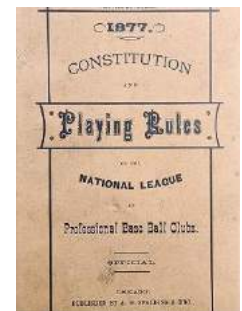


The official rules of baseball evolved from the original Knickerbocker rules written in 1845 to the first set of National League rules printed in 1877. There were frequent changes to the rules from 1877 to the 1920s, but by 1931 the rule book stabilized and only a few changes occurred in the 1930s and the 1940s.



The table on the next page, from the Baseball Almanac, lists the major rule changes between 1901 and 1954. As you can see, there was a rapid adoption of new rules in 1950, dramatically changing the game and how it was played. This sudden change was largely due to one man who wrote a series of influential articles about the rules starting in 1949. He worked out of a small office in

| Year | Changes Made To Official Major League Baseball Rules |
|------|---|
| 1901 | All foul balls not caught on fly counted as strikes until batter has two strikes. Catchers were compelled to remain continuously under the bat. |
| 1903 | Height of the mound was limited to 15 inches higher than the level of the baselines. Foul strike rule was adopted by the American League. |
| 1908 | Pitchers were prohibited from soiling a new ball. The sacrifice fly rule was adopted. |
| 1909 | Relief pitcher must face at least one batter. |
| 1910 | Stolen base no longer credited when other runner in a double steal is thrown out. |
| 1917 | Earned-run statistics and definitions were added to the rules. All freak deliveries, including the spitball, were outlawed. Balk to be called if pitcher releases pitch while catcher is out of his box. The failure of a preceding runner to touch a base would not affect the status of a succeeding runner. |
| 1920 | The batter was given credit for a home run in the last of the ninth inning if the winning run was on base when the ball was hit out of the field. The number of runs batted in were to be included in the official score. Frivolous ninth-inning uncontested steals in one-sided games were to be scored as defensive indifference. |
| 1925 | The minimum home-run distance was set at 250 feet. |
| 1926 | Pitcher was allowed to use a rosin bag. Sacrifice hit awarded when any runner advances on a fly out. Balls that bounce over the fence entitle batter to two bases. Balls hit over the fence are to be ruled fair or foul based on where they are when they leave the field. |
| 1931 | Sacrifice flies eliminated. Regulations referring to a batter contacting his own ball were clarified as was the area of bases awarded a batter when a defensive player threw his glove at a batted or thrown ball or in the case of spectator interference. Home team must bat second. Mound must be 15 inches high. |
| 1950 | Rules for determining winning and losing pitcher established. Size of first baseman's glove/mitt regulated. Strike zone redefined to from armpits to top of knees. |
| 1953 | Players were to remove their gloves from the field (in 1954) when batting and no equipment was to show on the field at any time. Defensive interference was changed from an offense solely by a catcher to one by a fielder as well. |
| 1954 | No fielder could take a position in line with a batter's vision with the deliberate intent to in any way distract the batter. |

Montreal on the third floor at 1121 St. Catherine Street West. That man was my father, Harry Simmons, who authored the series "So You Think You Know Baseball!" which was published in the *Saturday Evening Post* magazine from 1949 to 1961.

Simmons became interested in the early history of baseball during the 1930s, and he spent long hours in the New York Public Library studying their holdings of old sporting newspapers, books and magazines. It was there he met Ernie Lanigan, who later became the curator of the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown. Simmons was soon doing research for the major baseball writers of the day, including Taylor Spink, Hy Turkin and Lee Allen. Simmons published many papers on the evolution of the rules of baseball in various baseball magazines of the time as he became an expert in this area.



Ernie Lanigan



IL Secretary Simmons Presenting
To 1945 IL MVP Sherm Lollar

In 1946, after serving in the U.S. Army during World War II, Simmons became the Secretary of the International League, which moved its head office to Montreal beginning in 1953. In July 1951, he served as an expert witness representing baseball at the Congressional Celler House Judiciary Committee which probed monopoly influences in organized baseball. His

testimony resulted in a decision by the committee which was favorable to Organized Baseball. He was also busy as the schedule maker for the Major Leagues from 1953 through 1982. I talked about this important aspect of his career last year at this conference. He accomplished this tedious and difficult task in the days before computers, helping the Major Leagues in their rapid expansion during the 1960s and 1970s.



