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Women and Baseball?

By

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Western Oregon University
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Readers
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WOMEN AND BASEBALL?

Introduction

American women began playing baseball in the mid nineteenth century, but they did not have a professional baseball league of their own until Philip Q. Wrigley founded the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League (also known as the AAGPBL) in 1943. The league was active between the years of 1943 and 1954, and it was a microcosm of the social and cultural change that was taking place in the United States during those years. World War Two gave many American women the opportunity to challenge the social construction of masculine and feminine roles. The AAGPBL is one unique illustration of the affect that World War Two (and labor shortages due to the war) had on these gender roles; it is also the only female sports league that achieved professional status during the war. Gender discourses apparent before the war shaped the league, but for a short period of time the female baseball players were able to explore new ideas of what it was to be feminine and masculine as well. The All-American Girls Professional Baseball League was not the first opportunity for women to play baseball in America, but the league did mark the height of popularity and success of women in baseball. The AAGPBL was an important step for women, especially for female athletes, the league affected those directly associated with it, and has recently gained a new generation of fans.

Before The AAGPBL

Before the formation of the AAGPBL some women had had success entering the field of baseball. During the nineteenth century, women were beginning to be encouraged to attend professional baseball games because the owners and managers believed that adding women to the crowd would help improve the crowd's behavior. Prior to the twentieth century, baseball crowds had earned a rowdy reputation, so the thought of adding women to the crowds was appealing to many people. Women did not limit their activities to watching baseball games, however. Vassar College, Smith College, and Mount Holyoke College all fielded women's baseball teams in the late nineteenth century. In 1867 the Dolly Vardens of Philadelphia took the field against a male baseball team, and in September of 1875 the first game between two women's baseball teams took place. The game was adapted for the women, with shortened base paths, lighter bats, a lighter ball, and only six innings of play. In 1892 and 1893 the Chicago Bloomer Girls and the New York Champions played exhibition games across the country.¹

In 1898 Elizabeth Stride also known as Lizzie Arlington, played baseball for the Philadelphia Reserves, a predominately men's minor league baseball team. Following Lizzie Arlington, more women played for minor league baseball teams including Alta Weiss, Lizzie Murphy and Josie Caruso, all played for various teams between 1907 and 1931.² During the 1930s and the 1940s women began playing in exhibition games against Major League Baseball players, Jackie Mitchell for example, who struck out

¹ Gai Ingham Berlage, Women in Baseball: The Forgotten History (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1994), 4-7, 29, 35, 45, 46-58, 76-77.

² Berlage, 76-77.

Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig on the same day.³ Although women had been able to make inroads into the world of baseball prior to the formation of the AAGPBL, the place where women were really making an impact was on the softball field.

Baseball and softball were different games because of the rules associated with each, but they were different socially as well. Baseball crowds had been known for being rowdy before the twentieth century, but in the years leading up to World War Two baseball had become a family sport, a game that was suitable for everyone. Softball however, was not. In the years prior to World War Two and the formation of the AAGPBL, softball had become very popular. In 1939 approximately ten million more people watched softball games than watched baseball.⁴ Softball was the most popular in the Midwest, where the AAGPBL would later place their teams. Although softball games drew large crowds, the teams were not seen as socially acceptable, the players were often seen as being masculine and lesbians by middle class commentators, who passed those same ideas onto parents that did not want their daughters to be perceived in that fashion, and therefore did not want their daughters to grow up to be softball players.⁵ In a 1942 article in the Saturday Evening Post journalist Robert M. Yoder described one softball player as running like a man, catching like a man, and sliding like a man. The article went on to say that "If she could spit, she could go with Brooklyn," meaning that if she were a man, she would be plying for the Brooklyn Dodgers.⁶ The women who played softball were not depicted as role models in popular media, and although women had success in both softball and baseball, the public seemed oblivious

³ Mary Northrup, "Women in Sports," Book Links, Volume 14 Issue 4 (March 2005): 10-11.

⁴ Berlage, 134.

⁵ Berlage, 134-135.

⁶ Robert M. Yoder, "Miss Casey At The Bat", Saturday Evening Post (August 22, 1942): 48.

to those successes. People had watched the games, but women in softball and baseball continued to be projected as unladylike and were mostly ignored by the media.⁷ The public finally really began to acknowledge women in baseball and the contributions that women had made to the game when the AAGPBL was founded and more attention was focused on the women athletes since there was less competition from their male counterparts.

