

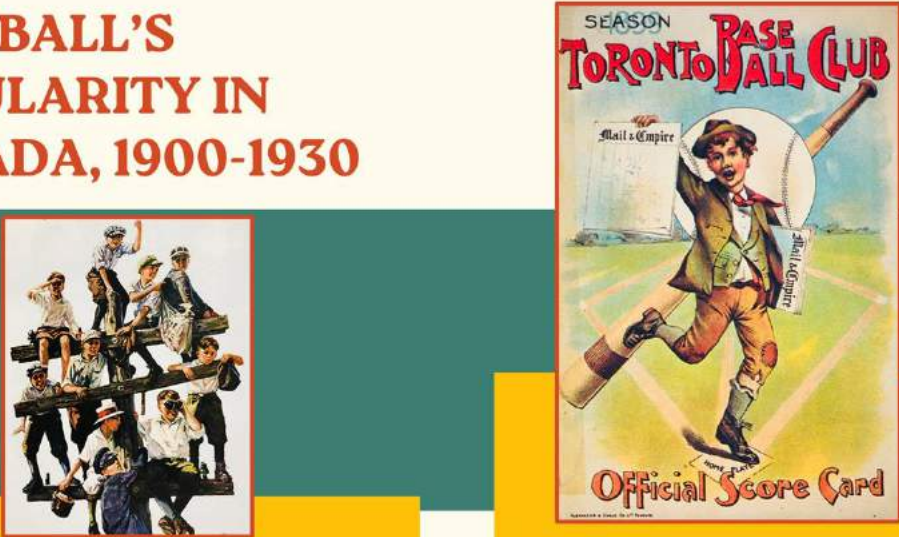


Abstract

In the early decades of the 20th century, baseball was the most popular sport in Canada. By the 1920s, the World Series was the greatest national event, one that was “watched” each year by thousands of Canadian baseball fans outside a newspaper building or in an indoor setting (e.g., theatre or hall) far removed from the two cities in which the teams competed. Canadian fans witnessed a remote and live re-creation of each game on a mechanical or an electric scoreboard. A telegraph operator at the site of the game regularly sent succinct reports of the current action on the field to another operator in a Canadian city or town who in turn passed the update to a broadcaster. With the aid of a megaphone, the broadcaster described the play to awaiting fans while one or more technicians scurried to represent the announced action on the scoreboard. In this presentation, I will introduce examples of mechanical or electronic scoreboards that were used in different parts of Canada. I will also discuss how these

telegraph-informed scoreboards enriched fans' knowledge of baseball and set the stage for subsequent developments in the broadcast of baseball games through radio and eventually television.

BASEBALL'S POPULARITY IN CANADA, 1900-1930



“By mid-1920s...baseball's World Series had become Canada's greatest 'national' sporting event”
(Thompson & Seager, 1985)

“By 1914...baseball was truly Canada's national sport”
(Metcalf, 1987)

“By 1914...baseball was truly Canada's national sport”

In his book *Canada Learns to Play* Alan Metcalfe (1987) comments on the national prominence of baseball in the latter part of the 19th century and during the first decades of the 20th century:

On the other hand, if we measure “Canadian” by the degree to which games were played (as compared to games that were created by Canadians, such as hockey and lacrosse), a different perspective emerges. By 1914, there were only two truly Canadian sports—ice hockey and baseball. Baseball had a much longer history than ice hockey, having been played across the country since Confederation. Ice hockey, on the other hand, was strictly limited until the 1890s, when it experienced great growth. In fact, the dominant position of baseball was even greater than hockey since it faced formidable rivals in soccer, cricket, lacrosse, rowing, and many other sports. Ice hockey had no rival except curling. By this definition, baseball was truly Canada's national sport...A final measurement of “Canadian” is

the degree to which the game was played or watched by Canadians. In this case, only one game comes close to this criterion—baseball. (pp. 97–98)

Participation and Press Coverage

Don Morrow and Kevin B. Wamsley (2005), in a section on the “Boom Years of Baseball, 1900–1920”, state: “Between 1900 and 1920, baseball was easily Canada’s most popular sport” (p.116). Stacey L. Lorenz (2015), concurred with Metcalfe and Morrow and Walmsley, noting that in comparison to hockey, baseball was the most popular “because baseball was the only game played and watched in all geographic regions and by all social classes” (p.2109). In my view (Thiessen), this claim is defensible into the early 1930s.

In terms of press coverage, baseball dominated the sports pages of most Canadian newspapers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In a study of sports coverage in major newspapers across Canada between 1885 and 1915, Morrow and Walmsley (2005; also noted by Lorenz, 1995) report that baseball ranked first in percentage coverage of all sports and that 50% of the coverage of baseball focused on American leagues, with a primary focus on the major leagues. In a second study on the content of sports pages in five major newspapers (in Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, and Vancouver) between 1926 and 1935, baseball was still slightly ahead of hockey for the most coverage. Baseball received more space in Toronto and Vancouver. The coverage of baseball and hockey was similar in Halifax and Winnipeg, while in Montreal, baseball was second to hockey.


“By mid-1920s...baseball’s World Series had become Canada’s greatest ‘national’ sporting event”

Thompson and Seager (1985) describe the importance of the World Series (WS) to Canadians in the 1920s:

By the mid-twenties baseball’s World Series had become Canada’s greatest “national” sporting event, with crowds packed in front of newspaper offices to watch the games charted out on a scale-model diamond, while an announcer with a megaphone recreated the action from a running description provided by the wire services. Before the Cardinal-Yankee series of 1926, the Calgary *Herald* devoted ten column inches of its editorial page

to an analysis of “this greatest of all features in the season’s program”; an adjacent editorial on the appointment of Lord Willingdon as Canada’s new governor general received exactly one inch. (p. 187)

In 1835 Samuel Morse devised a system of dots and dashes to represent letters and numbers. In 1837 he was granted a patent for an electromagnetic telegraph. Morse's original transmitter incorporated a device called a portarule, which employed molded type with built-in dots and dashes.



TELEGRAPH-BASED COVERAGE OF BASEBALL IN CANADIAN NEWSPAPERS IN 1910

MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL

- ✦ Designated sports page or sports section
- ✦ Detailed accounts of games, teams, leagues, and players

WORLD SERIES

- ✦ Front page reports on each game
- ✦ Lead stories and photos on sports page or in sports section
- ✦ Inning-by-inning updates posted on bulletin board on outside wall of newspaper building

The image above describes how the telegraph improved the ways fans, especially those who could not attend games (for reason of cost, time, distance), kept informed about baseball. Much of this development related to the capacity of newspapers to use the telegraph to increase and broaden their coverage of baseball. Between 1870 and 1930, fans increasingly had:

More Details on Players and Games: Game reports evolved from brief notes on the final score to more detailed summaries of various aspects of the game and/or sport (performances of best players, turning points, play-by-play descriptions, etc.) published in designated sports’ pages or sections.

More information on Games Played Elsewhere: The baseball news expanded from predominantly coverage of local teams to reports on regional, national, and often international sporting events or games (mainly in the US), especially championship and/or World Series games.

More Sources to Choose From: While most relied on newspaper reports, by the 20th century, fans could also get updates or play-by-play reports through sources other than the newspapers (e.g., through telegraph connections available in pool halls, hotels, businesses, theatres, music halls, arenas, etc.).

