

Presentation Schedule

Saturday, November 7th

8:00 - 9:00 Registration and breakfast

9:00 - 9:15 Welcome and announcements

Keynote Address

**9:15 - 10:15 Colin Howell: An Ecology of Baseball in the Northern
Borderlands: Measuring Competition and Understanding
Opportunity**

This paper reconceptualizes postwar baseball in the northern borderlands as an interconnected ecology of leagues, teams, and player pathways extending across the Maritimes, New England, Quebec, and the upper Midwest. Using a SABRmetric framework built around Quality of Competition (QUOC) indices and Major League Equivalencies (MLEs), the paper considers independent, semi-professional, and organized circuits not as a hierarchy, but as parallel labour markets that offered career choice options. The analysis introduces a flexible model that distinguishes between player status at the time of participation—prospect, peak professional, veteran, and elite amateur—and incorporates league-level context, including developmental concentration and veteran density. Case studies such as the 1958 Kentville Wildcats and the 1951 Sherbrooke Athletics illustrate how teams of comparable competitive strength could be constructed through fundamentally different strategies: prospect pipelines versus veteran cores. The result is a more historically grounded method for evaluating league quality and a new framework for understanding player choice, mobility, and opportunity in the postwar game.

10:15 - 10:30 Break

Toronto Maple Leafs Session

10:30 - 11:00 Jim Easton: Toronto Base Ball Club 1895-1897: A prelude for Bill Dinneen and 41 years in the major leagues

One always endeavours to get off to a good start on any project or activity, but setting off on the right foot for a career path, especially as a teenage athlete, can be a challenge. This presentation seeks to examine the team situation, manager strengths and player backgrounds as well as city and league circumstances that Bill Dinneen encountered out of the gate for his first three seasons (1895-1897) in Toronto. One can speculate as to how these variables, in combination with his novice experience, helped to lay the foundation of a career in baseball that lasted 41 years!

11:00 - 11:30 Mackenzie Longpre: Charlie White, Leon Day, and a Groundbreaking Summer in Toronto: The Integration Story of the International League Maple Leafs

For much of their existence, the International League Toronto Maple Leafs adhered to the same segregationist colour barrier that was in place across all of white organized baseball. For myriad reasons, it wasn't until 1951 that the team began an earnest pursuit of Black ballplayers. A young catcher and infielder named Charlie White, and the legendary Negro League veteran, Leon Day, were the first Black players to suit up for the Maple Leafs in July of 1951. Together, these two men broke the team's long-held colour barrier and ushered in a post-integration era for organized baseball in Toronto. This presentation will explore why and how the Maple Leafs integrated their team, and discuss the complementary career arcs of both White and Day.

11:30 - 12:00 William Humber: Elston Howard: Best Ever Here?

Evaluating Toronto ballplayers in 1980, Milt Dunnell called Elston Howard perhaps the “best ever here.” Arguably that accolade is still true. Howard became the first Black ballplayer on the New York Yankees in 1955 despite having offered major league-ready credentials long before then. In 1954 he learned the fundamentals of the catching position while winning International League MVP honours as the slugging hero of the pennant winning Toronto Maple Leafs. A major factor in the Yankees sending Howard to the Leafs, and not to one of their own farm teams, was Toronto’s flamboyant owner Jack Kent Cooke and his reputation for surmounting the era’s muddled racial climate. Elston’s lodging in 1954 testified to Toronto’s generally benign liberality. Cooke’s hubris however was a major factor in Toronto’s not joining the major leagues in the 1950s, while Howard was later disappointed in not becoming the Blue Jays first manager in 1977. Years later, but long after his death, a special Canadian moment graced Howard’s family.

12:00 - 1:30 **Lunch**

1:30 - 2:00 **Benno Rosinke: Keep Calm and Muddle Through: How the Inter-County League Survived the Hardships of WWII**

The Inter-County League was (it became the Canadian League for the 2026 season) the longest lived baseball league in Canada. Formed in 1919, it thrived in Central Ontario for over 100 years, but in the period between 1939 and 1946 it came close to extinction. World War II was a major crisis for the league, with the loss of players and teams. However, the league did not fold and survived the most severe crisis in its history. This paper deals with how the league survived and was able to produce memorable seasons despite all the wartime problems and restrictions it faced.

