it came across that way.



John A. Jan 11, 11:19pm

@Paul S. Throwing the WS is the most fundamental attack on the entire enterprise of professional baseball that I can imagine. So, you can trot out all the false equivalencies you like -- Jackson "didn't oppress anyone," etc. His action attacked the game at its very core, and I will never agree with bestowing the game's highest honor upon someone with no honor himself.



Paul S. Jan 11, 11:25pm

@John A. You didn't respond to the actual substance of my post, which took your question at face value and tried to respond in earnest.

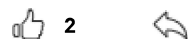
The last line was meant mostly as a joke, but also to say that destroying the very fabric of baseball pales in significance to supporting the confederacy.



John A. Jan 11, 11:46pm

@Paul S. I guess I didn't understand your point. The Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum (its official title) has plenty about Jackson in the "museum" space; there simply is no "incompleteness" in that regard. So, what would be gained by inducting him as a "Hall of Famer"?

I don't view HOF induction as deeming anyone to be laudable, nor do I doubt that some leading Confederates were "honorable" according to their own lights. But I would not have a "Hall of Fame" include anyone whose acts assailed the essence of the subject endeavor, be it democracy or competitive sports.



Jewel B. Jan 11, 11:48pm

@ Paul S. I agree with you 100% about the statues! The Confederate Statues should absolutely be torn down and put into a museum. In fact, I'm kind of surprised that this hasn't already been done. Imagine how many people would visit a Civil War Museum. It'd be a good place to learn about US history, warts and all.

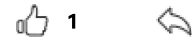
I do think that the HOF can still "tell the story of baseball" without glorifying or celebrating players, though. Joe Jackson and Pete Rose are already in the HOF and so their stories and positive contributions are being told. They're just not celebrated or honored like those who have been inducted.



Paul S. Jan 12, 2:12am

@John A. and Jewel B. I guess the difference is simply in how you view the Hall of Fame. To me, the Hall of Fame wing should enshrine all the best of the best. I don't think it at all sullies the hall to do that, and to me it's incomplete without Shoeless Joe and others. That's what's gained. My question: what is lost if he's enshrined?

I'd be curious as to how others define the Hall and what it should be. I don't know how you start to add caveats in any consistent, logical way. Maybe I'm just being daft though.



Jewel B. Jan 12, 2:51am

@Paul S. You're definitely not daft. You make some great points! To answer your question: what will be lost if Joe Jackson or Pete Rose or the PED guys is the principle of not rewarding cheaters. Maybe it's silly, maybe even a bit old-fashioned. But I just don't think it sets a good standard to glorify players who cheated the game and, to a degree, cheated the fans.

I don't mind the scoundrels and the jerks and everything else. Ty Cobb and Rogers Hornsby and Babe Ruth and Juan Marichal and, yeah, hopefully eventually Curt Schilling will all be represented. They were mean or bad people...but they never cheated and to me that's the line that should be drawn in the sand between those who are in and those who are out of the HOF.

Now I will say this: I would have ZERO issue of those who openly sought to rob others of opportunity - such as Kennesaw Landis and Cap Anson - had their plaques removed from the HOF. Known cheaters such as Gaylord Perry should be out, too. Kick them all out. I would never vote for Bonds/Clemens and company, but I'd have much less of a problem with them being in than the likes of Manny, Raffy, A-Rod, and Cano. In fact, I'd say the HOF should not allow players to even be on the ballot if they were suspended for cheating.



Jewel B. Jan 12, 2:53am

And before someone asks, I really don't know what to do with the Astros players who were stealing signs. Is Beltran's role enough to keep him out? I just don't know yet. Same with Altuve and anyone else from that team who eventually gets their 10 years in and becomes eligible for the HOF.



Paul S. Jan 12, 5:25am

@Jewel B. I think cheating is a logical line to draw. I struggle with two things when I go down that line of reasoning. 1. The HOF already has plenty of cheaters, like Gaylord Perry, which you note. I can't imagine how many pitchers have scuffed a ball or used pine tar. Given that they're not going to kick Perry and others out, I have a hard time drawing the line as you suggest. 2. I also have a hard time defining cheating. We all agree PEDs are cheating, but what do you do about greenies? Helping players recover from fatigue seems awfully similar to PEDs. I just struggle distinguishing between things enough to draw a firm line.

In the end, I'm not trying to persuade you to change your stance. I just think it's interesting the logic people apply to define what the HOF is and what things should keep players out.

Edited to add: Also you rightfully point out the Astros. What about the 1951 Giants who employed sign stealing and win the World Series. Should all of them be kicked out? That seems wrong to me, but if that's the case we have to figure out what separates their cheating from other cheating.



ROBERT S. Jan 11, 1:27pm

Here is a link to Jackson's grand jury testimony:
www.baseball-almanac.com/articles/joejackson.shtml

It's hard to understand how he could later claimed his innocence after reading this, but somehow I still feel sorry for the guy.



Ray C. Jan 11, 6:01pm

@ROBERT S. Haven't you seen the news lately?



Bill I. Jan 11, 1:30pm



Thanks for an interesting article—I vaguely knew that Jackson was illiterate but do not remember reading about his unhappiness playing in the “North”. I’m still pretty sure that I am against him being in the HOF but he’s an interesting character on many levels. More than I had realized.

 5 

Jackson G. Jan 11, 1:33pm



Shadow 12. Mark McGwire (1986-2001) – Typically, I’m not a fan of one dimensional sluggers, at least relative to the average fan. And McGwire has all the flaws of the archetype – bad glove, bad baserunning, poor contact hitting. He also had a career on the shorter side and battled with injuries throughout. And he was a power hitter in one of the easiest times to hit home runs. This is all to say, there are a lot of issues with McGwire’s career that I’m concerned with.

But when he was at bat, he was simply the most threatening power hitter the game has ever seen. From 1996-1999, he destroyed the ball while getting on base at a good clip as well. That sort of offensive peak kind of makes all the flaws fade away. I consider Willie McCovey to be the ideal player of this archetype, and even he didn’t have a peak like that. McGwire was a specialist, but the most valuable specialty is hitting home runs. He hit enough to be a Hall of Famer in my book.

 15 

Michael P. Jan 11, 1:42pm

This is the best story I've ever read about Joe Jackson. I'm an older man today, and growling up in Chicago, my uncle told me stories about Jackson when he was with the white Sox.. My uncle was born in 1893, so he was old enough to see Jackson, Cobb, Ruth etc. He was also a professional soft ball player-- they played 18" softball in Chicago in those days--for so much betting money that major leaguers played with them in their off seasons. Of all the players he'd seen play, uncle said Jackson was by far the best. Surprisingly, he thought Tris Speaker wasn't far behind. Thanks for writing this great story!

 47 

Chris M. Jan 11, 2:05pm

Among 100s of great articles you’ve written. I enjoyed this one the most. Thank you.

 3 

Paul C. Jan 11, 2:10pm

Your best article yet.
Say it is so, Joe.



David F. Jan 11, 2:13pm

I get tired of the Jackson/Rose debate. Change the language in baseball's rule against gambling, maybe that the guilty can never PLAY or MANAGE again. Problem solved. There are/were no rules against steroids, greenies, coke, being a racist but there is a clear rule about gambling. Just soften the rule.



Davis R. Jan 11, 2:30pm

@David F. I think one of the problems here that you're not mentioning is that players take PEDs to gain advantages to help them win games ... Jackson admitted to "helping" his team lose games. I think this is not a soft difference ... perhaps others disagree...?



Keith A. Jan 11, 2:39pm

That is what the rule is. Banned from baseball means you can never play or manage again. The Hall of Fame has a separate rule that prevents banned players from induction.



Joe H. Jan 11, 6:08pm


The HOF's rule is that any player on MLB's permanently ineligible list is ineligible for induction. But this isn't a longstanding rule, having only been put in place so that voters didn't have to agonize over voting for Pete Rose.



Tyler B. Jan 11, 2:20pm

Probably my favorite entry so far in this series, what a wonderful read today.

I'm a big believer that "banned for life" means "for life" and not "for ever", so with Joe Jackson dead, he should be in. Similarly, Pete Rose should be elected posthumously, once he's no longer with us.