More Timely Reports: Initially fans read game reports published the next day. By the final decade of the 19th century, some newspapers published a special edition on the same day, just a few hours after the game ended. In the first decades of the 20th century, newspapers started to provide inning-by-inning updates on bulletin boards located on the outside walls of their own building. Subsequently these bulletin-board updates expanded to include audio and visual play-by-play reports of the game in progress.

Technological and Communication Changes in Canada in 19th and Early 20th Century

The following points illustrate some of the key developments in telegraphy, the production of newspapers, the telephone, and the radio between 1870 and 1930. I also add a note to the telephone and radio summaries on how these developments enhanced the broadcasting efforts in baseball.

Developments in Telegraphy, 1850–1925

1840-1860: Eastern cities linked to each other and to major US cities

Submarine cables between New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Cape Breton, Maritimes and New York

1860-1870: Atlantic cable connecting Canada to Europe

1870-1900: Local groups (e.g., newspapers, pubs, ball parks, pool halls, etc.) arranged for connections to telegraph services

1875+: Speed of cable increased from 25-28 five-letter words per minute (1850s) to 50+ five-letter words per minute after 1875

1885-1895: Prairies added to national and international cable networks

1900-1925: More than 30,000 miles of cable lines in Canada, paralleling CPR tracks

Pacific cable to Australia and New Zealand

Formation of Canadian Press and United Press International of Canada, both of whom provided information and coordinated communication links across the country and with other countries

Developments in the Production of Newspapers, 1850–1900+

1850+: Increased use of telegraph enabled the press to report local, regional, national, and international sporting news

By the end of the 19th century, most newspapers had a separate page or, for some, a multipage sports section

1867-1900: In 1867, just over 200 newspapers in Canada (Ont, Que, NB, NS), including 21 dailies...In 1874, close to 500 newspapers, including 46 dailies, 330 weeklies, 41 monthlies...In 1900, more than 1200 newspapers, including 121 dailies, 804 weeklies, 91 semi-weeklies, 202 monthlies...In 1911, 143 dailies

1885+: Improvements in printing (e.g., use of rotary and revolving printing press) increased speed and volume of production. For example, *Winnipeg Free Press* could produce 1800 eight-page issues on one side in one hour

By 1900, *Toronto Globe's* electricity-powered press could produce 48,000 eight-page newspapers in one hour

1890+: Gradual shift from woodcut images to half-tone prints to photographs...providing more visual representations of sport

Telephone and Links to Baseball

1874: Invention of the telephone

1878: Formation of the Bell Telephone Company of Canada

1880s: In Toronto in 1879, 400 phones in use... By 1888, 2,234 phones, adding about 100 phones per month...1900 7,242 phones...1910 32, 515 phones...1920 95,749 phones

1900: More than 52,000 phones in Canada

Link to Baseball: By 1880s, the telephone was also used to arrange games with teams in other cities and towns (previously had mainly used telegraph for this purpose). Locally, reporters and other agents used a telephone located at the ball park to notify newspapers and other interested parties (e.g., pubs, pool halls, hotels, etc.) on the result of a game and/or the score at the end of each inning. In the 1900–1930 period, some newspapers published a phone number that fans could call to get updates or results of a game.

Radio (Wireless) and Links to Baseball

1921: First broadcast of baseball game on KDKA in Pittsburgh

1920s: In 1923, about 10,000 radio licenses, 34 broadcasting stations in Canada...By 1929, about 300,000 radio licenses, 85 broadcasting stations (some owned by major newspapers)

Canadian stations varied considerably in power, in most cases, with much less power than many of the stations in nearby American cities. Most Canadian radio receivers could pick up a US station; only 3 in 5 receivers could pick up a Canadian station.

1931: One-third of Canadian households had a radio, half of which were in urban Ontario

Link to Baseball World Series (WS): In the 1920s, most Canadians could not listen to a radio broadcast of a WS game in their own homes. Those who did likely listened to the WS game on a US station. A number of the major Canadian newspapers published a list of those US stations that listeners in their area could tune in for a broadcast of the WS game. By the late 1920s, some Canadian stations were able to broadcast the WS games for those nearby listeners who could pick up the broadcasting station. In addition, a few newspapers received a play-by-play report of the WS game by telegraph, which was passed to an announcer on its own radio station, who in turn updated listeners on the key plays of the game.

For additional readings on the development of technology and communication in Canada, see Keyes (1989), Jobling (1970), Lorenz (2000), and Rutherford (1978, 1982).

As much as these improvements in the telegraph (and other forms of communication) helped newspapers to expand their coverage of WS games, they also opened up the possibility of creating new ways to transmit or broadcast WS games to Canadian fans while it was being played.

After 1910, Canadian fans entered into a new era. They did not have to wait until a newspaper published its account of a WS game. Fans could now “watch” every play in the game shortly after it happened, recreated on a mechanical or electric scoreboard ...We begin our exploration of these scoreboards in Vancouver.



From 1910 to the 1930s, fans gathered outside newspaper buildings or in various indoor venues to “watch” the World Series (WS), the greatest “national” sporting event in Canada in this period.

Here we see fans in downtown Vancouver in front of *The Province* and *Vancouver Sun* buildings

in 1931 “watching” the final WS game between the St. Louis Cardinals and the Philadelphia Athletics (Cards won 4–3).

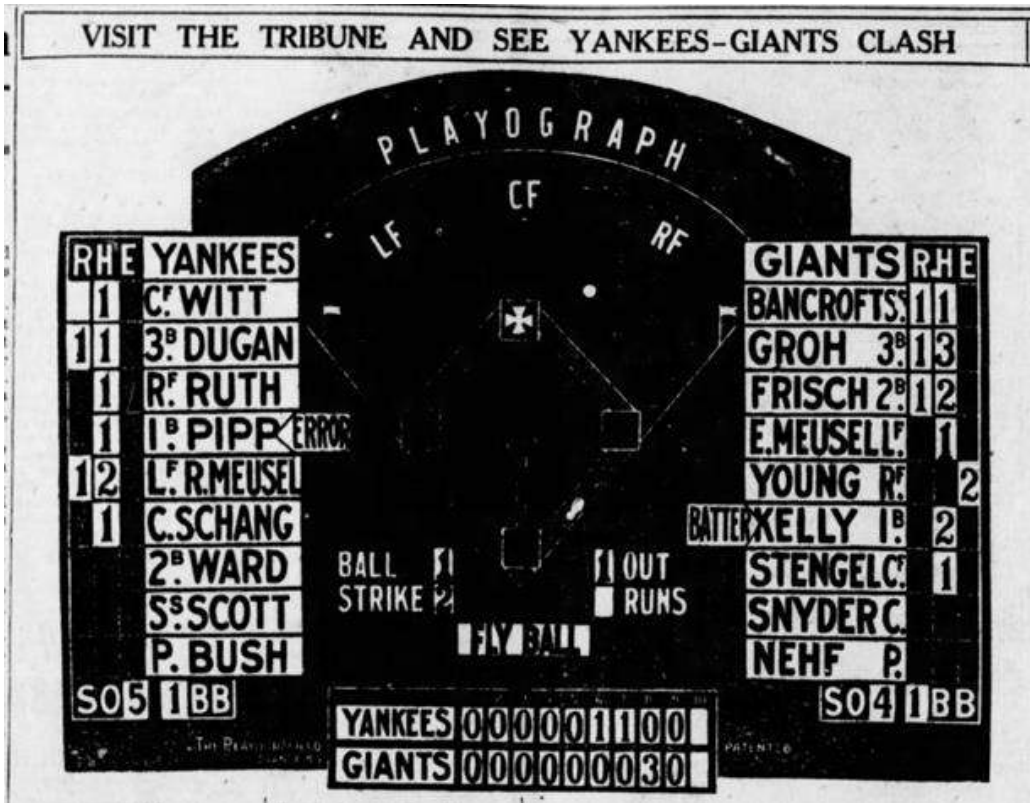
Two large Playograph Scoreboards were located on the sides of *The Province* and *Vancouver Sun* newspaper buildings to show every play in each WS game. Note that fans are staring in two directions, one group watching the game on the board mounted on the *Province’s* building, the other group watching the game on the *Sun’s* board on the side of its building. An announcer on a public address system “described all the thrilling scenes [of the final game]” as well as provided “a breezy running comment as the contest progressed.” ...The largest crowd to watch a game on the Playograph in Vancouver was estimated at 3,000 fans.