Schedule Maker Simmons

One of his many responsibilities at the International League was the hiring, firing and management of the umpires who worked for the League. Simmons would hold conferences to discuss the rules and to review calls the umpires had made during ball games. They would frequently call him up to ask about some of the unusual plays on which they'd had to rule. He soon realized that some of the umpires were of the opinion that they "don't have to know the right answer unless the managers do." This was, of course, before the days when umpires had to be graduates of one of the professional umpiring schools. He started to



Bottom of the Sixth (Tough Call)
Norman Rockwell April 23, 1949

compile some of the oddest plays, and in 1949 he submitted a package of them to the very popular magazine, *The Saturday Evening Post*. *The Post* was published weekly from 1897 to 1963. It was one of the most widely-circulated and influential magazines in Canada and the United States, with a circulation of 5 million in 1955 and 6.9 million in 1960. In Canada its 1955 circulation was 275,000. It is probably best remembered by its front covers which usually had an amusing illustration by Norman Rockwell.

The initial article of “So You Think You Know Baseball!” was published in the June 11, 1949 issue. *The Post* had a stable of artists working for it, and they chose Willard Mullin to draw the cartoon which would accompany the article. Mullin was best known for his creation of the “Brooklyn Bum” personification of the Brooklyn Dodgers baseball team, and he really brought some fun to the articles.



Willard Mullin

The first article caused a sensation and the magazine knew it had a winner. Here is an image of



First Article June 11, 1949

this initial article. I'm afraid that if I start discussing the play, it will start some arguments which will take up the rest of my talk. I'll just say that it resulted in a rule change to baseball in 1950 and caused over 7,000 fans to write letters of protest to *The Post*. The play became known as the “Fourth Out Rule” and remains controversial even today.

There was an especially confusing occurrence on June 29 just last year, in Washington, against the Pirates. Basically, a team must record a fourth out if the hitter who was supposed to be the third out makes it to first base because the third strike was dropped by the catcher, and there are no runners on

first. I encourage you to do a Google search for “the fourth out in baseball” and you will be entertained by videos of how messy this scenario can be. Harry Simmons is known as the Father of the Fourth Out Rule.

In fact three of the changes made to the rules of baseball in 1950 were due to the articles which Simmons wrote for *The Post* in 1949. The so-called “Fourth Out” was covered by a new Rule 5.09(c)(4) which says that “Appeal plays may require an umpire to recognize an apparent ‘fourth out’.” The second rule change was due to an article which dealt with a club having fewer than 9 men



Saturday Evening Post, August 20, 1949

on the field. This resulted in new Rule 7.03(b). The third change, Rule 4.04(a), was in response to an article concerning when a game can be canceled on account of rain.

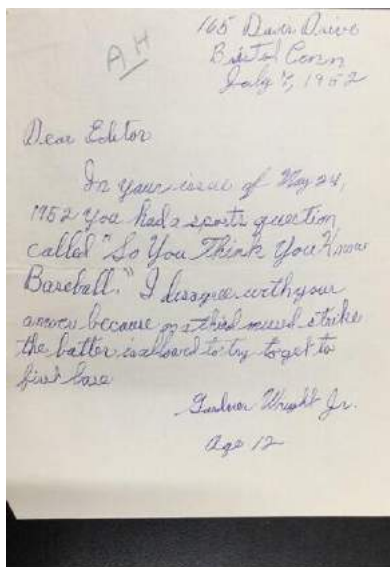
Just as an aside, since he was also my father, you might enjoy the picture of my Dad in this photo from the May 6, 1950 issue of the magazine.



Saturday Evening Post, May 6, 1950

There he is holding me and my twin sister Sara. The article predicts that I will one day become a great ballplayer and my sister will watch me play on Ladies Day. Well, I'm still waiting for that contract from the Blue Jays!

Thousands of letters from readers of the series quickly started to arrive at the office of the magazine, the league office in Montreal and even to our home in Cartierville, a suburb of Montreal. These letters were mostly of two types: either protesting that an article was wrong in its solution, or describing plays which the writers had witnessed or been involved in, and asking for the correct answer.