 24 



Doug B. Jan 11, 2:23pm

Interesting thought

 3 


Paul K. Jan 11, 3:50pm

@Tyler B. I don't much care either way, but worth noting that Rose's ban is not "for life," it's "permanent ineligibility."

 13 

Adam M. Jan 12, 12:10am

@Paul K. This. "banned for life" is incorrect. I wish people would stop saying that.

 1 

Maffy L. Jan 11, 2:21pm

Joe Jackson didn't fix the World Series.

"But the evidence that he did is overwhelming, what proof do you have that says otherwise?"

He said he didn't.

"His word alone is surely the weakest type of evidence!"

Wrong. He hit over .400 six times in his Career that means he's right all the time.

Neal T. Jan 11, 6:15pm

@Maffy L. No, Jackson didn't fix the 1919 World Series. The gangsters did ... and paid Jackson, Cioatta et al. to carry out their fix

Cicotte, et al. to carry out their fix.

As for Jackson saying he didn't do it, he *testified* (under oath) that he did. The latter carries greater weight IMHO.



Maffy L. 23h ago

@Neal T. He later said he didn't. That supersedes whatever "testimony" he provided before a court whose authority I don't recognize. I only recognize the authority of high batting averages.



Glenn H. Jan 11, 2:26pm

Thanks Joe. Excellent read.



Charlie H. Jan 11, 2:27pm

I still don't understand why he changed his mind about playing in the majors after the trade to Cleveland. Also, did the gamblers come up with the money or not? At first they didn't so the White Sox decided to try to win, then they did?



Chris H. Jan 11, 3:45pm

@Charlie H. A good question. It is possible - I am totally speculating here - that Cleveland was a more welcoming place than Philadelphia. It had about 1/3 as many people in 1910 (560,000 vs 1.5 million). And - I say this as a native Ohioan - a southerner may not have stood out so much or have been picked on. The midwest is perhaps more like the south than an east coast city is. Or it's possible he got home and decided he liked the major league money after all.



James W. Jan 11, 2:30pm

Joe: There's a couple of lines in a film at the Hall Of Fame (at least in my memory) that go something

like: How do ballplayers play baseball that well? Shucks, playing ball ain't nothing if you're a ballplayer.

Writing ain't nothing if you're a writer. Thanks for the piece. I always enjoy you work.



Bob P. Jan 11, 2:38pm

Enjoyed the article. I have been a fanatic of our National Past Time for seventy years. Growing up and playing in mill villages, in the South, was special. My personal memories of these times are cherished.

IMHO Shoeless Joe is HOF worthy. Baseball is baseball. I want the best baseball players enshrined @ Cooperstown. Rest assured there are plenty of scoundrels in the Club of 333.

Thanks Mr. Posnanski.



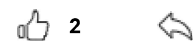
Alex W. Jan 11, 2:38pm

He took money to throw the World Series. Nothing else matters. Not a Hall of Famer.



Jim P. Jan 11, 2:40pm

Wow. Best one yet, Joe.



Bernie P. Jan 11, 2:42pm

Joe, you need to write this as a screenplay. It's a great story. It forces people to look beyond the traditional narrative. I love it.



J PAUL H. Jan 11, 2:47pm

I don't understand why Shoeless is eligible for this list? I thought the only players who would be on the list are those that are eligible now. Hence Puigle isn't eligible but McGwire is. So I guess this means that

list are those that are eligible now. Hence Pujols isn't eligible, but McGwire is. So I guess this means that Pete Rose is eligible for the Outsiders list, too?



Adam M. Jan 12, 3:09am

@J PAUL H. The list is the 100 best players not currently in the hall of fame. I don't recall anything in the series description about whether they are eligible or not. We could very well see Pete Rose on this list. (I'm guessing we won't but who knows)



Ronald H. Jan 11, 2:48pm

So there are 11 spots left in Joe's list. Possibly a tie or two so could be up to 13 players.

Who do you think they'll be, without worrying about the order.

These are not in the order that I think Joe will have, but in the order of my confidence that they'll make Joe's list somewhere.

1. Buck O'Neil
2. Barry Bonds- Joe has voted for him before
3. Roger Clemens - ditto
4. Dick Allen
5. Lou Whitaker
6. Dwight Evans
7. Dale Murphy
8. Minnie Minoso
9. Pete Rose
10. Scott Rolen
11. Carlos Beltran
12. Dave Steib

He could also put a negro league player or a real old timer 1800's to 1920. Have no suggestions for those.

Bonus wildcard upset special Duane Kuiper

Remember he said he was not including those who have not met the 5 year retirement rule yet- so no Ichiro, Beltre, Rodriguez on his list.

Your turn



Philip T. Jan 11, 3:14pm

@Ronald H. Thanks for compiling who's left to look forward to, but Stieb has already appeared (36) and Beltran isn't eligible yet (2023 I believe).



Alex B. Jan 11, 3:16pm

@Ronald H. He's already listed Steib.

Jim McCormick, a pitcher with 76.2 WAR, is a 19th century candidate. (Unless Joe has already entered him on the list, and I missed it.)



Craig W. Jan 11, 3:23pm

Beltran ineligible. Stieb already on the list, otherwise good list.

Curt Flood comes to mind because of his attempt to break the reserve clause.



Jeff K. Jan 11, 4:25pm

@Craig W. I think Curt Flood belongs in the Hall of Fame as a pioneer for that attempt to break the reserve clause. So does the man who finished what Flood started, Andy Messersmith.



John B. Jan 11, 6:28pm

He might have a pioneer list which Would have people like flood, Boras, Bill James, frank Jobe, etc



Jewel B. Jan 11, 6:34pm

@Ronald H. Excellent list, Ronald! I think instead of Beltran, though, he'll have Quisenberry. I'm not sure who he'll have instead of Steib - maybe Frank White?

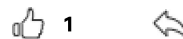


Jim P. Jan 11, 7:07pm

@Ronald H. Dave Stieb was #36. Beltran played through 2017 and isn't eligible yet.

The other ten are no question part of the final eleven.

I've been trying to think of the 11th for the last few minutes before posting this and I'm coming up empty...



Ronald H. Jan 11, 7:34pm

So I went back twice to check for prior entries and still missed Stieb. And missed Beltran's eligibility too. I had thought of Curt Flood and forgot to include him and like many others will now add him to the list.



Ronald H. Jan 11, 8:15pm

@Jewel. Quiz already made the list. At 67. That one I did catch.



Jewel B. Jan 11, 11:50pm

Ah well then we have a bit of a mystery, Ronald! It'll be fun to see whom Joe chooses, eh?



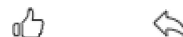
Paul S. 23h ago

No Gil Hodges? Got between 40% and 64% of vote in 14 of 15 years on ballot 50% or more 11 times. No one has ever gotten more HOF votes than he did.



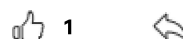
Simon J. 11h ago

@Ronald H. I wouldn't be surprised to see Bonds and Clemens together. They're in or out for the same reasons, really.



Murray S. Jan 11, 2:49pm

Fantastic essay—I learned a lot about him. Thanks, Joe!



Jared R. Jan 11, 2:49pm

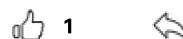
Guy makes \$75 a month for much of his career and gamblers offer him 5k to throw a few games? Family first.



John B. Jan 11, 2:50pm

He's a far more popular player now than if he hadn't cheated. It might have hurt his pocketbook but they don't write movies about Ty Cobb.

"Ty Cobb wanted to play...but none of us could stand the son-of-a-bitch when we were alive, so we told him to stick it!"



Alex B. Jan 11, 3:05pm

@John B. I mean, they did make a movie about Ty Cobb, but it was based on Stump's dishonest work, and so was a borderline hit-piece. So I'd say your broader point stands.



Rick S. Jan 12, 12:18am

Alex B: There's nothing borderline about Stump's book. It was character assassination.