“Watching” the WS: The Telegraph, The Playograph Scoreboard, and The Announcer

A telegraph operator at the site of the WS game regularly sent succinct reports of the current action on the field to another operator in Vancouver, who in turn passed the update to an announcer. With the aid of a megaphone (in this case, a public address system), the announcer described the play to awaiting fans while one or more Playograph operators scurried to represent the announced action on the scoreboard. In short, the telegraph enabled the newspapers, through the representation on the Playograph Scoreboard and the description from the announcer, to provide a play-by-play broadcast of the game within seconds/minutes of when each play actually happened. Today we might call this a “delayed broadcast.”

We travel east to Winnipeg and back in time to 1923 to examine how the *Winnipeg Tribune* used the Playograph to broadcast a WS game.

This image of the *Winnipeg Tribune’s* Playograph scoreboard was published by the *Tribune* two days before the start of the 1923 World Series:



The following explanation of the key features of the Playograph appeared below the image of the board:

THE TRIBUNE has always enjoyed an enviable reputation in giving its readers a wholesome and authoritative sports service. Winnipeggers will again be able to enjoy the coming World's Series clash between New York Yankees and Giants by visiting The Tribune building.

The "Playograph," which so minutely depicted all plays of last year's World's Series so quickly and distinctly, will again be in operation each day of the baseball classic, starting Wednesday at 1 p.m.

Game Minutely Played

The latest mechanical device, the 1923 model "Playograph," erected in front of The Tribune building, will reproduce the clash of Yankees and Giants with remarkable exactness, depicting even minute details. There is going to be some consolation for Winnipeg baseball fans who are unable to take that expensive journey to New York. Right before your very eyes, right here in Winnipeg, the World's Series will be played as vividly and clear as if it were a real game you are watching instead of a reproduction.

The "Playograph" above illustrated is a most ingenious invention for reproducing a game of baseball. Unlike the various devices, electric, and otherwise, known to the public, which only record results in a vague manner, the Playograph actually plays the game. "Watch the ball," the slogan made famous by the "Playograph."

Ball Is Curved

A real ball is shown in action, that travels to all parts of the playing field, in exact duplication of the ball in the actual game. Balls, strikes, fadeaways, curves and strike-outs; bases on balls, singles, doubles, triplex, homers, fumbles, muffs, bunts, the pitcher trying to catch the man off first, the exact manoeuvre of the ball as on the crucial diamond, the play at second when the catcher throws there to catch the runner stealing—these are some of the plays calculated to arouse the enthusiasm of the fans in many close games.

It shows many other details of the games never before attempted. It is, in fact, a real game played on a miniature field. It is entirely mechanical in construction. It has no electricity whatever connected with it.

As seen in the illustration, a ball field with all its positions, is shown. By an ingenious invention a ball is invisibly suspended in front of the field. As the ball is pitched, batted or fielded in a game which may be played a thousand miles away, the play is immediately duplicated on the Playograph by the operator in the rear of the machine, who has the ball at all times under control, and throws it about, covering any position on the field. The moving ball idea is original with the Playograph.

Another Important Feature

As the Playograph depicts the flight of the ball, it also shows the progress of the runner on the bases; when he is "safe" or "out" or holding the base. This is accomplished by a system of white metal squares, representing the runner's action, exactly as in the real game.

Umpire's Decisions

The umpire's decisions are instantly recorded in their respective decisions. The technique of the game will not be lost, even to minute detail. When a batter is out on strikes, the Playograph shows if fanned out or called out on strikes by the umpire. The man at the bat is indicated by an arrow opposite his name; another arrow shows the "errors" and who makes them. All these are operated, as everything else, from the rear of the Playograph and out of sight of the spectators.

Complete Record of the Game

In addition to the player, attached on each side is a scoring, which shows the runs, hits, errors, strike-outs and base on balls. By another exclusive feature, which is termed play signs, one is told of the various hits, fly ball, bunt, batter hit, fumble, muff, fanned, called out, etc. These points are all shown in connection with the flight of the ball and base-runner, giving a sensational and realistic reproduction and affording a clear understanding of each play as it is made.

How Operated

The Playograph is operated in conjunction with the telegraph wire which runs direct to the ball park where the game is played. As each play is made it is instantly sent over a special wire to the operator back of the Playograph, who reproduces it exactly as it was made simultaneously as possible.

The Playograph will show a most complete and realistic reproduction of the "World's Series," one which holds the interest from the start of play until the last man is out and the happy and unhappy fans wend their way homeward.

Time and Place

The Tribune extends a most cordial invitation to all of its friends to be at The Tribune building at 1 o'clock Wednesday afternoon to witness the first game of baseball's grand climax upon the "Playograph" that is a close second to the real game.

The key features of the Playograph included mechanisms that helped fans follow the ball and slots that provided information about the current play and the progress of the game.

Following the Action on the Board

Moving Ball: “‘Watch the Ball’ was the slogan made famous by the Playograph,” (October 8, 1923, p.8, *Winnipeg Tribune*). The Playograph was a mechanical board (no electricity). Two (or more) men standing behind the board manipulated levers, pulleys, strings, keys, slots, and so forth to show the plays of the game. One man managed the movement of the ball and the other operated a keyboard that worked the other parts of the board.

Each play represented on the board was triggered by a wire sent from the site of the WS game to a telegraph operator situated behind the board. The information from the wire was passed to the Playograph operators who in turn reproduced the play on the board. Hunt (1912) described the mechanism that determined the movement of the ball:

On the back of the board, “behind the scenes” as it were, there is a perpendicular stick, one end of which is fastened to the floor. On this stick is a cross handle by which the ball is moved up and down by means of a thin and almost invisible string which is fastened to the ball above and below and similarly to the handle on the back. Thus it will be readily seen that by moving this handle up or down the ball will move down or up as the case may be. However this would only permit the ball to move straight up or down between the catcher’s box and center field. The perpendicular stick is, while fastened at the bottom, loose at the top and free to move in a groove to the right or left. Now by a combination of these two movements the ball may be made to move anywhere on the board. Of course anyone could not go up and immediately work the ball, but by practice one may become very adept at it. For instance, while representing a throw from the pitcher’s box to home plate, by a slight and quick movement of the perpendicular bar, an excellent curve may be represented.