Letter of Complaint, 1952

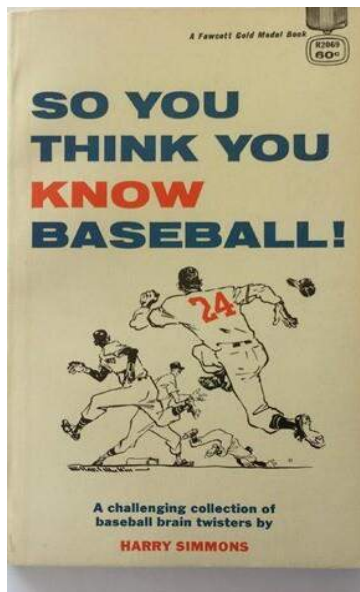
Fortunately Simmons kept many hundreds of these letters which are now in his papers at the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame in St. Marys. For some reason, he didn't hold on to many of the letters of complaint, but at left is one from 12-year-old Gordon Wright, Jr. There are many examples from readers in Canada, including letters from Fred Moore of Toronto, J. S. Lacey of Orkey, Saskatchewan, and Jim Leaman from Magna Bay, B.C., all asking about rulings on difficult plays. Simmons would frequently answer the letters. He also received letters from other countries; the library has correspondence from fans in Italy, Argentina, Cuba and Australia.

Simmons was fortunate to be working with Frank Shaughnessy, who was the President of the International League from 1936 to 1960. Shag, as he was known, is in both the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame and the Canadian Football Hall of Fame. Mr. Shaughnessy, whom I fondly remember, was probably the most knowledgeable person on the rules of baseball, having been a player, a manager, and an executive, as well as a member of the Baseball Rules Committee for many years.

My father and Shag would spend many hours in the Montreal office discussing the rules whenever a team of league umpires would stop by to discuss a tricky play, or to solve the riddles outlined by the letters from fans. There would be six seasoned baseball men sitting around Shag's office literally chewing tobacco -- with a spittoon in a handy place. I think it is amazing and little known by baseball historians that these men were changing the future of baseball from a small office in Montreal.



Simmons and Shag



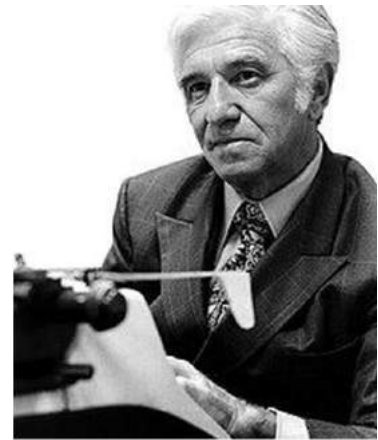
Fawcett Publications
3rd Edition

The series ran in *The Post* until 1961, when the magazine had financial difficulties and closed down. Over the years Simmons received many offers from publishers who wanted to print the articles in book form. Finally in 1960, he accepted an offer from Fawcett Publications which printed the articles in three separate editions which sold over 500,000 copies. The first edition sold for 25 cents, the second for 40 cents and the third for a whopping 60 cents! Starting in 1970, *Baseball Digest* carried the series but with updates to the names of the players involved.

I remember when I was in grade nine in 1963, one of the boys in my class was reading *So You Think You*

Know Baseball!. He said that he found it really fun and interesting. When I told him that it was my father who had written the book he didn't believe me. He thought I was joking. Fortunately another friend of mine, who knew of my Dad's work, overheard us and verified that my Dad was in fact the author. I offered to have the book autographed for him, which I did.

When Frank Shaughnessy retired in the 1960s, Simmons replaced him on the Baseball Rules Committee, where he served until his retirement in 1981. He would often receive phone calls at the office or even at our home from sports writers asking questions about the rules and about strange plays. I'll discuss just one such inquiry from Dick Young of the *New York Daily News*. On April 19, 1977 the Toronto Blue Jays were away in New York to play the Yankees. It's the bottom of the 4th inning with the Jays ahead 4 - 0 with Jerry Garvin pitching for the Jays and with Jimmy Wynn on third base and Lou Piniella at bat for the Yankees. Garvin winds up, hesitates, and a balk is called by the third base umpire. Garvin pitches and Piniella lines for a double into left-center field. The umpire ruled that the ball was dead when he called a balk and erased Piniella's double, but allowed Wynn to move up one base to score. Piniella was sent back