Brent H. Jan 11, 2:51pm

Story I once read about Cobb and Jackson and that first season when Jackson hit .408 and Cobb .420. At some point in the season Cobb realized that his fellow Southerner was a threat to "his" batting title. Before that, Cobb had been friendly to Jackson, since he was a fellow Southerner playing with a bunch of Yankees (geographical Yankees, of course, not the ones who played in NY), but once he recognized that Jackson might actually beat him for the batting title, he stopped talking to him. Just gave him the cold shoulder. Jackson supposedly went into slump, fell far enough behind Cobb that Ty knew he couldn't catch and then suddenly Ty was his friend again. Don't know if it is true, but it kind of fits both of them.



7



Howard D. Jan 11, 3:01pm

I sure hope Lou Whitaker is on this list somewhere...



4



Samuel F. Jan 11, 3:07pm

One of your best articles Joe. I had never really looked at his stats before, but after doing so, it's quite clear that with the Black Sox series I'm pretty sure he's going to the Hall of Fame.



Frank F. Jan 11, 3:08pm

A sublime piece of writing. A great reminder of why I have loved baseball since I was 8 years old. Thank you, Joe. 🍷



3



Misha R. Jan 11, 3:17pm

This is the best entry in the best series I have ever read on the Athletic. Or, frankly, anywhere else.



Michael B. Jan 11, 3:25pm

Finely crafted story telling, Joe. I vote aye on his admission, along with Pete Rose.



Samuel S. Jan 11, 3:32pm

Love these articles! There is just one name that as the list creeps closer to one that I am pretty sure was left off, but shouldn't have been, Jason Kendall. One of 8 catchers with 2000 hits.



Louis C. Jan 11, 3:36pm

So here's the article I want to see.... A roster of "Best Players Not To Be In the HOF" v. "Worst Players Who Are In the HOF". My guess is that the Outsiders win that game quite handily.



Davis R. Jan 11, 6:19pm

@Louis C. ...unless Morris pitches for the Worst and goes all 1991 Game 7 on the Bests...



Craig W. Jan 11, 7:16pm

@Davis R. of course, he could be facing playoff Curt Schilling for the Bests. Sounds like a good battle unless Morris regresses to 1992 Game 5.



Mark B. Jan 11, 10:12pm

@Louis C. John A. covered this in a previous comment section in great detail. Can't remember where exactly. In fact, it's stopped being beneficial before you got the 100th, seems like it was in the 70s or so.



Steven W. Jan 11, 3:39pm

I view myself as one that would like to see the great immortalized. Blemishes should be considered, but not a sole disqualifier. To me, Joe Jackson is a legend of the game and a folk hero of sorts and for that should be in. I'd have him in. I'd have Rose in. And I'd have Bonds and Clemens in.



Bill G. Jan 11, 3:46pm

His sentence was a lifetime ban from baseball. His life is over. His ban should be over. At the very least, put Joe on the ballot and let's see if he gets the necessary votes. If he does, he's in; if not, he's out.



Ronald H. Jan 11, 8:21pm

@ Bill G. Was it a lifetime ban or permanent ban. For Rose, it's permanent. Death doesn't change anything. I think the same is true for Jackson- permanent, not lifetime. In which case neither will ever get in unless they change the sentence.



Chris H. Jan 11, 3:49pm

This is really a wonderful piece of writing. Joe Jackson is a compelling figure, and the story is beautiful, heartbreaking, archetypal.

And that said, I can't see giving him a plaque at Cooperstown. Even if you threw out the character clause entirely, it seems to me looking past a player who intentionally threw games is a pretty bright line to cross.

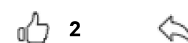


Mike D. Jan 11, 3:54pm

Ah, yes. Eventually we'd get to the O.G. moral conundrum of Baseball Hall of Fame voting. And for what it's worth, Jackson is a big part of the reason I came around on the steroid guys too. The game of baseball has never been "perfect," no matter how much we want it to be. The owners were exploiting the players as cheap labor for years (as Joe points out in this article), the game at its highest level has a reprehensible history of racism that sure didn't end just because Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier, and we know that a lot of the stars of the game weren't choirboys themselves (like, you know...Ty Cobb, another guy who plays a key supporting role in this very article). And unlike Bonds, Clemens, and a whole host of other guys who played in an era where PEDs were commonplace, when it comes to Joe Jackson, there is no "did he or didn't he" debate at all: he took money to throw the 1919 World Series. We know he did, because he admitted as much, and the only question is whether it should keep him out of the hall.

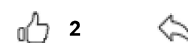
And I don't think it should. I'm not even trying to rationalize what he did by arguing that owners like Somers and Comiskey exploited him, because the owners did that to every player back then, and only a few of them have been branded forever for committing a mortal sin against baseball in response. I'm just saying that the only way to truly acknowledge the history of this game - to "tell the story" of baseball, as many have mentioned in these very comments - is to accept that some of the people who are indeed worthy of enshrinement in the Hall of Fame have committed these sins. We enshrine them, we make sure their plaque states exactly what they did, and we no longer hide from the past.

Having said that, there is, of course, still a "line in the sand" when someone's character impacts their HOF eligibility. Sinning against the game of baseball, such as gambling on the sport or using PEDs? You can still be enshrined on the basis of your playing record, because we can fully tell YOUR story on a plaque as well. Sinning against humanity, like committing an actual high crime as opposed to cheating on a game? Now we're in the gray area. Now we're talking about why Omar Vizquel is (rightly) in danger of falling off the ballot this year, and now we're talking about why I'm not arguing that Pete Rose belongs in the Hall now...but I was about four years ago. Still, that's certainly a topic for an upcoming article in this list, I'm sure.



Ronald H. Jan 11, 8:30pm

@ Mike D. Vizquel is NOT falling off the ballot this year. Even if none of the remaining votes to come in name him, he'll end up at about the 10% level. He's already got 52 votes. What his actions will do is cause him to lose steam, probably regress in % from last year and maybe fall off the ballot in future years. I'd guess he stays on, but never comes close to 75% when his 10 year run is done, which looked pretty likely that he'd achieve a couple of years ago.



Jewel B. Jan 12, 2:59am

@Ronald H. I don't think Vizquel will ever go down below 20% and probably not even lower than 30%. He'll definitely lose votes (as we're seeing) but I agree that he's likely never in danger of falling off the ballot entirely. It'll be really interesting to watch how all of this unfolds. Personally, I've never thought he was a HOFer anyway based on his career numbers, but I think it's ridiculous that these accusations are costing him votes. He was a clean player who played the game the right way for 20+ years - what do these accusations have to do with what he did on the field?



Jewel B. Jan 12, 3:00am

I also hate the fact that this story about Vizquel broke in December - right when HOF ballots were being submitted. It's such an obvious ploy to hurt Vizquel's HOF chances that it's pretty shameless.



Chad S. Jan 11, 4:05pm

A fine article but completely irrelevant. As stated in your introduction, Joe, you're counting down the top100 eligible players who aren't in the Hall of Fame. I'm pretty sure that his ban makes Shoeless Joe ineligible and therefore he shouldn't be on this list.



Ronald H. Jan 11, 8:33pm

@ Chad S. Technically you are correct. But I think Joe was thinking more along the lines of they've been retired for the required 5 years. Same issue will apply when Rose comes up.



Mark T. Jan 11, 4:13pm

A great article as usual, but I could never vote him into the Hall. It promotes the glories of the sport, and throwing games is the polar opposite. He'll have to settle for being remembered in other forums.



Stephen K B. Jan 11, 4:21pm

This is my favourite entry in this series. Well done.



Dave W. Jan 11, 4:31pm

It strikes me as funny that there are those who would put Jackson, Rose and the steroid crew in the hall but not Schilling.



2



Michael D. Jan 11, 5:00pm

If you mean BBWAA members, they've never been able to vote yes or no on Jackson or Rose. I'm not sure either would be elected if they appeared on the ballot.



Marc K. Jan 11, 5:10pm

@Dave W. I get your point, but it could be that Bonds, Clemens, Rose and Jackson were way better baseball players than Schilling, and that Schilling is being punished for his abhorrent behavior because he is kinda borderline and that tips the scales for some. If they put in Palmeiro but not Schilling, you win!