Fans could thus watch the ball as: the pitcher sent it to the plate; the batter drove a ball deep into left, center, or right field; an outfielder attempted to throw out an advancing runner or an infielder retrieved a ground ball and fired it to first base for a put out; the catcher threw a ball to second to prevent a stolen base, etc.

Play Slot: The Play Slot (see middle of board, above line score) provided a one or two word description of what just happened, here shown as a Fly Ball. Other possible Play Slot signs included: Flied Out, Fouled Out, 2 Base Hit, Batter Hit, Fly Ball, Bunt, Fanned Out, Stole Base, Called Out, HR, Double Play, Balk, etc.

Understanding the Information Displayed on the Board

The board had slots that keep fans up to date about the runs scored in the inning and the game; the runs, hits, and errors of each player; and the current play on the field. The slots were located in the following positions on the board:

...In the centre of the board: Field—diamond, including foul lines (flags), lines between bases, some positions (e.g., LF, CF, RF)

...Down each side: Batting order (name, position) for each team, slots for running record of each player (runs, hits, errors), and total number of strikeouts (S) and bases on balls (BB)

...In the centre, bottom of board: Runs scored in each inning by each team (line score)

...In the centre, just above line score, keys used to show:

>> “Batter” at the plate (see **Giants-Kelly**)

>> “Ball & Strike”-current count on the batter (see **1 ball, 2 strikes**)

>> “Out”-current number of outs (see **1**),

>> “Runs”- number of runs scored to this point in the inning (0-see **white blank**)

>> “Footprints” of a player running to a base (see **white footprint** half way between home and first base)

>> “Error”-if charged, which player made the error (see Line up- **Yankees-1B Pipp**)

>> "X or O" - what happened to a runner at a particular base (see **X** on second, indicating that **Kelly** made it safely to second on **Pipp's error** on the **Fly Ball** (**O** indicates an out)

The World's Series

ALL eyes in the baseball world will be turned Saturday to New York, where the St. Louis Cardinals, in the world's series for the first time in history, will battle against the New York Yankees, many times winners of the crown of baseball. The series will bring two home-run kings into action, Rogers Hornsby, manager of the Cards, and the great Babe Ruth, of the Yanks.

The huge Yankee stadium, with 65,000 seats, is expected to see the biggest crowd in history.

The Tribune cannot offer you a seat in the stadium, but it can give you the next best thing, a bird's-eye view of the game, play by play.

The Tribune baseball board will show you the field in position, the runners on bases, the man at bat, the flight of the ball from the mound to the plate and thence to the distant bleachers or the fielder's hand. You will be able to follow every move as clearly as if you were in the grandstand.

The Tribune will be connected by direct wire with the stadium and as fast as each play is made it will be shown on the board. In addition, Mike O'Connor, The Tribune announcer, will tell the story of the game innings by innings. There is one thing about Mike, he can be heard. You will miss nothing if you are in the crowd when he is speaking.

Telephone operators will give you the latest news on the game while it is still in progress.

Saturday's game, the opener, starts at 1.30 New York, 12.30 Winnipeg time. At 12.30 the service will begin. Come to The Tribune and watch it.

The telephone number to call is

24 331

The image above was a notice published in the *Winnipeg Tribune* a few days before the 1926 WS started. The notice:

>>appeared on the front page. The WS was front-page news in many newspapers in Canada.

>>did not explicitly refer to the Playograph...The *Tribune* had used the Playograph for years. It was "its" baseball board, something most subscribers must have known.

>>promised “a bird’s-eye view of the game play by play”

>>gave fans the option of phoning the newspaper for updates (at no. 24 331)

>>highlighted an announcer

In the early applications of the Playograph, a few newspapers let each movement on the scoreboard “speak for itself” (like a silent movie). However, the operators of the Playograph soon realized that fans would have a richer experience if the visual representation of the game on the Playograph was accompanied by an audio description of the plays. Accordingly, most newspapers hired or appointed an announcer who described the plays with the aid of a megaphone. Some dubbed the announcer the “Megaphone Man.”



The above photo was taken at a New York Highlanders’ (Yankees’) game in 1909. Here the Megaphone Man announced the next batter. The Megaphone Man beside the *Tribune’s* Playograph was hundreds if not thousands of miles from the

site of the WS game. He was not only charged with announcing batters but also with describing pitches and hits, noting flyouts, groundouts, and errors, and indeed reporting all plays that took place on the field.

Initially the *Tribune's* announcer simply read the telegraphed messages passed to him by the telegraph operator sitting near the Playograph. The Megaphone Man quickly learned that he had to fill the "dead" times between messages, which he did with comments about the player at bat, the two WS teams, the pitchers, the rules and the calls of umpires, and so on. Some also added humorous anecdotes about the two teams or about baseball in general. Announcers often were or soon became local celebrities.

For most of the 1920s, the *Winnipeg Tribune* secured the services of Mike O'Connor to announce the games. The *Tribune* referred to Mike as "Winnipeg's premier announcer," "the man with the silver pipes," or a man who "kept the fans in a happy mood with his inimitable humour." He had a booming voice, one that was further amplified through the use of a megaphone. Mike was a knowledgeable baseball announcer who had been quite involved in baseball in the past (he had played minor league baseball in San Antonio, for example). He also was a local personality/celebrity, someone who was actively sought as an announcer for or speaker at various events in Winnipeg.

In short, fans had simultaneous visual (scoreboard) and audio (megaphone) representations of the ongoing action on the field in each of the WS games, sometimes seconds after it happened in whichever stadium the WS was being played.

In other parts of Canada, some newspapers occasionally relied more heavily on a Megaphone Man to broadcast the World Series (e.g., *Montreal Star*, *Saint John Evening Times-Globe*, *Saint John Telegraph-Journal*, *Regina Leader-Post*, *Fredericton Daily Gleaner*). While these newspapers also used their own bulletin boards to provide inning-by-inning updates, they usually highlighted the Megaphone Man in their ads and notices.

The *Tribune* used various strategies to promote its Playograph:

Ads/Notes-As illustrated above, the *Tribune* published a notice or ad before a WS game to remind fans that watching a WS game on the *Tribune's* Playograph: "was the next best thing to being there." It also emphasized the speed with which a play was reported ("as fast as the play was made it will be shown on the board"). These ads/notes also highlighted the popularity of the announcer.

Peanuts-By 1925, the *Tribune* distributed peanuts to the fans.



Prizes for Attending the Playograph-The above photo was published in the *Tribune* during the 1930 WS. As an incentive/reward for watching the *Tribune's* scoreboard, after each game the paper included a photo of the crowd watching the Playograph with the faces of five fans circled. If the person recognized his/her face, she/he could go to the *Tribune* building and claim a prize of \$1.00.

Playograph Scoreboards In Other Cities

The Automatic Baseball Playograph was featured on an outside wall of other newspapers across Canada. It was also used by entrepreneurs who mounted the board in enclosed and/or indoor venues:

Newspapers

Vancouver: *The Province*; *Vancouver Sun*

Saskatoon: *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*

Regina: *Regina Leader-Post*

Winnipeg: *Winnipeg Tribune*

Brantford: *Brantford Expositor*

Kingston: *Kingston Whig-Standard*

Enclosed And/Or Indoor Venues

Toronto: Paragon Scoreboard (Playograph- Massey Hall, the Strand Theatre, the Empire Theatre, the Tivoli Theatre, the Regent Theatre, etc.