The Beginning

The main reason why Philip Q. Wrigley was able to found the All-American Girls Baseball League was due to the temporary social and cultural changes caused by World War Two. Societal views regarding masculinity and femininity were undergoing a noticeable transformation, even if only temporarily. All sorts of "masculine" jobs were being opened up to women; some women were working making airplanes, some went to the battlefield as nurses, and some joined the sports arena. In the sports world, women were given the opportunity to play baseball as well as work as football coaches and horse jockeys.⁸ The societal view of feminine and masculine endeavors changed as men left for war, and someone had to do the jobs, so some women challenged some social norms. It was no longer socially unacceptable for women to do things such as play baseball. Women were even being recruited to join the armed forces as WAVES, nurses. Women were entering the workforce, taking the athletic fields, and becoming part of the armed services. The recruitment of women into the workplace became so important, that the US government actually created marketing that encouraged women

⁷ Berlage, 134-135.

⁸ Merrie A. Fidler, "The All-American Girls' Baseball League, 1943-1954." in Her Story in Sports: A Historical Anthology of Women in Sports, ed. Reet Howell et al. (West Point: Leisure Press, 1982), 590-603.

to do things that had previously been socially unacceptable.⁹

For women, World War II brought new opportunities, especially new professional opportunities, but it also brought a lot of new expectations. Women were expected to continue with the work that they had previously been doing, but they were also now expected to take on new roles that their husbands previously had fulfilled. There was also an increased demand for production for wartime goods, creating even more jobs for women. Three million new women entered the workforce during the war.¹⁰ The idea of the double shift became prominent; working a full day at a paying job and then working a full day at home. Women were allowed to enter the masculine professions, but they were expected to stay lady-like in the rest of their lives (such as keeping up their appearances including keeping long hair and wearing make-up).¹¹

The changing societal view of masculinity and femininity was a main reason that the league was able to attain the level of success that it did, but there were other factors that allowed the league reach the popularity that it did. Major League Baseball teams lost many of their best players to the war effort, weakening both the Major League and Minor Leagues teams. Many Minor League teams actually folded during World War Two due to falling attendance associated with these changes. Philip Q. Wrigley, the chewing gum magnate and the owner of the Chicago Cubs during World War Two, became convinced that the declining level of play in men's baseball called for drastic action. Wrigley wanted to ensure that the American pastime would survive the war. Wrigley

⁹ Jone Johnson Lewis, *World War II Posters: Women's Roles*,
http://womenshistory.about.com/library/pic/bl_p_wwii_posters_index.htm

¹⁰ *Rosie the Riveter: Women Working During World War II*,
<http://www.nps.gov/pwro/collection/website/rosie.htm>

¹¹ Emily Yellin, *Our Mother's War: American Women at Home and at the Front During World War II* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 45.

and the other owners of the MLB teams began searching for ways to make up for lost revenue and to keep up the spirits of the country.¹²

The shortage of talented male baseball players forced Wrigley to think out of the box, and enabled him to come up with the idea to promote women as professional athletes. Wrigley presented the idea of a women's professional baseball league to other MLB owners in an effort to garner more support but was largely unsuccessful. Branch Rickey, the president and general manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers was the only MLB official to support Wrigley; the other owners did not think that a women's professional league was marketable enough. Wrigley founded the league, financed the league, and found a way to market the league. In creating the league, it was important to Wrigley that it serve as a symbol of patriotism, and so he began the league as a non-profit organization¹³.

As previously noted, softball was already quite popular with American audiences and Wrigley chose to use the existing fan base to his advantage. Yet Wrigley was well aware of the negative stereotypes that were associated with softball and wanted to avoid them. Wrigley had a goal of creating a wholesome form of entertainment, fit for anyone in the family. In 1943 he formed the AAGSL (All-American Girls Softball League which later became the AAGPBL) and promoted it as patriotic; the players were marketed as women helping the war effort from the home front. As part of the patriotic focus of the league, players visited hospitals, and performed in USO shows. To avoid negative stereotypes associated with softball, the players were required to adhere to

¹² Fidler, 593-597.