1



Jewel B. Jan 11, 6:37pm

@Marc K. Every single eligible pitcher with 3,000 strikeouts (except Clemens, of course) is in. Schilling finished 2nd in Cy Young voting 3 times. He has a legendary post-season career. So I'm not sure how Schilling is considered "borderline." I think diminishing his career is the only real foothold that people who simply don't like him have in justifying their exclusion of him without admitting their distaste for him.



1



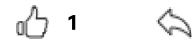
Ben T. Jan 11, 4:38pm

I'm turning over in my head who specifically Shoeless Joe should be if Ruth is Elvis. Maybe Chuck Berry for sheer talent and impact, but Big Mama Thornton somehow feels like a better fit.



Chris H. Jan 11, 5:41pm

Fats Domino?



Jewel B. Jan 11, 6:40pm

@Ben T. I was struck by that line, too, Ben. The problem with Chuck Berry is that he wasn't famous before Elvis started recording. I think we'd have to go a little further back. Maybe Robert Johnson or Elmore James or possibly a group like the Soul Stirrers.



Ben T. Jan 11, 7:05pm

@Jewel B. Good point. I guess that's why Thornton felt right to me, since Elvis copied her "Hound Dog." Did he know Johnson or Leonard? I thought they were a bigger influence on later rock.



Jewel B. Jan 11, 11:58pm

@Ben T. That's the problem: we don't know who Elvis actually listened to and/or was influenced by before he started recording. Maybe an Elvis fan would know more? Crap I might have to research this now because it's piquing my curiosity, lol.

I do know that Robert Johnson heavily influenced Eric Clapton and that Elmore James heavily influenced the Beatles, especially John Lennon. A group like the Soul Stirrers (where Sam Cooke got his start) seems likely to have caught the ear of Elvis due to his fondness for gospel. And Soul Stirrers were popular enough to have some radio play, especially in the South. But I have no direct link from Elvis to the Soul Stirrers, so who knows.



Jewel B. Jan 11, 11:59pm

BTW. one of Stevie Nicks' hotel aliases was "Ben T. Fender" so your name made me chuckle

a bit. SRV was something else, man.



John A. Jan 11, 4:42pm

“If you believe the Hall of Fame is, instead, an honor meant for those great players who are, above all else, a credit to the game, then no, you can’t vote for him.”

That wording seems to imply that those (like me) who support the permanent ban on Jackson’s induction use some sort of lofty standard about being “a credit to the game.”

But my standard is NOT that a player must have an affirmative case as “a CREDIT to the game” -- only that he not be a clear DIScredit to the game.

Jackson took money to throw the World Series.

And since his complicity surely smoothed the way for others to go along, what he actually did on the field in those games is completely irrelevant.

His initial consent furthered the fix, and the fix did occur; that is his guilt.

To pick a random analogy (ahem):

If you help to plan and give direct impetus to an illegal insurrection, failing to show up for the actual fight wouldn’t make you innocent.

The Hall of Fame is a deeply flawed institution, with many problematic inductees.

I would support evicting several, if that was possible.

But since (a) there is no process for such eviction, and (b) none so far as I know were complicit in violating at the ultimate level the fundamental assumption that necessarily underlies the whole enterprise -- that players play TO WIN -- other “character” issues of existing HOFers seem irrelevant to the Jackson question.

To those who would induct Jackson now simply because he’s dead and none connected with him will benefit thereby, I ask --

How does inducting him improve or benefit anything?

The Hall of Fame can amply encompass the history of MLB without adding a bust of Jackson. Keeping him unenshrined does not keep anyone from knowing that he was one of the greatest players; it just upholds the worthy principle that those permanently banned from MLB participation should not be given the game’s highest honor, even posthumously.

I’m down with that, and always will be.

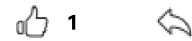


15



Ronald H. Jan 11, 8:40pm

@John A. Great post. Usually your arguments are supported by the wonderful "in context" statistics you grace us with. This was just a masterful piece of writing with nary a statistic around. I was somewhat on the fence. No more.



Kevin A. Jan 11, 4:49pm

It's almost a sad irony that Comiskey is in the Hall, but Jackson is not. I personally think it's past time for him to be in the Hall. Baseball was a totally different business back in those days. While players did better than the average person with respect to salary, they didn't do a whole lot better. Was it right that he agreed to take the money? No. Do I personally think he actually did anything to cost the White Sox or that was in any way a detriment to his team in that series? No. I think looking at his batting record in the World Series and deriving that he "threw" any games is a stretch...and a very big one. Many of his at bats were leading off an inning and he reached base several times leading off an inning. Not exactly what you would expect from someone throwing a Series. And he did have one hit with runners on in game 2. Eddie Collins was 1 out of 14 in the first 4 games the White Sox lost in that Series. Should we also deduce that he helped throw the Series? There is a strong likelihood that many more players than the Black Sox threw games in those days and virtually none of them were ever punished for it. On another note, everything I had read earlier about Jackson was that his middle name was Jefferson. But baseball-reference.com has it Walker you have it in this article. Do you know the story behind that?



John B. Jan 11, 6:32pm

Someone will be saying the same about Jim Crane and Beltran in 100 years



Mariam T. Jan 12, 2:17am

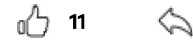
Good points: The evidence is a whole lot more complicated than Joe P. makes it. Took the money, yes; threw the games, not necessarily. Everyone was trying to protect themselves when the you-know-what hit the fan.



Michael D. Jan 11, 4:50pm

In the end, he took the money and in the process helped enable the scandal. He was a product of the times as there's evidence other players took money from gamblers to throw games during and prior to 1919. In that sense, there's a correlation to the PED users who knew other players were taking PEDs and

believed MLB ignoring it was basically giving approval. "We love the 1998 HR race so we'll look the other way!" The comparison falls apart there. PED users were trying to improve their performances and win games. The 1919 White Sox were trying to lose games. A great hitter. Overall seems to be a good man beyond this issue. Doesn't matter. He took the money. His exclusion from HOF induction is more important than his inclusion.



John A. Jan 11, 4:58pm

@Michael D. Your excellent conclusion says more in a mere dozen words than everything I've ever read or written on this topic:

"His exclusion from HOF induction is more important than his inclusion."

Simple cost-benefit analysis:

The benefits are minuscule, and the costs potentially catastrophic.



Michael D. Jan 11, 5:16pm

It's not an easy conclusion for me because I WANT to find a reason for his induction. I simply can't get there.



John A. Jan 11, 4:55pm

"My own view is Joe Jackson is an integral part of baseball history. There are others I'd put in first. But, eventually, yes, I would get to Shoeless Joe."

Joe, you're a great writer ... but a poor logician.

HOF enshrinement has never been about being "an integral part of baseball history."

As you well know, the "Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum" is a bicameral institution -- there is the history part, and the enshrinement part. They are separate.

Jackson's story is told in the HOF, as it should be.

But nothing in the nature of the HOF requires that persons be ENSHRINED just for being integral to baseball history.

Charles Comiskey, for instance, is indisputably "an integral part of baseball history" -- and to a far greater extent than Jackson.

But I wouldn't have enshrined Comiskey for all the money in the world.

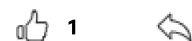
I mean, hell -- Benedict Arnold, Robert E. Lee and the Ku Klux Klan are "integral" to U.S. history. But I ain't supporting any busts or statues of them.



Jewel B. Jan 12, 12:03am

@John A. I don't know if Robert E. Lee deserves to be in that group. He strongly considered fighting for the Union before ultimately going with the Confederates. It's been widely reported that Robert E. Lee was respected by many in the North, even if they disagreed with which side he was on.

Perhaps Jefferson Davis, who was a real piece of work, would fit better in your trio of dishonor.



John A. Jan 12, 1:43am

@Jewel B. Yes, I probably should use Jeff Davis in examples, over Lee.

But, y'know ... Like Lee, I strongly considered *not* undertaking each of my worst sins ... ultimately, we're judged by actions.

To name Lee (or Davis) is not to claim that they were "more evil" than others involved in that endeavor, but simply that they were leaders. And Lee's perceived nobility no doubt strengthened and lengthened the Confederates' commitment to a wrongheaded cause -- much like Shoeless Joe's stardom made it easier for weak teammates to join him on the road to perdition.