Montreal: Mount Royal Arena; Orpheum Theatre

Next we travel east to Toronto and back in time to 1916 to explore how Toronto fans “watched” the World Series.

WATCHING THE WORLD SERIES IN TORONTO IN 1916

PARAGON AUTOMATIC
SCORE BOARD
(Star Theatre)

NOKES
ELECTRASCORE
(Massey Hall)

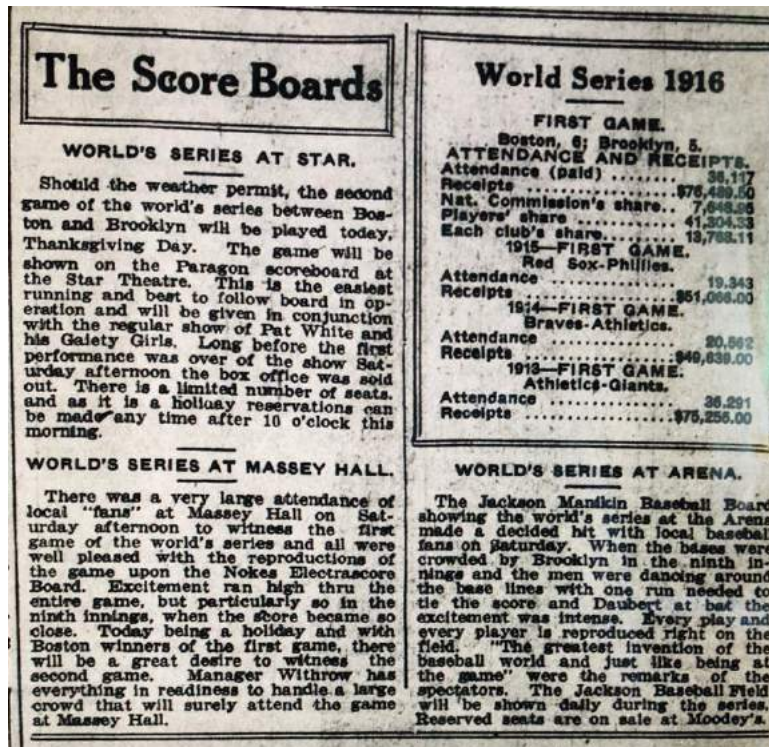
JACKSON MANIKIN
BASEBALL INDICATOR
(Arena Gardens)

MASSEY HALL
Saturday, 2 p.m.
WORLD'S NOKES
SERIES.. ELECTRA
SCORE
BOARD
PRICES 25c AND 50c.

JACKSON'S MANIKINS
World's Series
ARENA, SAT., 2 p.m.
Come and see the greatest baseball in-
vention in years. Players do everything
but talk. Smoke if you like.

The above ads appeared in the *Toronto Globe* (October 5, 1916, p. 9) two days prior to the World Series match between the Boston Red Sox and Brooklyn Robins.

Boston won the series 4–1. The *Toronto World* (1916) published the following summaries of the above three boards/devices:



The three boards/devices differed from newspaper-sponsored boards in at least three ways:

Non-Newspaper Promoters-Local entrepreneurs sponsored these boards/devices. Toronto newspapers published ads or notices about these three devices.

Indoors-These boards/devices played in theatres, halls, arenas, etc. Most fans "watched" the game from a seat.

Admission-Nokes and Jackson charged 25 cents for general admission and 50 cents for reserved seats.

From my research, it appears that most Toronto newspapers (e.g., *Toronto Globe*, *Toronto Star*, *Toronto World*, *Toronto Telegram*, *Toronto Mail*, *Toronto News*) had bulletin boards on the outside wall of their respective buildings. They likely provided regular updates on the WS game in progress. However, to date, I have not found examples where Toronto newspapers used any of the mechanical or

electric scoreboards noted herein or a megaphone man to describe the action (*Toronto Star* may have used the Playograph in the mid-1920s). I have not located any photos of crowds gathering outside Toronto newspaper buildings or notices that encouraged fans to watch their bulletin boards and/or listen to their Megaphone Men outside their main offices. The newspapers promoted these devices through ads and short articles on the devices, as well as publishing numerous reports, columns, and articles on the WS.



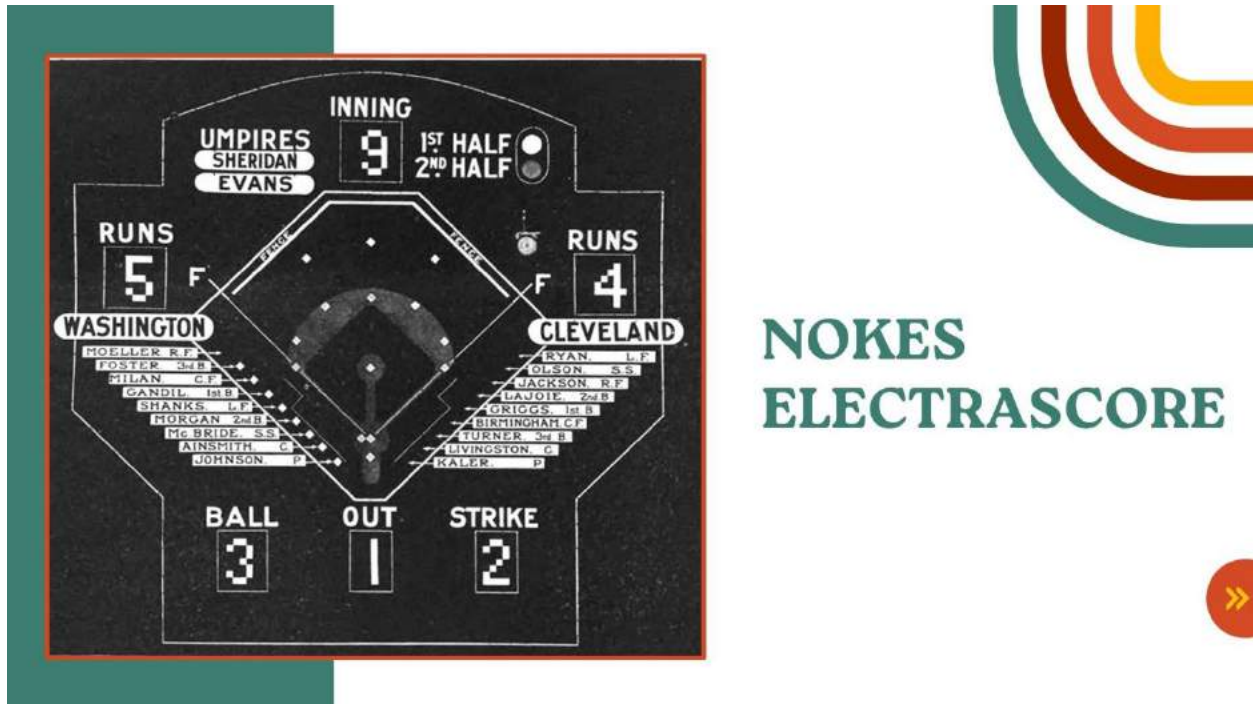
This image includes photos of Bill Hewitt (1920) on the left and Tommy Ryan (1934) on the right and an ad for the Paragon Scoreboard published in the *Toronto Star* on October 2, 1922 (p. 9).