Dick Young

to home plate to continue batting where he ended up striking out. The Jays won the game 5 to 1 and the Yankees protested the match. Young quoted the rule "The ball is dead and each runner shall advance one base unless the batter reaches first on a hit, and all other runners advance one base in which case the play proceeds without reference to the balk." Young questioned the umpire's decision and called Simmons, who said that the rule was badly written and that he was in the process of trying to rephrase it. At left is the comment that Simmons wrote, which is now in the rule book.

by the umpire. (Intended meaning of the word "er" is that the defensive team in making an appeal threw the ball out of play. For example, if the pitcher threw to first base to appeal and threw the ball into the stands, no second appeal would be allowed.)

Appeal plays may require an umpire to recognize an apparent "fourth out." If the third out is made during a play in which an appeal play is sustained on another runner, the appeal play decision takes precedence in determining the out. If there is more than one appeal during a play that ends a half-inning, the defense may elect to take the out that gives it the advantage. For the purpose of this rule, the defensive team has "left the field" when the pitcher and all infielders have left fair territory on their way to the bench or clubhouse.

Rule 5.09(c) Comment: If two runners arrive at home base about the same time and the first runner misses home plate but a second runner legally touches the plate, the runner is tagged out on his attempt to come back and touch the base or is called out on appeal, then he shall be considered as having been put out before the second runner scored and being the third out. Second runner's run shall not count, as provided in Rule 5.09(d).

If a pitcher balks when making an appeal, such act shall be a play. An appeal should be clearly intended as an appeal, either by a verbal request by the player or an act that unmistakably indicates an appeal to the umpire. A player, inadvertently stepping on the base with a ball in his hand, would not constitute

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Rule 5.09(c) to 5.10(b)

an appeal. Time is not out when an appeal is being made.

(d) Effect of Preceding Runner's Failure to Touch a Base

Unless two are out, the status of a following runner is not affected by a preceding runner's failure to touch or retouch a base. If, upon appeal, the preceding runner is the third out, no runners following him shall score. If such third out is the result of a force play, neither preceding nor following runners shall score.

(e) Retiring the Side

When three offensive players are legally put out, that team takes the field and the opposing team becomes the offensive team.

5.10 Substitutions and Pitching Changes (Including Visits to the Mound)

(a) A player, or players, may be substituted during a game at any time the ball is dead. A substitute player shall bat in the replaced player's position in the team's batting order.

(b) The manager shall immediately notify the umpire-in-chief

Simmons Comment on Rule Change Resulting from Game of April 19, 1977

Simmons worked for the International League until 1966. He then joined the Baseball Commissioner's Office as a general resource and speech writer to Commissioners William Eckert and Bowie Kuhn. He stayed there until his retirement in 1981. Since Simmons had many friends in the baseball circles of Montreal and knew everyone of importance in the game, it was only natural that he was called upon for assistance when Montreal was ready for a Major League franchise. He directed Gerry Snyder of the mayor's office on how to go about getting the franchise. Later, he recommended the hiring of Jim Fanning and John McHale, who had worked with him in the Commissioner's Office, to run the club.

Fortunately, my father was a bit of a hoarder and he never threw anything out. He saved all his correspondence from his 50 year involvement in baseball, including original research work, the letters from fans of the "So You Think You Know Baseball!" series, files of papers from his days working for the International League and at the office of the Commissioner of Baseball, and many boxes related to his work as the Major League scheduler.

These items, along with his large collection of baseball books, journals, magazines, pins, souvenir bats, many different leagues' passes, and countless newspaper articles were stored in 70 large storage boxes and 100 large garbage bags. After my father's passing at the age of 90 in 1998, I donated all these items to the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame, which did a marvelous job sorting through and organizing everything. This is now called the "Harry Simmons Collection" in the Harry Simmons Memorial Library. I urge you all to visit the Library and go through the collection. It is a fascinating resource of baseball history with many unknown facts ready to be discovered. John Thorn of SABR said that given Simmons' reputation as a researcher, there are likely many items of historical



A Portion of the Harry Simmons Collection



The Harry Simmons Memorial Library

significance in the collection.



David Simmons
November 2023