Kent A. Jan 11, 5:03pm

Buck Weaver as well.



Daniel C. Jan 11, 5:10pm

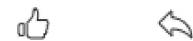
There are a few baseball immortals - like Shoeless Joe and Pete Rose - who everyone knows belong in the hall for their play, and everyone knows why they're kept out.

If the job of the hall is to tell the story of baseball, it tells their story best by keeping them out. It might seem like an unkindness, but I don't think it is. Shoeless Joe's punishment allows him to receive private sympathy, and even loyalty, that he wouldn't receive in the absence of that ongoing official censure.



Paul S. Jan 11, 9:05pm

@Daniel C. I don't think I agree with education by omission. I have twin 4 year olds. Someday (hopefully soon), I will take them to Cooperstown. It would be far easier to tell them the story of baseball if there were a Rose plaque to help out with all the pertinent detail of his life and career.



Ronald H. Jan 12, 6:57am

@Paul C. You can get as much information on Rose and his life without a plaque. To say that it would be easier to educate them with a plaque is nonsense.



Chris H. 17h ago

@Paul S. It will equally be a good lesson for your children to tell them, in front of an exhibit where Rose is featured, "Here is Pete Rose. He broke important rules, and for that reason when we go look at the plaques of the most celebrated players, we won't find one for him."



Norman S. Jan 11, 5:18pm

One forgets how different the South was from the rest of the country in the early years of the 20th century. Jackson was an extreme case but Cobb suffered from similar insecurity, and to some extent never really got over it. After WWII, that began to change and TV accelerated the process a great deal. Interestingly, a lot of early TV glorified Southern hicks (Beverly Hillbillies, Gomer Pyle, etc.)

Most of the Black Sox were not Southerners. Gandil, the ringleader, was a Californian. Cicotte was from Michigan, Felsch from Wisconsin. The only one who was similar to Jackson was Williams. But "Eight Men Out" points out that one of the things that helped make the plot to throw the Series get off the ground was the deep divide between those who eventually went ahead with the fix and those who didn't. The divide existed BEFORE the fix was proposed and seems likely to have mainly centered on the sophistication and education of one group of the players vs. the others. AFTER the fix, the team was

even more bitterly divided.

So one group which felt aggrieved by the other on what was mostly a cultural level discarded the fundamental ethics of sports, and felt just as righteous in the year that followed as before they cheated their teammates out of a legitimate shot at a winner's share.

Does anyone else find this familiar today?



Max H. Jan 11, 5:20pm

I love the story. Thanks, Joe! I think he deserved the Hall of Fame. An amazing baseball talent.



Don W. Jan 11, 5:28pm

A great story would be how MLB teams of the early 1900s found players far from the northeast where most of the original 16 teams were located. Equally fascinating is the fact that Jackson and Cobb grew up less than 70 miles apart. Today you can drive from Greenville to Royston, Ga on I-85 in a little over an hour. Imagine how remote those places must have been then.

BTW - Greenville has honored Jackson with a statue in its beautiful downtown West End area less only a few blocks from the minor league park that anchors the scenic area of what once was an old textile town, now a center of international commerce.



Jim B. Jan 11, 5:31pm

James M.

As a life-log Chicago WS fan I've always wanted to find a reason for including Joe in the HOF. After reading the details regarding his "strategic" at bats in the WS I now feel the exclusion is warranted. I believe that he was as skilled as anyone with a bat and could manipulate those AB's with runners in scoring position, therefore affecting the outcome. Which indicates to me that the "fix" was in and he deserves his fate.



Tim S. Jan 11, 5:35pm

serious question. How did Babe Ruth copy Jackson's swing: Given that Ruth grew up in an industrial school for boys, he wasn't taking the train to DC to watch the Senators play the Indians or the White Sox. And I'm pretty sure there weren't newsreel in the 1910's. I suspect that the first time Ruth saw Jackson swing was when the Red Sox played the Indians in Ruth's rookie year of 1914.

It was a nice thing for Ruth to say, but I suspect it's not real accurate. But is it possible he did copy his swing? Joe??



John A. Jan 11, 7:00pm

@Tim S. I don't know that Ruth DID copy Jackson's swing.

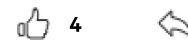
But it seems plausible that a 19-year-old Ruth was still in the process of forming "his swing" when he first witnessed Jackson in the big leagues in 1914.

Ruth was a pitcher in his first pro season, who had hit .231 in the minors that year (from what stats we have), and went 2 for 10 with Boston.

Jackson was then a superstar who'd batted .393 over the prior 3 years, while leading MLB in extra-base hits and total bases.

Ruth wanted to be a slugger, and Jackson was best example he would have seen that year.

So I wouldn't be *surprised* if Ruth really did copy Jackson's swing.



Brady F. Jan 11, 5:44pm

I've really enjoyed this series, Joe. Thanks for the wonderful writing!!



Jack C. Jan 11, 5:45pm

As he does in most stories Joe did another great job with Mr. Joe Jackson.

Mr. Jackson's life after 1921 may have been the happiest of all his years from his point of view.

Jack C.



Thomas A. Jan 11, 6:10pm

Thanks for the story, Joe. Thinking that Jackson regained some of that early happiness once he moved back to South Carolina makes me a little happier at a story I always thought ended very darkly.



JJOCIII Jan 11, 6:32pm

get this man in the hall



Michael G. Jan 11, 6:35pm

Great piece, and it goes to the heart of the pending argument as we get to Bonds and Clemens, and we had with others on this list--and, obviously, with Pete Rose. When it comes to Rose, I always think of something Jon Miller told an interviewer, and I realized he had to have gotten it from Joe Morgan or possibly, from his years with the Orioles, Jim Palmer and/or Brooks Robinson. Miller said the Hall of Fame without Rose is like those photos China puts out of the leaders where Mao would be in them when he was in favor and then "photoshopped" out--how do you deny his existence? But Miller added he thought it was that there were players who simply would refuse to attend the ceremony if Rose got in. And I think that's worth thinking about.



You Jan 11, 6:40pm

I thought you were going to make Jackson a victim, as so many of his supporters do. Kudos to you Mr Posnanski, for being truthful and revealing the real Shoeless Joe.

He was a criminal. Could hit the hell out of the baseball, sure. But a criminal all the same. Let's please stop making excuses and trying to point to his .375 batting average in that series as proof he was honest.

I'd put 500 other players in the Hall before a guy who nearly ruined the game.



2



Christopher M. Jan 11, 6:41pm

Considering all the very wicked people in the HOF (Landis included, a man who kept integration from happening sooner...talk about damaging the game), yes he belongs. And yes the Black Sox's should be mentioned on the plaque, because now 30 years on from Field of Dreams I do wonder how many kids even know it happened. I wish I could have seen him play.



Edward J. Jan 11, 6:58pm

Fantastic story Joe



Cr H. Jan 11, 7:17pm

This is why I pay for The Athletic.



1



Ted G. Jan 11, 7:23pm

Shoeless Joe belongs in the HOF.



John A. Jan 11, 7:31pm

Don't forget:

The 1919 fix also might have cost the 1920 White Sox another pennant.

They were red-hot (10-1), closing to a half-game behind with 3 to play, when the "Black Sox" were banned.

Those 3 games were with the mediocre Browns, against whom they were 13-6 to date.

Without the banished players -- three of their four best hitters, their starting SS, and two 20-game winners slated to start in that series -- they dropped 2 of 3, and finished 2 games behind.

If Landis's ban was justified -- and I think it was -- then their absence for that final series was a direct consequence of the WS fix, and must be held against the value of Jackson et al.

So, Jackson played on four teams that had a real shot at a championship ... and his corrupt action worked to sabotage TWO of them.

How can THAT player be a Hall of Famer?



2



Curtis C. Jan 11, 7:34pm

This was the best essay of this fantastic series. Thank you!



J B. Jan 11, 7:49pm

This is the best article of this series of 100. As always, Joe, thank you so much for all of this. It's just the best.