In 1910, Bill Hewitt (1875-1966), a sports executive and journalist (and father of Foster Hewitt and grandfather of Bill Hewitt) and Tommy Ryan (1872-1961), a sportsman and entrepreneur, inventor of five-pin bowling, and inductee in Canada's Sports Hall of Fame, joined together to introduce the mechanical Paragon Automatic Score Board to Toronto fans.

The Paragon is similar to and closely aligned to the Playograph. In the 1910-1914 period, "The Paragon Playograph" was used in Buffalo, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and other cities. The Paragon is the longest running scoreboard in Toronto and probably in Canada. It was played from 1910 to the mid-1930s. Though Ryan

frequently operated the Paragon at the Star Theatre (one of two burlesque theatres in Toronto), he also played the Paragon at Massey Hall, the Strand Theatre, the Empire Theatre, the Tivoli Theatre, and the Regent Theatre, among others.

In addition, Ryan broadcast “away” games (and some home games) of the Toronto Maple Leafs baseball team (Eastern League).



The Nokes Electrascore shown above was used at Massey Hall between 1914 and 1916. It was an electric scoreboard with more than 23,000 feet of electric wiring. It relied on 1500+ flashing lights to display the various actions on the field. The board was 16 feet wide, 16 feet high, and 3 feet thick and weighed about a ton. It was operated by one man.

Unique Features of the Electrascore

Different Coloured Lights to Show Simultaneous Movements of Ball and Players

Ball: Red lights traced the movement of the ball (by hit or throw), with lights along its path alternately illuminating and then dimming as the ball moved across the field.

Players on Field (Defensive Team)-White Lights of one or more players went on to show their response(s) to a hit ball, runners advancing base, throwing the ball to other players, etc.

Players at Bat or On Base- A batsman was shown with a white light when he came to bat and again when he completed his play (got out or scored a run). His light turned green when he hit the ball and when he ran the bases.

An Example of the “Light Show”

Moeller (Washington) hits a ground ball between the third baseman and the shortstop into left field for a single....WHAT DID FANS SEE?

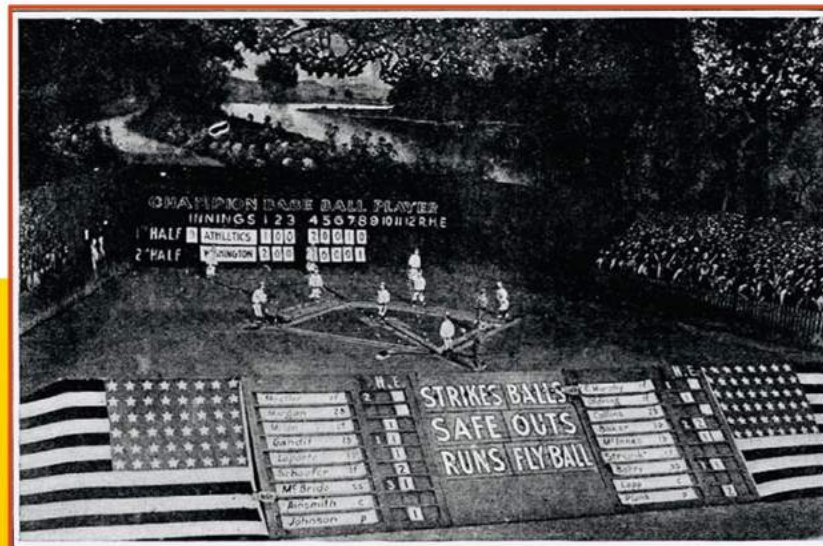
Batter: Shown in white lights as he walked to the plate and during his time at bat. Once he hit the ball, his light turned green as he ran to first base on his single.

Ball: Red lights followed the path of the ball as it passed between the third baseman and the shortstop, as the left fielder scooped it up and threw to the second baseman to hold the runner to a single. The second baseman tossed the ball to the pitcher and the next play begins.

Fielders: White lights brightened and then dimmed as the third baseman and the shortstop both moved to snag the groundball, as the left fielder ran to pick up the groundball and threw the ball to second base, and as the second baseman hustled to the base to catch the incoming throw from the left fielder.

Thus, for this one play, all four colours were illuminated, sometimes simultaneously (e.g., red light brightened as it reached the left fielder as did the white light of the left fielder to show his movement to the ball and his throw to second base) to reflect the movement of the ball and the actions of various players involved in the play.

JACKSON MANIKIN BASEBALL INDICATOR-FIELD



The Jackson Manikin Baseball Indicator was the third device used to broadcast the World Series to Toronto fans in 1916. While the mechanical and electric devices were somewhat like old-fashioned pinball or arcade games, the Jackson Manikin Baseball Indicator was more like a puppet show. The players and umpires were “manikins,” that is puppet-like figures about 1.5 feet high (see the image on the next page). The “Field” had the following features:

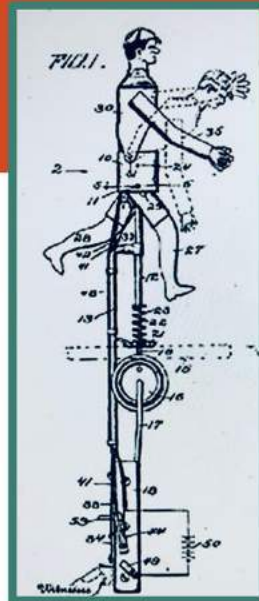
Size of “Board”: The Field was set up in the Arena Gardens, the hockey rink used by the Toronto Maple Leafs. The Field covered most of the ice surface, which was 95 feet wide and 230 feet long.

Miniature Field: The Field included: a diamond, a grandstand, fences, scenery, a scoreboard, and various slots that used electric lights to show the lineups of the two teams, runs scored, balls and strikes, outs, and plays. The board slanted upwards to facilitate easy viewing for the fans.

Mechanical and Electric Components: Ten operators, most of whom were underneath the “board,” used levers to operate the men in the field, at bat, and on bases (mechanical) while a separate operator used lights for the slots (to highlight the lineups of the two teams, runs scored, balls and strikes, outs, and plays) and to show the movement of the ball.

Announcer (aka Megaphone Man): One of the operators called out “Play Ball” and “Balls” and “Strikes,” and likely described some of the plays (such as a double play or an error) or actions (arguing with umpire, say, or a manager or captain replacing the pitcher).

JACKSON MANIKIN BASEBALL INDICATOR- PLAYERS



The image on the left above is a sketch of the prototype manikin (submitted as part of the US Patent application), while that on the right is a photo of the actual figure of the catcher. Fans would see the top half of the right image on the field. The bottom half of the images (below dotted line in left image) shows the levers that the operator used to display the movements of the player (running, catching, sliding, and so on).

Mitchell (1913) described a manikin running bases and a manikin at bat:

Through a system of levers the operator is able to raise either the right or left arm or both, or cause the figure to bend over. In running bases the wheel attached to the manikin fits the base-runner groove, and in revolving causes the legs to move backward and forward. If the operator wishes to make the figure slide into a base, it is necessary only to incline the entire device in the direction desired. . . .

