Baseball Essay, Research Paper

How Baseball has Changed and Influenced America in the past 100 Years Compared to Today

Baseball is continuous, like no other American tradition, an endless game of repeated summers, which brought together all generations of fathers and sons. Baseball has survived The Great Depression, World War I, and World War II. The game has stood tall and proud though the toughest trying times in history, and this is why baseball will always be an important place in American culture.

Baseball used to be made up of one division until in 1901 when it dropped its twelve teams down to eight, and started the American League. Through the first decade of the twentieth century, baseball remained a game of strategy. The so-called dead ball provided few homeruns. The game relied on the contact hitters, bunting, and base stealing for its offense. Then in 1911 the cork center baseball changed the game dramatically. All kinds of records started to fall because the ball could be hit farther and harder than ever before and the popularity of the game started to grow. Then again in 1914 another rival league started to form. This League was called the Federal League, which only lasted two seasons due to the lack of presence on the field. They took the American and National League to court on assumptions of them both constituting a monopoly. The Federal League lost the allegations because the Supreme Court ruled that baseball was exempt from anti-trust legislation, which means they allowed their monopoly.

The twenties were a great time for Baseball because this is when George Ruth arose from being a pitcher for the Red Sox s to become legendary hitter for the Yankees. Ruth revolutionized the game with his prowess as a homerun hitter, which all the fans would come from everywhere to watch him hit. Ruth also ushered in an era of economic prosperity for the game of Baseball and its owners. Then, came World War II, which caused a large percentage of ballplayers to enter the armed forces. This caused a very difficult time for baseball during this period. Since Baseball has always been segregated during this time it opened up a new era for African-Americans to play. Among one of the first to ever play was Jackie Robinson in 1947 for the Brooklyn Dodgers. Baseball just didn t let hundreds of African-Americans play but it just allowed little by little to play due to the shortage of white ballplayers overseas. To show how long it took for Baseball to actually call itself integrated wasn t until the early sixties.

Yet again in 1960 another rival league tried to make it into Baseball. The Continental League wanted to start its own League in the south and west because all the other Leagues were concentrated in the northeast. The Continental League never had a chance to make it to seek a win in court to join the Leagues because it went bankrupt in the first season. The Continental League wasn t at all a failure because the American and National League were faced with a possibility of losing their monopoly, so they reached a compromise of expanding the League from sixteen teams to twenty-four teams. The players liked this because it meant more jobs.

Baseball prospered economically as attendance continued to grow and national television and radio contracts brought in huge amounts of money. But, what the players finally realized was that the owners were the ones making all the money and not them. The players had a union but they never really used it an they all decided to put it to work to make more money for themselves. They hired a guy named Marvin Miller who had fought for the United Steelworkers union for years to help them out. He knew there was more prosperity for the players to gain because the minimum salary for a ball player was $6,000 just a thousand more than in 1947. After he started to collect all this data the players went to the commissioners and had there first bargaining agreement in 1968. This agreement opened up players to allow to bargain their contracts instead of the owners setting only one price and that s it. The owners hated this because it took more money out of their pockets to pay for the player s salaries. One of the first cases of a player holding out was Curt Flood in 1969. He played centerfield for the Cardinals and refused to report to training camp unless they gave up a $5,000 raise. They finally gave in and gave him his raise but they traded him to the Phillies right after the season was over. Flood did not want to leave because he lived in the community and filed a suit against the Commissioner. Flood argued that the Reserve Clause was illegal and he should be allowed to negotiate freely with other teams. The Reserve Clause granted teams the rights to unilaterally renew a player s contract preventing him from entertaining other offers. He argued this in the Supreme Court but he lost and it made other players think about their contracts. Two other players in 1975 challenged the reserve clause that said the teams had the right to renew a player s contract for one year. They are the ones who got free agency born because if the contract only bounded you to a team for one year and not the next well you re on your own and the owner has no control over you.

Players loved this because this caused their salary to rise and for more than one year because owners were outbidding for them and wanted to secure them for longer periods of times so they won t have to pay more money for them next year if they get better. This made the owners mad once again and they wanted something in return since they put all this money into a player and now their just losing them. The players argued that this would severely limit their freedom. The owners and players couldn t agree so in the middle of the 1981 season the players walked out.

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