¹³ AAGPBL Players Association, "League History," <http://www.aagpbl.org/league/history.cfm>

strict beauty and social standards set by the league.¹⁴

The AAGPBL gained popularity by building on the fan base of softball. The league that Wrigley first formed was essentially a softball league with modified rules. The league was first called the All-American Girls Softball League, later called the All-American Girls Baseball League (as it is still referred to by some) and finally named the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League.¹⁵ Each name change was associated with rule changes; every time the rules changed, the league's name changed. The distance from the mound to home plate changed, the pitching style changed, and the distances between the bases changed. By the time of the league's demise in 1954, the women were playing the exact same game that the men played, using the same size ball, the same field dimensions, and the same style pitching as their male counterparts. The rule changes are credited to the league managers, most of whom had been Major League baseball players.¹⁶

Marketing Of The Athletes

Although the female ballplayers now had a league of their own, they were still expected to follow beauty and social rules that were set by the league. The players were even required to attend charm school. Wrigley wanted to leave no doubt in the minds of observers that the women playing in the AAGPBL were feminine, even if they were playing baseball. He had the women wear skirts as a part of their uniforms. In fact, the designer of the uniforms was the same person who created the outfits worn by

¹⁴ Berlage, 134-143.

¹⁵ Barbara Gregorich, Women at Play: The Story of Women in Baseball (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1993). 85.

¹⁶ Gregorich, 85.

the Wrigley pixies (spokeswomen for Wrigley's gum company). The uniforms were also fashioned after the women's tennis and field hockey uniforms of the same era.¹⁷

The league developed a comprehensive marketing campaign. Arthur Meyerhoff worked for Wrigley and the Cubs organization as part of its marketing force and was put in charge of the marketing of the AAGPBL by Wrigley. The appearance of the players was of utmost importance to Wrigley and Meyerhoff, which is why they created strict etiquette and appearance rules for the athletes to follow. The players went to charm school where they learned proper etiquette. They also learned how to fashion their hair and how to apply make-up. The league restricted the women's lives as well as their appearance. Players were not allowed to wear slacks in public, they were required to wear lipstick, the athletes could not have bob or boyish haircuts, and they were not allowed to drink alcohol. The teams traveled with chaperones, which would monitor player activities during road trips, and players could not go out without permission from the chaperones. The women were required to stay and eat at approved sites only, and they had to ask for permission to participate in social activities. Any player who did not adhere to the rules of the league was fined; five dollars for the first offense, ten for the second, and suspension for third.¹⁸

The etiquette and appearance rules that the athletes had to follow to were designed to give the league a more marketable product. The league was capitalizing on the talent pool that had already been created by softball leagues, but the AAGPBL did not want the negative stereotypes that went along with the softball leagues, or the challenging of gender roles that was associated with the softball leagues. Wrigley

¹⁷ Bergae, 139-140. The uniforms featured in the movie "A League of Their Own" very adeptly mirror the uniforms that were actually used in the league.

¹⁸AAGPBL Players Association, "Rules of Conduct" <http://www.aagpbl.org/league/conduct.cfm>

ensured that the AAGPBL was able to capitalize on the softball talent pool by utilizing some of the scouts from the Chicago Cubs for the league. These scouts carefully examined the women that were recruited for the AAGPBL through the softball leagues. The athletes not only had to excel at their sport, they also had to fit the AAGPBL mold when it came to appearance and etiquette. Women whom the scouts perceived as having more masculine physical features or more masculine mannerisms were not recruited for the AAGPBL. Wrigley and Meyerhoff believed that appearance and etiquette were greatly important when trying to commercially market their league to families. The rules that governed the players were not only important to the marketing of the league, they were also important when trying to recruit for the league. Many of the athletes who played in the AAGPBL were minors when they first entered the league, and parent permission was necessary for them to play. Many parents of minors entering the AAGPBL felt that it was important that there be strict guidelines for the athletes to follow.¹⁹

Success For The AAGPBL

There were a number of reasons for the success of the AAGPBL. There was an effective marketing campaign, there was a parity in the league, and the league had teams in smaller cities (or markets), which allowed for loyal basis of fans to develop. Arthur Meyerhoff had come up with the ideas on how the league was going to market players, but he proved to be even more creative and very instrumental to the league's success. Although some of the marketing ploys that Meyerhoff and the AAGPBL tried did not work out (such as combining symphony and baseball), many of the marketing