2:00 - 2:30 **Paul Allen: Fergie in Chatham**

This paper provides an insider’s account of Fergie Jenkins’ youth baseball experiences in his home town of Chatham, Ontario. Former teammate and friend, Paul Allen, the author of *Bright Lights Black Stars*, draws from personal memories and

scrapbooks to illuminate the early development of the eventual HOF Canadian, Ferguson Arthur Jenkins. Allen and Jenkins were teenage teammates in the 1950s when the Chatham All-Star teams won three OBA championships. They shared the same coaches and even attended MLB team tryout camps together. Allen had a unique perspective as a third baseman observing Jenkins' remarkable growth as a player. The presentation is based on newspaper articles and firsthand experiences, highlighting the inception of Little League Baseball in Chatham. It is enriched with stories and classic photographs of Jenkins and some of his earliest teammates, demonstrating a young boy's unwavering determination to pursue a professional baseball career.

2:30 - 2:45 **Break**

2:45 - 3:15 **Joe Marren: Bo may have known football and baseball, but he couldn't skate**

Bo may have known football and baseball, but he couldn't skate. Canada knows hockey, but also has a rich history with two-sport players in hockey and baseball. There were several athletes who played both sports, and this paper explores the intersecting careers of two of them. The first is James Riley, who played baseball in the majors and minors from 1921 to 1932, as well as 90 games in the Pacific Coast Hockey Association and was a member of the Stanley Cup-winning Seattle Metropolitans in 1917. The second is Dennis Ribant (the OHL's Hamilton Red Wings in 1960 and six Major League teams during the 1960s), who threw the Midwest League's first nine-inning complete game perfect game in 1961.

3:15 - 3:45 **Andrew Forbes: Spoke, Peck, and the Greatest Game Ever Played in Peterborough**

On October 13, 1923 an exhibition game was held at Riverside Park in Peterborough, Ontario. There would be nothing exceptional in this, as Peterborough was something of a baseball hotbed, except that one of the participants was future Hall of Famer Tris Speaker. Also present were big leaguers Les Nunamaker and Roger Peckinpaugh. But why were they in Peterborough? This presentation will

unravel that mystery, lay out the particulars of the contest, and reveal just how close the people of Peterborough came to seeing Speaker's buddy Ty Cobb as well.

3:45 - 4:00 **Break**

Panel Discussion

4:00 - 5:15 **Cross-Country Check-Up:** A wide-ranging discussion of the long-term trends, specific events, and influential participants who shaped baseball's historical development in Canada's various regions.

West Coast: Tom Hawthorne

Ontario: Bill Humber

Quebec: Patrick Carpentier

East Coast: Colin Howell

Sunday, November 8th

8:00 - 9:00 **Registration and breakfast**

Nineteenth Century Session

9:00 - 9:30 Justin Mckinney: **Base-Ballists Arrested: The London, Ontario Theft Case Against Billy Geer and Harry Luff**

In September 1875, two of the most promising baseball players in America, Billy Geer and Harry Luff, were charged with theft and robbery in London, Ontario while on a road trip with the New Haven Elm Citys. For several weeks, the case loomed large in the baseball world, as the character of the two players was called into question and their baseball futures hung in the balance. This presentation will explore the facts of the case, as well as the troubled lives of Luff and Geer, each of

whom would earn greater fame for their off-the-field conduct than for their baseball abilities.

9:30 - 10:00 Douglas Fox: **Did Harry Decker really exist, or was he the work of a 19th century opium-addicted short story writer?**

Harry Decker's personality was so dark and mysterious, his deeds so immoral, that he must have been a fictional character. While he reportedly was a model citizen when he played for Toronto's International Association entry in 1887 and 1888, he was a serial philanderer, forger, and counterfeiter whose reach always seemed to exceed his grasp. Once considered a top prospect in the game (before the term came into common use), Decker wasted his talent on get rich-quick schemes and multiple women who fell for his charms, repeatedly betraying family, friends, and teammates in the process. Without a doubt, Harry Decker was one of the shadiest characters to ever wear a Toronto uniform.