At the commencement of the game . . . the batter in his brown suit comes up through a hole near the home plate and with bat in his hand takes up his place. A light appears in the pitcher's hand if he is right-handed, in his right hand, and if left-handed, in his left hand. After "winding up" he delivers the ball toward the batter. The light in his hand is extinguished, and if the pitcher is inclined to be wild it is shown in the catcher's hand, the umpire raises his left arm and the announcer calls "ball one." If the batter makes a safe hit—say for two bases to left field—the progress of the ball is shown on the ground from home plate, between shortstop and third base out into left, where the fielder stoops and the light is shown in his hand. He throws to third base, who in turn throws it to the pitcher. . . . If, however, the batter merely hits a fly to left field, a light glows over the shortstop's head, then over the head of the left fielder, and then in his hand...

The showing of the World Series at the Arena Gardens in 1916 was the only time that the Jackson Manikin Baseball Indicator played in Toronto.

The next six images include a sample of scoreboards in use in other cities in Canada. In each case, a Megaphone Man assisted in the broadcast of WS games.



Edmonton Journal
Magnetic Player Board
1933

(City of Edmonton Archives-EA-160-1513.JPG)

Calgary Herald
Magnetic Player Board
1928

A Magnetic Player Board
was also used by the
Regina Leader-Post.

See World Series at Herald

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	R	H	E	SO	BB
CARDINALS	0	1	0	0	1	0	3	0	0				5	9	2	5	1
YANKEES	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0				3	8	2	4	2

R	H	E	CARDINALS	YANKEES	R	H	E
0	0	0	DOITHIT C.F.	KOENIG S.S.	0	0	0
0	1	0	HIGH 3.B.	PASCHAL L.F.	0	1	0
2	1	0	FRISCH 2.B.	RUTH R.F.	1	3	0
1	3	0	BOTTOMLEY I.B.	GEHRIG I.B.	0	0	0
0	1	0	HAFEFY L.F.	MEUSEL L.F.	0	1	0
1	2	0	HARPER R.F.	LAZZERI 2.B.	0	1	0
0	1	1	WILSON C.	ROBERTSON S.B.	1	1	1
1	0	0	MARANVILLE S.S.	BENGOUGH C.	0	0	0
0	0	1	SHERDEL P.	HOYT P.	0	0	1
0	0	0			1	1	0

MAGNETIC PLAYER BOARD BALL \ STRIKE WATCH THIS SPACE



Winnipeg Free Press Evening Bulletin
Wonder Board
1924

The *Free Press* was a competitor to the *Winnipeg Tribune*.

THE EXPOSITOR'S PLAYOGRAPH IN ACTION



Brantford Expositor Playograph, 1924

**BASEBALL WORLD SERIES RESULT ON THE
PLAY-O-GRAPH AT THE MT. ROYAL ARENA**

**STARTING
Oct. 2nd.
At 1:30 p.m.
Follow the Ball**

**THE AUTOMATIC BASE BALL
PLAY O GRAPH**

**YANKEES
VS.
ST. LOUIS
Admission ... 50c
Follow the Ball**

SCORE		PLAY O GRAPH		SCORE	
1	2	3	4	5	6
0	0	0	0	0	0
BOSTON		PLAY O GRAPH		BROOKLYN	
1	0	BALLS 3		1	0
0	0	2 STRIKES		0	0
0	0	2 OUT		0	0
0	0	FLY BALL		0	0
0	0	RUNS		0	0
0	0	2 nd HALF		0	0
0	0	8 INNING		0	0
0	0	UMPIRE		0	0
0	0	GUY QUIGLEY		0	0

Montreal Daily Star Playograph, 1926

The Crowd Watching the Baseball Score Board In Front of The Evening Mail Building Yesterday



Halifax Evening Mail Electric Baseball Scoreboard, 1922

(1922-10-05-p3-*The Evening Mail* (Halifax)-Electric Baseball Score Board)

Scoreboards Noted in the Above Six Images: The *Edmonton Journal* and *Calgary Herald* (also *Regina Leader-Post*) used the Magnetic Player Board. The *Winnipeg Free Press* and *Evening Bulletin* and the *Halifax Evening Mail* referred to their boards as an “electric board” but the reference to a white ball in the descriptions suggest that these too were magnetic boards. The *Brantford Expositor* used the Playograph while the *Montreal Daily Star* advertised the use of the Playograph in the Mount Royal Arena.

Locally Developed Boards: Newspapers in some towns (such as *The Weekly Advance* in Kemptville, Ontario and the *Springhill Record* in Springhill, Nova Scotia) and cities (the *Ottawa Citizen*) either used their own bulletin board or used a board developed by inventors in the surrounding area.

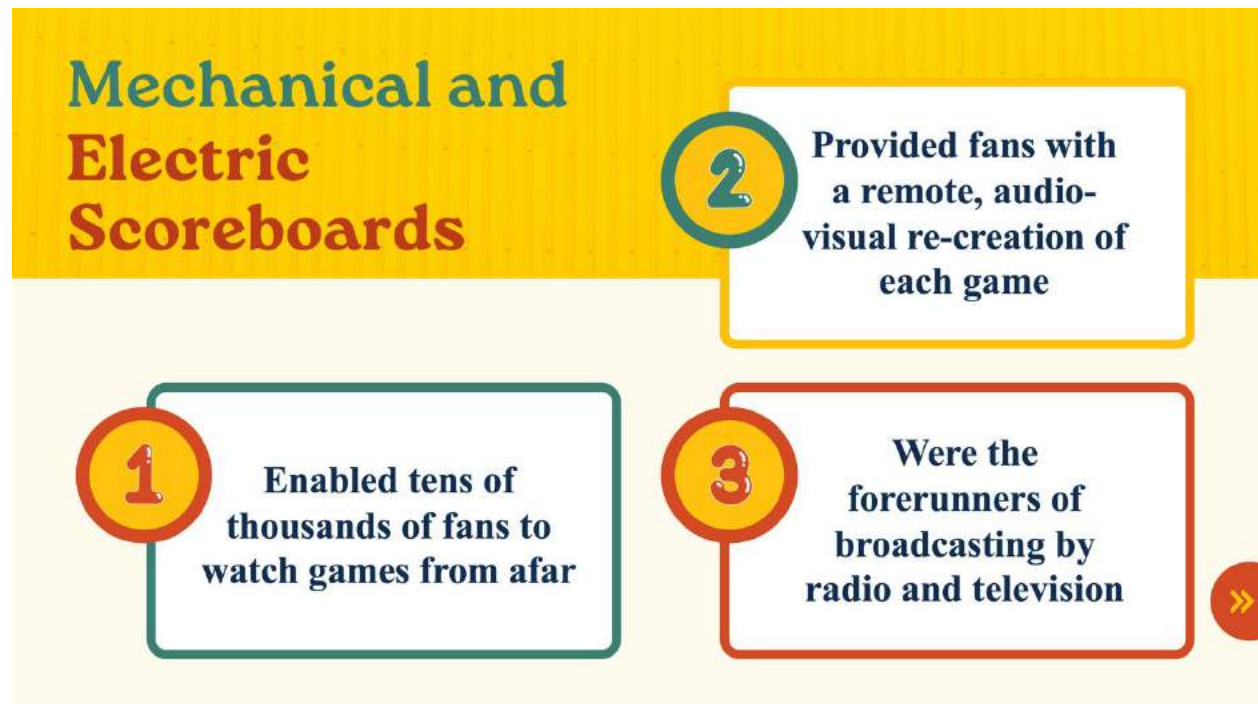
Boards in Small Communities and/or Remote Areas: Many fans in smaller towns and villages or in more remote regions of the country relied more on reports posted on boards outside the telegraph office, post office, or, in some communities, the weekly or bi-weekly newspaper office. In most cases, these postings provided the final score at the end of the WS game, with a few offering updates on any changes in the score during the game.