Jay A. Jan 11, 8:10pm

I'm with Bill James about Jackson. Sure, let him into Cooperstown. After you let in all the honest players, even the Moonlight Graham's and Mario Mendoza's. Then all the honest managers, coaches, GM's, umpires. Then, and only then, do you put Jackson in the Hall. Saying Jackson shouldn't be judged by those eight games is like saying John Wilkes Booth shouldn't be judged just by that one second that he pulled the trigger. Games were being thrown frequently at that time. And the Black Sox were throwing games in 1920, due to being blackmailed. Sorry Joe



2



Mike L. Jan 11, 8:11pm

No. He, like Rose, Clemens, Bonds, gets more publicity than the others of his age and time who did go in. Most people around baseball, including fans, know who he is, but Tris Speaker, Nap LaJoie, Sam Crawford and Harry Hooper barely get a nod of recognition. The Hall could create a back corner for great players who made bad choices and stick them all in. It would be the most popular corner in the Hall.



1



Bob B. Jan 11, 8:18pm

Joe, this story is a gem. If Shoeless Joe goes in, so does every other miscreant who has been held out for the sake of ethics. But what he a story he was in an amazing era of baseball.



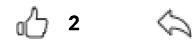
Warren Z. Jan 11, 8:28pm

Shoeless Joe had 12 hits and six runs batted in during a single World Series in 1919. Not too many guys have done that. To cherry-pick game situations and say he wasn't trying his best is ridiculous. What was he supposed to do, hit 1.000?

Jackson hit .375 in the 1919 series, with an OPS of .956.

In the 1917 series, which the White Sox won, he hit .304 with no homers and two RBI and an OPS of .638. The numbers don't back up your argument at all, especially when they are compared to those of Eddie Collins in the 1919 series.

With all this said, I don't think Shoeless Joe should be in. I also don't think Bonds, Clemens, Palmeiro, McGwire, etc., should be in either. But I do think that if the steroid crowd gets in, then Jackson should be in.



ROBERT S. Jan 12, 1:59am

@Warren Z. In addition to the numbers you listed, Joe hit the only HR in the 1919 WS, threw out a handful of runners, and did not make an error in 30 chances. However, he is clear in his grand jury testimony that he took the bribe, and said his wife cried when she found out what he had done. Then he denied it the rest of his life. He testified that he took the money, but played his best. If the White Sox had won, Jackson would probably be at the bottom of Lake Michigan in a pair of cement boots.



Michel L. Jan 11, 8:30pm

I think a lot of people would do right by Joe Jackson, much like Tom Stauch. Joe should be playing in the majors. Joe should be in the Hall.

Sounds to me like Joe didn't need the majors or the Hall to be happy. While his family cares, I don't think Joe would care one bit whether he was enshrined in Cooperstown or not.

For my part, both the romantic and the cynic in me would put him in the Hall. There are several great sinners who have already been enshrined and who will be enshrined.



Dick F. Jan 11, 8:31pm

In the movie "Eight Men Out," D.B. Sweeney does what is probably a closer-to-the-truth version of Jackson than Liotta did in "Field of Dreams."



James K. Jan 11, 8:40pm

I cannot say I agree that you should avoid voting for Curt Schilling but vote for Joe Jackson to enter the Hall of Fame. Especially since you rail against the Hall voting in players after their death.

But an amazing article per usual Joe, I can honestly say you greatly improve my fandom and I always look forward to the next piece.



Ronald H. Jan 11, 8:56pm

Near the beginning of his write up Joe referenced the fact that this story was an updated version of a story he did in one of his two prior attempts at the Baseball 100. Both of those were aborted before he finished. If I remember, version 1 around #31, version 2 at #66. There were many players in those two versions- maybe around 15? - that weren't in his final version. These stories are on the web. Plus many of the players who were on all three versions had different write ups, in whole or in part, that Joe did. If you enjoyed the Baseball 100, and were sorry to see it end, there is a fair amount more you can read. For those who enjoy Joe's writing, it is an unexpected gift.



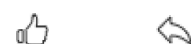
Veronica P. Jan 11, 9:24pm

If you take your kid to Cooperstown to introduce him to those who you offer up as examples of the best of baseball, do you really want him to admire those with lapsed ethics/integrity?



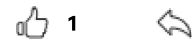
Matthew R. 21h ago

You mean a human being? I'm guessing a staggering percentage of the hall of famers would have all types of baggage if TMZ got started in 1900.



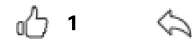
Veronica P. 21h ago

There's baggage and then there's a line you just don't cross. Shoeless Joe & Charlie Hustle crossed it.



Walter K. Jan 11, 9:57pm

Even by your lofty standards, this is an exceptionally well-written piece. Well done, Joe!



Mark L. Jan 11, 10:36pm

That Joe took a bribe when he was undoubtedly being underpaid by his scumbag boss is far, far less bad than the multiplicity of frankly evil things that Comiskey did, that Landis did, that so many other people who profited from the baseball toil of others did.

Was the SABR writer normally on the side of labour or management in his other writing? Is it possible he was trying to get a job with a front office and didn't want to insult any owner, even one as long dead as Comiskey? Why do you say "he was only as crooked as every other owner" as if that's a point in his favour?

Jackson should be in, and not only should Landis and Comiskey not be, their names ought to be purged from everything they touched. Like Landis and the BBWAA. Kick them out of the Hall, if we're all so desperate to right historical wrongs.



John A. Jan 11, 11:34pm

@Mark L. The question of whose actions were more "evil" is ultimately irrelevant.

The sins of Comiskey, Landis, etc. did not threaten to destroy the whole enterprise, but Jackson's sin did. Without widespread faith that games are contested by two sides trying to win, there is no MLB as we know it.

By all means, let's unenshrine Landis, Comiskey, Selig, Cap Anson, and others whose sins harmed multitudes. But to use their presence as an excuse to induct a player guilty of the supreme subversion of the game's first principle seems lunacy to me.



Jake L. Jan 11, 11:04pm

Hard pass for me. Third highest career average but never led the league because batting averages were so much higher. Even if he was Clyde Drexler to Cobb's Jordan (a great player playing in the shadow of the greatest), his career ended before he'd put together the kind of career numbers that put him over the top.

So, he's borderline without even addressing the elephant in the room: He cheated to lose. Baseball has always been kind to players who cheat to win, but cheating to lose is the line in the sand.



John A. Jan 12, 1:31am

@Jake L. Since Jackson played just 1,332 games, it's interesting to wonder if -- absent his ultimate sin -- his HOF credentials stack up to others with short careers.

My gut says his excellence more than overcomes the brevity, but let's take a look.

There are 7 modern HOFers within one season's worth of his games total, who lack the "excuse" of segregation, military service, illness or being a catcher:

1,283, Chick Hafey
 1,288, Frank Chance
 1,348, Hack Wilson
 1,438, Freddie Lindstrom
 1,455, Earl Combs
 1,472, Ralph Kiner
 1,483, Elmer Flick

All V.C. selections, and I think it's safe to say that Hafey, Wilson and Lindstrom would not get in by today's standards. The hard cases are:

-- Frank Chance: The "peerless leader" of the first modern dynasty, his Cubs from 1905-10 won 4 pennants, 2 WS, and 68% of all their games (best modern 6-year W%). He actually began as a catcher, but that doesn't address his short back-end career; just 6 years with 100+ games or 3+ WAR, the last at age 31.

Career: 135 OPS+; 46 WAR (2nd once, never 1st); 28 WAA.

Per 150 games: 5.3 WAR, 3.3 WAA.

-- Elmer Flick: Everyday star hitter for 10 straight years, but never on a pennant-winner; his absence most of 1908 likely cost Cleveland its best shot in deadball.

Career: 148 OPS+ (#29 among moderns with 5,000 PAs); 53 WAR; 30 WAA.

Per 150: 5.4 WAR, 3.0 WAA.

-- Earl Combs: Led off for Muderers' Row, a key man in 4 pennants, 3 WS titles, hit .350 in 4 WS with 17 runs in 16 games. On the flip side: just 9 full-time years, and his team won 3 of 4 pennants before he arrived and 3 straight titles after he left.

Career: 125 OPS+; 44 WAR; 21 WAA.

Per 150: 4.5 WAR, 2.2 WAA.