¹⁹ Berlage, 139-154 and Sue Macy, *A Whole New Ballgame: The Story of the All-American Girls Profession Baseball League* (New York: Puffin Books, 1993), 11-21.

schemes did. One of the greatest marketing ideas that Meyerhoff developed was the idea to play a doubleheader under lights. The games were marketed as the first doubleheader to ever be played under the lights as well as being a patriotic event. The double header was played in 1944 and was announced as being a "Red Cross thank you night," and it turned out to be one of the most successful event that the league hosted.²⁰

Centered in the Midwest, the league had teams located in Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota and Michigan, and in a study completed by the Journal of Sport Behavior, 34% of the people polled believed that limited travel (due to the war effort and gas rationing) was one reason why the AAGPBL became so popular and drew such great crowds.²¹ The teams of the AAGPBL were hometown teams with which people could readily identify. The league was able to retain the "hometown feel" of its teams due to its contract policy. Because the league did not allow individual teams of the AAGPBL to own player contracts, the league itself owned the contracts. This allowed the league to keep hometown heroes and hometown favorites near their fan base. Since the league owned player contracts, the league was able to balance the talent of teams, creating parity within the league. Balanced teams meant closer scoring games and tighter pennant races.²² Another technique that helped the AAGPBL build a strong following was the practice of allowing poor children to sit on the third baseline of some games. These children came to be referred to as the "Knot Hole Gang." The league also had a novelty to it; prior to the creation of the AAGPBL not many Americans had

²⁰ Fidler, 601.

²¹ Karen H. Weiller and Catriona T. Higgs, "Fandom in the 40's: The Integrating Functions of All American Girls Professional Baseball League," Journal of Sport Behavior (June 1997) Academic Search Premier.

²² Susan E. Johnson, When women Played Hardball (Seattle: Seal Press, 1994), xix-xxiv.

had the opportunity to experience watching women play baseball.²³

The league was popular partially because of the familiarity of the players and fans. Since the AAGPBL owned player contracts, not the individual teams, the stars of the league were able to continue to play with the same team for long periods of time, creating a relationship with the fans in the area. Many of the players also lived in the areas that they were playing in, even during the off-season, often attaining jobs as secretaries or factory workers.²⁴ Wrigley had situated the teams in smaller towns across the Midwest, creating a marketplace where the teams would be highly competitive. Since the teams were located in the smaller towns of the Midwest, the teams were not competing for the fans attending Major League baseball games; instead they were competing for the fans attending the Minor League games. During World War II, gas rationing was a part of civilian life and limited travel opportunities; local residents were forced to stay closer to home, thereby allowing the fan base to grow for the AAGPBL teams. The league was able to increase its fan base through smart marketing and through player interaction with the fans. The league capitalized on the popularity of the best known players, making them the stars of the league and marketing them to enhance fan base, including Dorothy Kamenshek, Ann Harnett, and Jean Faut.²⁵

A Few AAGPBL Players

There were a number of great stars for in the AAGPBL, but none better known than Dorothy Kamenshek. Dorothy was a former softball player who entered the league at the age of seventeen, needing her parents' permission to play for the league. She was one of sixty women to make a roster, out of the two hundred-fifty women who tried

²³ Weiller and Higgs.

²⁴ AAGPBL Payers Association "General Articles," <http://www.aagpbl.org/articles/general.cfm?ID=9>

²⁵ Yellin

in 1943. Dorothy made the roster of the Rockford Peaches (located in Rockford, Illinois) that inaugural year. Dorothy was a first baseman. And beginning in her second year with the league, she made it to the All-Star game every year that she played. After nine years in the league, Dorothy retired as a fan favorite. The fans in Rockford even held a "Kamenshek Night" to honor her.²⁶

Although Dorothy Kamenshek was the greatest star of the league, she was not the first player that the league signed, that honor went to Ann Harnett. Harnett was a good baseball player, but she was also exactly what the league wanted when it came to image, which was one of the key reasons that she was the first player signed. Wrigley wanted players of high quality, yet he also wanted to portray an image of femininity; he believed that the marketing of femininity would strengthen the league. Ann Harnett was lady-like, she was feminine, and she was exactly what Wrigley wanted.²⁷ Ann played in the outfield, she was also a third baseman and a catcher. She played in the league for four years, and she played three of those with the Kenosha Comets, and the last year with the Peoria Red Wings. Harnett was chosen to be a player in the league due to her appearance as well as her athletic ability, she was even chosen to model for the design phase of creating uniforms for the league.²⁸

Another star of the league was Jean Faut and she played for the South Bend Blue Sox. Faut was the only AAGPBL player to pitch a perfect game, a feat she accomplished twice in her career. The first perfect game that Jean Faut pitched was against the Rockford Peaches on the 21st of July in 1951, the second was against the

²⁶ Gregorich, 90-95.