10:00 - 10:30 Avi Hyman, Samuel Shuster-Hyman and Caleb Shuster-Hyman: **Analyzing the Effectiveness of GenAI as a Research Tool for the Study of Canadian Baseball History**

Since the release of publicly available generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools in late 2022, the capabilities of services like ChatGPT, Copilot, Claude, etc. to generate text that effectively simulates human language have grown extensively. At the same time, the efficacy of these tools to assist with research has also been widely touted. We set out to test these systems for their efficacy as research tools related to the historical study of baseball. To complete this task, we use a case related to media coverage of Canadian baseball player Edward "The Only" Nolan. Specifically, we wanted to see how effectively several popular GenAI tools would work in 'automatically' identifying different reporting trends and patterns related to media coverage of Nolan's professional baseball career. Our methodology focused on developing a robust multi-shot research prompt that could be run against the same dataset of newspaper articles that talked about Nolan's career, and run through multiple different GenAI tools so that we could compare the outputs, as well as how those outputs compare to a human review of the same articles. The presentation will

highlight our findings and engage attendees in a discussion about the future of using GenAI as a research tool.

10:30 - 10:45 **Break**

10:45 - 11:15 **Max Weder: The Saskatoon Gems, The North Battleford**

Beavers and the Edmonton Eskimos: Canada at the Global World Series, 1955 to 1957

From 1938 through 1953, the International Baseball Federation held the Amateur World Series. Canada did not participate. The series resumed in 1961, but in 1955 the National Baseball Congress looked to hold a Global World Series which would allow semi-pro players. The tournament was held in Milwaukee from September 23 to 28. Despite having finished second to the Edmonton Eskimos in the Western Canada Baseball League, the Saskatoon Gems were selected to represent Canada. The Gems won Canada's first game in an international tournament, beating Japan 5-2, and finished third in the tournament. The Beavers and the Eskimos followed the Gems, with the Eskimos also finishing third in 1957.

11:15 - 11:45 **Arturo Marciano: How a Canadian Team Has Inspired Generations of Venezuelan Baseball Fans**

The Toronto Blue Jays have inspired generations of Canadian baseball fans since their inaugural game 50 years ago. A lesser-known aspect of their history is the working agreement established in the 1980s with Cardenales de Lara, a team in the Venezuelan Winter League. During the winter months, several prominent Blue Jays players, including Tom Henke, Ernie Whitt, Jesse Barfield, Willie Upshaw, Lloyd Moseby, Cecil Fielder, and Derek Bell, as well as managers such as Bobby Cox and John McLaren, participated in games for Cardenales de Lara. This presentation will examine the significance of that partnership and its impact on Venezuelan baseball fans.

11:45 - 12:15 **Bill Sproule: The House of David Baseball Team and their Canadian Tours**

The House of David baseball team was a traveling team that played exhibition games throughout the United States and Canada against amateur and semi-pro teams from the 1920s to the 1950s. The team was originally the product of the House of David religious commune from Benton Harbor, Michigan, and the players were known for their long hair and beards, their “pepper game” tricks, and baseball skills. The presentation will introduce the House of David, the baseball teams, and their barnstorming tours, specifically their tours in Canada.

12:15 - 12:45 **Matt Simpson: Collecting the Northern Hall: Canadian Content in the Hobby That Defined our Childhoods in the Junk Wax Era**

This paper will continue to examine the evolution of baseball cards into the 1980s and ‘90s, an era commonly referred to as the ‘Junk Wax Era’, as Topps’ monopoly came to an end and card manufacturers raced to belch out obscene amounts of low-quality cards that were gobbled up by kids hoping to retire early by owning the next Mickey Mantle rookie card. Canadian kids were not immune to baseball card fever and Canadian manufacturers and distributors played their role in the frenzy. No good article about baseball cards is complete without a good Top 10 list; I will therefore propose a list of the Top 10 ‘Holy Grail’ Canadian-connected Junk Wax Era cards.

12:45 **Closing remarks**