-- Ralph Kiner: Did lose 2+ pro years to WWII service, but was hardly a prospect before that, and was a rookie star at 23, so I grant no bonus credit. Not quite the "one-dimensional slugger" (hit over .300 three times, and drew a ton of walks), but a famously poor fielder. Nine full years and 2/3 of another; didn't "hang around" as a subpar player.

Career: 149 OPS+ (#26); 48 WAR; 24 WAA.

Per 150: 4.9 WAR, 2.4 WAA.

Now Shoeless Joe:

Just 9 full years, and barely 200 PAs outside of that. But in his 10-year prime he was #4 in WAR & WAA, behind only Pantheon members (and far ahead of #5).

Career: 170 OPS+ (#8); 62 WAR; 40 WAA (#51).

Per 150: 7.0 WAR, 4.5 WAA.

Compared to those 4 "legit" V.C. selections who had similarly short careers, Jackson's measurable performance is a clear cut above.

Those WAR and WAA rates are staggering: #11 and #14 among all moderns with 1,000 games. And while the rates would have come down had he played longer, his totals would no longer seem so scant.

So, I have no doubt that Jackson *would* be in the HOF, if eligible and not so grossly tainted.



Ronald H. Jan 12, 2:40am

@John A. I always appreciate how in an original comment or a reply you back up opinion with facts. And I learn a lot about baseball history. I must admit I don't know if I ever heard the name Elmer Flick- even though he's apparently in the HOF. Keep up the good work.



John A. Jan 12, 5:40am

@Ronald H. Glad to find a kindred factualist! 😊

There's an old story that a young Cobb was offered even-up for Flick, but Cleveland didn't like Cobb's fiery reputation. Dunno if it's true ... Would've been around 1906, before Cobb's big breakout. Flick, though still on top of his game, was 10 years older, and would be washed up within a couple years. The eternal story...



Donald M. Jan 12, 12:00am

have read more than once about strong suspicions that the Cubs threw the 2018 Series !



Richard S. Jan 12, 12:13am

One other sad thing about the Scandal is that it sucks all the life out of the 1919 World Series.

So no one ever gives any credit to Sox rookie Dickie Kerr, who tossed two complete games (19 innings total) for the Pale Hose, winning both with a 1.42 ERA.



Dennis E. Jan 12, 12:58am

Excellent, as usual, Joe. Thought provoking (as noted by the *currently* 188 comments. I loved the "All the King's Men" quote. If I had a favorite book, that'd probably be it. Thanks, as always!



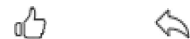
Dave F. Jan 12, 1:22am

Vote Joe into the HOF. His lifetime stats and what he had to put up with from the cheap owners are enough.



William V. Jan 12, 1:52am

Enjoyed article. Note that Shoeless Joe died at 64, not 63, according to Wikipedia.



Tom M. Jan 12, 2:32am

Socks went to get Shoeless Joe. You can't make this stuff up.



Eric C. Jan 12, 3:35am

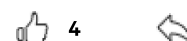
I've gone back and forth regarding Jackson and the Hall of Fame. Gambling was such a huge thing in baseball, as well as other sports, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Until the Black Sox Scandal (they received that moniker because Comiskey wouldn't pay for the team's laundry so their uniforms were dirty for days on end), players like Hal Chase were given slaps on the wrist for throwing games. It's believed by many historians, but unproven, that previous World Series were thrown as well. In regards to this particular scandal, six of the players were especially complicit. Buck Weaver knew about the scheme but didn't tell a soul. Jackson supposedly took the money, but tried to give it to Comiskey. The owner didn't accept it, because that would've been proof of his players' misdoings and thought it'd be better to act innocent and hope nobody found out.

There's a terrific book about this, and it's not *Eight Men Out*. It's Gene Carney's "Burying the Black Sox", and it details the circumstances of the players, management, owners and gamblers behind this sordid affair while doing so in a relatively unbiased manner. It helps separate fact from fiction, and this should be required reading for those who believe he belongs in the Hall, as well as those who believes in his damnation.

There's a case to be made that Jackson was railroaded into a confession by management who wanted to escape blame. The book digs deeply into this matter convincingly. There was no lifetime ban for players who threw games as of 1919, and there certainly was no Hall of Fame at the time. The expected consequence if found out was a total unknown, but eternal banishment didn't fit into the equation at that time. There was no powerful labor union to appeal his case, and despite being found innocent in an admittedly partial trial (one in which confessions were stolen — presumably by management), was declared guilty by Landis for the lifetime ban without real opportunities for the players to plead their cases.

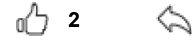
Was Jackson innocent? Probably not, but I don't believe he's the wholly immoral guy many proclaim him to be. Just because somebody confesses to a misdeed didn't mean they did it. In some cases, they do so in order to accept lighter penalties. In other cases, they do so to protect family and friends. Some do so out of duress. Obviously some do so because they are in fact guilty. There was no smoking gun in Jackson's case, and there still hasn't been sufficient evidence found in the last 100 years to prove or disprove his guilt or innocence without a reasonable doubt. That's a large part of the intrigue regarding Jackson. I do believe that he wasn't totally happy playing semi-pro ball in the 30's and 40's, as his good name had famously (or infamously) been taken away. Not that it's proof, but he did declare his innocence continually until he died over 65 years ago.

Because of the lack of physical evidence, I'd lean slightly toward his becoming a Hall of Famer, at least until evidence is indeed found to prove his guilt. Ted Williams and Bob Feller, baseball and war heroes alike, strongly pushed for Jackson's inclusion in the Hall of Fame. Who am I to say they were wrong?



Ronald H. Jan 12, 6:55am

@Eric C. Lack of physical evidence? Is not his admitting in sworn testimony to taking money before a grand jury pretty damning evidence. I mean, I wish he hadn't done it, but he did. Trying to pretend there is no evidence is fanciful thinking.



Patrick C. Jan 12, 3:53am

If Yawkey, Landis, and Anson are in, who arguably did more damage to the game with their segregationist policies, then Jackson should also be in. For goodness sakes, the man's been dead for almost 60 years



John M. 19h ago

Probably the best in the series, thanks! I'd let Jackson in too!



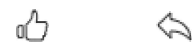
Brad P. 17h ago

Great story. Shoeless Joe should be in the Hall of Fame.



Brian S. 17h ago

Thank you for this article. It was a great read. Shoeless Joe is one of the players I wish I could watch play.



Kyle S. 16h ago

Great read



John F. 15h ago

This is the best one I've read in a while. Great job, Joe! I really appreciate you telling the whole story in your usual brilliant words.



Alan T. 9h ago

I agree with Connie Mack who is alleged to have said that Joe Jackson was a man "more sinned against than sinning", and with Steve Stone who commented during a White Sox broadcast that Joe "hit what, .375? It doesn't seem to me that Joe Jackson tried to lose." Mr. Posnanski writes regarding the slugger's performance that a "close look at the play-by-play shows he went hitless with runners in scoring position." Actually he went 5 -14 (.357) with RISP and 6-17 (.353) with runners on which is consistent with his lifetime .356 BA. In addition he had 12 hits, a Series record that lasted for decades. He also scored 5 runs and drove in 6 on a team that scored only 20. He led the team in slugging percentage and moved the most runners up.

Mr. Posnanski contends that Joe "didn't really start hitting until after gamblers failed to come up with the money". While he did not drive in any runs in the first five games, he did hit .316 compared to the combined .130 hit by the clean Sox who had just one RBI in those games. Joe hit a combined 5-7 in Games 2 and 3 against a Reds pitching staff considered by many to have been the best in the NL.

He also writes that "there is no question he took the money." Joe testified during his 1924 civil trial that Lefty Williams brought the bribe to his hotel room after the final game of the Series on Oct. 9. The pitcher told him that the money was for the use of his name. Joe angrily responded that he did not give his permission for his name to be used and told Lefty that he was going to take the money to Comiskey's office the next morning. That he went to the owner's office on Oct. 10 is verified by Joe's 1920 grand jury testimony. He said that he had an encounter with Chick Gandil who was "waiting in there." That Gandil was there is confirmed by Team Secretary Harry Grabiner's diary. Grabiner refused to allow Joe to see Comiskey and shouted at him to go away. Harry Brigham, the grand jury foreman, testified that Joe "had tried to see Comiskey after the Series to tell him what he knew." Lefty Williams admitted during his 1924 deposition that Joe did not know "his name was being used for the purpose of dealing with the gamblers."