Other Scoreboards in Use in North America

Some of the sources included in the articles or books listed at the end of this article (e.g. Edelman, Keyser, Macht, Schubin) describe some of the mechanical and electric scoreboards invented and patented in the US. Many of these boards were used in Canada. Please note that many of the better-known scoreboards had names similar to those given to the various pinball games popular during this period, which I would argue are similar to some of the sports-based computer games available today. A few of these scoreboards are listed below (including those mentioned earlier):

Automatic Base Ball
Electric Baseball Bulletin
Base-Ball Indicator
Illustrating Apparatus
Amusement Apparatus
Base-Ball Indicator Board
Electric Ball Game
Moving Picture Baseball Scoreboard
Roder Electric Game Reproducer
Compton's Electrical System
Star Ball Player
Nokes Electrascore
Coleman Lifelike Scoreboard
Reproducing Baseball by Telegraph
Automatic Baseball Playograph
Electric Marvel Player Board
Electro Wonder Score Board
Standard Ball Player
Jackson Manikin Baseball Indicator

Magnetic Player Board
Paragon Automatic Scoreboard



Mechanical or Electric (M-E) Scoreboards were most used in Canada during the 1910-to-1930 period (continuing in some cities well into the 1930s).

With a population around 9 million in the 1920s, the number of Canadian fans who “watched” each WS game on M-E scoreboards likely numbered between 50,000 and 100,000.

While the actual attendance at WS games in the 1920s was between 25,000 and 60,000, the number of Canadian and American fans watching from afar on M-E scoreboards numbered in the millions. Sandford (1920), in an article entitled “How the World’s Series is Flashed to Fifty Million People,” declared that this number could reach 50 million if one also counted every fan who received telegraph-based, play-by-play updates while the game was in progress.

Audio-Visual: Before the widespread use of M-E scoreboards, most fans relied on newspaper reports of WS games published after the game, either on the same day or in the edition distributed on the next day. Some fans followed the progress of the game through telegraphed updates during the game, often posted on bulletin

boards outside newspaper offices. The M-E scoreboards provided fans with a visual representation of and a megaphoned explanation for every play on the field moments after it happened. These multi-sensory broadcasts gave fans a richer and more evocative portrayal of the action, allowing them to imagine what it must have been like to be a fan in the ball park or a player on the field.

Remote Re-creation: The broadcast was “remote” in the sense that it occurred hundreds if not thousands of miles from where the WS game was actually played. The fans who “watched” the WS game from these distant locations cheered and clapped as much or more than those spectators in the ball parks, demonstrating a level of engagement that seemed far from remote.

Despite claims to “simultaneous coverage” or “immediate reconstructions,” the telegraphed summary of the most recent play on the field could sometimes take more than a few seconds to reach the location where remote broadcasts occurred. A commentator at the WS game produced a succinct description of the most recent play on the field that a telegraph operator on site sent to another telegraph operator who was located beside or behind the M-E scoreboard in cities and towns across Canada. The local telegraph operator passed the wired description of the most recent play to a Megaphone Man who shared it with the fans while those who worked the scoreboard moved the ball and the players according to the details provided by the wired message or the Megaphone Man. These slightly “delayed broadcasts” were as close to a real-time re-creation of each game as the various transfers allowed.

The Megaphone Man was the predecessor of the radio broadcaster. The M-E scoreboards demonstrated the importance of a dynamic visual representation of the action on the field. The combination of the audio and the visual was a powerful formula for broadcasting baseball, one that anticipated the eventual development of broadcasting by television.

In the early 1920s, some foresaw this development of broadcasting baseball by television. After noting that the radio was causing a problem in attendance at baseball games, *The Sporting News* (1922) went on to predict even further problems about what might follow radio broadcasts:

And next we will have the whole works shot to pieces because instead of mere sounds the radio will be reproducing in every home that has a ten-dollar equipment the picture of the play. Yep, that is the possibility. When Ruth hits a homer or Sisler slides into the plate, a film will catch him in the act, wireless will carry it a thousand miles broadcast and the family sitting in the darkened living room will see the scene reproduced instantaneously on the wall...Then what will become of baseball? Nobody will actually see Ruth and Sisler in action except the bored operators of the wireless picture producing machine who have to be out as part of their job.

In a 1924 article entitled "A Radio-Controlled Television Plane," the author commented on experiments with television and the possible application to broadcasting baseball games:

It is the writer's opinion that, within two or three years, it will be possible for a man in New York to listen over his radio to a ball game 500 miles away and see the players on a screen before him at the same time. Whether it will be the Jenkins machine or some other machine that will achieve this result is of little consequence. The main thing is that experimenters all over the world are working frantically on television and sooner or later the problem will be solved.

The first nationally televised broadcast of the WS in the US occurred in 1947. Likely some Canadian fans who had televisions were able to pick up the games on stations in some of the border cities (Buffalo, Detroit). In 1948, the Horseshoe Tavern in Toronto showed some of the WS games on its newly-installed TV.

In summary...As with the development of the game of baseball itself, Canada and the United States also shared in the development of how the game was broadcast. In the first three decades of the 20th century, more and more baseball fans on both sides of the border "watched" and "listened" to a play-by-play broadcast of the World Series with the aid of mechanical or electric scoreboards. We see the legacy of the M-E scoreboards in the many ways fans in Toronto and across Canada follow the game.

Turning to Toronto and the 1992 WS...On October 24, 1992 (*Toronto Star*, p. A6), for the first time ever, the Skydome opened its doors for fans to watch Game 6 of

the WS in Atlanta. The Jays won the game to take their first MLB championship. 45,000 watched the game on the Jumbotron.

The spirit of these earlier innovations is stronger than ever—albeit in forms never fully imagined a century ago. As fans, we can gather together to watch any game and any sport we want to follow. We can do so at home, in pubs/bars, or in

**45,000
WHOOP IT
UP AT DOME
1992**



numerous designated public venues. And like fans in the 1920s, we wildly cheer and/or boo every play, as if we were at the game.

Conclusion

In this presentation I have looked back 100 years to pay tribute to the inventors of mechanical and electric scoreboards, to the talented men who operated these boards, and to the Megaphone Men who brought voice and colour to what fans saw on these boards. These innovators set both the stage and the bar for what baseball and sports fans everywhere eventually came to expect as broadcasting expanded first to radio and then to television.

The images that follow provide three more examples of how the legacy of the mechanical and electric scoreboards “lives on” in the broadcasting strategies of three Toronto teams: Toronto Blue Jays (2015), Toronto Raptors (2019), and Toronto Maple Leafs (2023).



“Bird’s Nest,” Toronto City Hall, 2015 Playoffs



Jurassic Park, NBA Finals, 2019

Maple Leaf Square expanding for the mass crowds expected for round 2 of playoffs



Maple Leaf Square, NHL Playoffs, 2023

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