In response to a letter from Comiskey dated 11/11/19 where the owner offered to pay Joe's expenses to return to Chicago "if you wish to come on in reference to the matter pertaining to the talk emanating from the World Series." Joe (via his wife) wrote back expressing his surprise that "my name has been connected with any scandal...I did all I could to win and I think my record for the Series will show if you look at it." He indicated that he wanted to "clear my name...Let me hear from you as to when you want me to come to Chicago." Unsurprisingly, Comiskey never responded. Jackson told the grand jury that he "offered to come here last fall in the investigation. I would have told it last fall if they would have brought me in." I strongly believe that Joe, who still had the envelope with the cash, would have shown the

money to the owner as he had tried to do on Oct. 10. After getting no response to his letter, Joe testified in 1924 that he "didn't want the damn stuff (the \$5000) and I thought since that lousy so-called gambling outfit had used my name, I might as well have their money as for him (Williams.)" Joe also stated that when Grabiner signed him to a contract in Feb. 1920, the Secretary indicated that they knew he had received the bribe from Lefty and told Joe "as long as that bunch of bums used your name, you did the only sensible thing in keeping it." I believe that Comiskey and his people wanted Joe to keep the money so that he would then be implicated and thus less likely to expose the owner's cover-up of the fix. Joe Jackson, from his grand jury testimony to the day he died maintained that he always played to win and that he considered his performance in the 1919 World Series to have been the greatest accomplishment of his life.



Steven M. 4h ago

I think if you put him in you also have to figure out Pete Rose, who's stats and resume are unquestionable.



READ MORE

(/2308704/2021/01/07/jim-bowden-trade-grade-francisco-lindor/?article_source=related)

Bowden: Grading the Francisco Lindor trade for the Mets and Cleveland

(/2308704/2021/01/07/jim-bowden-trade-grade-francisco-lindor/?article_source=related)

Law: Mets trade for Francisco Lindor a huge win, but Cleveland didn't fail

(/2308606/2021/01/07/keith-law-mets-francisco-lindor/?article_source=related)

Rosenthal: MLB bracing for a reduction in TV rights fees in pending ESPN deal

(/2309573/2021/01/08/rosenthal-mlb-espn-tv-rights-fees-reduced/?article_source=related)

Rosenthal: Francisco Lindor trade shows the new Mets can be a big-market bully

(/2308705/2021/01/07/rosenthal-francisco-lindor-carlos-carrasco-trade/?article_source=related)

Rosenthal: Logic of a potential Fernando Tatis Jr. extension, more notes

(/2317282/2021/01/11/fernando-tatis-jr-padres-extension-notes/?article_source=related)

The Outsiders: No. 11, Dale Murphy

(/2311848/2021/01/12/hall-of-fame-outsiders-dale-murphy/?article_source=related)

National

Boxing (/boxing/)

Bundesliga (/bundesliga/)

Champions League (/champions-league/)

College Basketball (/college-basketball/)

College Football (/college-football/)

Culture (/culture/)

EFL (/efl/)

Europa League (/europa-league/)

Fantasy Baseball (/fantasy-baseball/)

Fantasy Basketball (/fantasy-basketball/)

Fantasy Football (/fantasy-football/)

Fantasy Hockey (/fantasy-hockey/)

Fantasy Premier League (/fantasy-premier-league/)

Golf (/golf/)

International (/international-soccer/)

La Liga (/la-liga/)

MLB (/mlb/)

MLS (/mls/)

Mixed Martial Arts (/mma/)

Motorsports (/motorsports/)

NBA (/nba/)

NCAA Women's Basketball (/womens-college-basketball/)

NFL (/nfl/)

[NHL \(/nhl/\)](#)

[NWSL \(/nws/\)](#)

[Premier League \(/premier-league/\)](#)

[Scottish Premiership \(/scottish-premiership/\)](#)

[Serie A \(/serie-a/\)](#)

[Sports Business \(/sports-business/\)](#)

[UK Women's Football \(/womens-football/\)](#)

[WNBA \(/wnba/\)](#)

[The Athletic Ink \(/ink/\)](#)

[Podcasts \(/podcasts/\)](#)

[Headlines \(/news/\)](#)

[US](#)

[Arizona \(/arizona/\)](#)

[Atlanta \(/atlanta/\)](#)

[Baltimore \(/baltimore/\)](#)

[Bay Area \(/bayarea/\)](#)

[Boston \(/boston/\)](#)

[Buffalo \(/buffalo/\)](#)

[Carolina \(/carolina/\)](#)

[Chicago \(/chicago/\)](#)

[Cincinnati \(/cincinnati/\)](#)

[Cleveland \(/cleveland/\)](#)

[Columbus \(/columbus/\)](#)

[Dallas \(/dfw/\)](#)

[Denver \(/denver/\)](#)

[Detroit \(/detroit/\)](#)

[Houston \(/houston/\)](#)

[Indiana \(/indiana/\)](#)

[Jacksonville \(/jacksonville/\)](#)

[Kansas City \(/kc/\)](#)

[Las Vegas \(/vegas/\)](#)

[Los Angeles \(/losangeles/\)](#)

[Memphis \(/memphis/\)](#)

[Miami \(/miami/\)](#)

[Minnesota \(/mn/\)](#)

[Nashville \(/nashville/\)](#)

[New Orleans \(/neworleans/\)](#)

[New York \(/newyork/\)](#)

[Oklahoma \(/oklahoma/\)](#)

[Oregon \(/oregon/\)](#)

[Orlando \(/orlando/\)](#)

[Philadelphia \(/philly/\)](#)

[Pittsburgh \(/pittsburgh/\)](#)

[Sacramento \(/sacramento/\)](#)

[San Antonio \(/sanantonio/\)](#)

[San Diego \(/sandiego/\)](#)

[Seattle \(/seattle/\)](#)

[St. Louis \(/stlouis/\)](#)

[Tampa Bay \(/tampabay/\)](#)

[Utah \(/utah/\)](#)

[Washington DC \(/dc/\)](#)

[Wisconsin \(/wisconsin/\)](#)

[Canada](#)

[Calgary \(/calgary/\)](#)

[Edmonton \(/edmonton/\)](#)

[Montreal \(/montreal/\)](#)

[Montréal \(français\) \(/montreal-fr/\)](#)

[Ottawa \(/ottawa/\)](#)

[Toronto \(/toronto/\)](#)

[Vancouver \(/vancouver/\)](#)

[Winnipeg \(/winnipeg/\)](#)

[Share](#)

[Buy a Gift \(/checkout/?type=gift\)](#)

[Invite Friends \(/share/?source=footer\)](#)

[HQ](#)

[Careers \(/careers/?source=footer\)](#)

[Code of Conduct \(/code-of-conduct/?source=footer\)](#)

[Business Inquiries \(/contact-us/?source=footer\)](#)

[Press Inquiries \(/press/?source=footer\)](#)

[Support](#)

[FAQ \(https://theathletic.zendesk.com/hc/en-us\)](https://theathletic.zendesk.com/hc/en-us)

[Forgot Password? \(/forgot-password/?source=footer\)](#)

[Redeem Gift \(/redeem/?source=footer\)](#)

[Email Us \(/contact-support\)](#)

(/)

©2021 The Athletic Media Company. All rights reserved.

[Terms of Service \(/tos-us/\)](#)


[Privacy Policy \(/privacy-us/\)](/privacy-us/)

[Payment Terms \(/payment-terms/\)](/payment-terms/)

[Support \(/contact-support/\)](/contact-support/)

 (<https://twitter.com/TheAthleticMLB>)

 (<https://www.facebook.com/TheAthletic/>)

 (<https://www.instagram.com/theathleticq/>)



(<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/the-athletic/id1135216317?ls=1&mt=8>)



(<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.theathletic>)