²⁷ AAGPBL Players Association "League History," <http://www.aagpbl.org/league/history.cfm>

²⁸ Berlage, 159-160.

Kalamazoo Lassies (an expansion team) in 1953.²⁹ She grew up down the street from a semipro baseball team, and as a young girl had learned how to pitch from the players on that team. Faut was originally recruited as a third baseman, but when rule changes required that the pitchers throw overhand, teams were shorthanded, so she was asked to pitch in a game. Thereafter Faut won a pitching spot and was even named AGPBL player of the year in 1953.³⁰

AAGPBL Inspires

The league was very popular in America, but it also inspired some opportunities for women in other places of the world. In 1947 the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League went to Havana, Cuba for spring training. Meyerhoff, the marketing guru for the league, was also the mastermind behind this idea. The Brooklyn Dodgers were having spring training in Havana, and the AAGPBL was able to outdraw them. More than 30,000 people attended the four AAGPBL exhibition games. The players also enjoyed the trip, Betsy Jochum (player for the South Bend Blue Sox) even noted the trip as one of her fondest baseball memories.³¹ After the AAGPBL's spring training trip to Havana, Latin America created a women's baseball league of its own, with many of the players later transitioning into the AAGPBL.³² As Jean Hastings Ardell, an author and AAGPBL aficionado, explains, the AAGPBL also inspired women's professional baseball in Japan. The future founder of the Japan league had heard about the AAGPBL on the radio, and was inspired to create a league like it. By 1949 Japan had its own professional women's baseball league. Ardell credits the success of the

²⁹ AAGPBL Players Association "<http://www.aagpbl.org/>

³⁰ Gregorich, 141-149.

³¹ AAGPBL Player Association "Player Biographies," <http://www.aagpbl.org/articles/biographies.cfm?ID=6>.

³² Berlage, 147.

Japanese league with some of the same reasons credited for the success of the AAGPBL: the war, the changing views of masculinity and femininity, and the talent of the players. The success of the Japanese league and the success of the AAGPBL were dependent upon some of the same factors, and the reasons for the collapse of the leagues were similar as well (addition of too many teams, weakening of the league).³³

Collapse Of The AAGPBL

The AAGPBL folded in 1954. Although the end came nine years after the end of World War Two, the league experienced a sharp decline as soon as soldiers began returning home after the war. During the war, the Major League teams had not competed for fans with the AAGPBL teams since the AAGPBL teams were centered in smaller communities, and since their audience was somewhat captive due to the gas rationing.³⁴ The marketing of the league was not intended to compete with the MLB. The league had been sold as a temporary institution. From the beginning, Wrigley and Meyerhoff had marketed the league as patriotic; they had illustrated through their marketing campaign that the female athletes were simply filling in for the men while they were gone, not taking jobs away from them. When the soldiers returned, a large part of the marketing scheme for the league was eliminated. The return of soldiers also increased the talent pool for the Major League baseball teams to draw upon, allowing the level of play in the Major Leagues to return to its pre-war standards. After the war, the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League also had television as competition; during this time attendance at Minor League baseball games was down as well. More and more people were staying at home and watching television rather than going to

³³ Ardell, 118-119.

³⁴ Macy, 89-98.

games to support their local teams.³⁵

Both ownership changes and structural changes contributed to the steady decline of the AAGPBL in the postwar period. There are three main phases that the AAGPBL went through; the first being the league ownership by Wrigley, the second being the league ownership by Meyerhoff, and the third being individual team ownership.³⁶ The league began as a non-profit league backed by the assets of the Cubs organization, meaning that there was access to the same kinds of things that the Major League Baseball teams received (like marketing and scouting tools) as well as plenty of money to get the league started. Wrigley was willing to use the Cubs assets, because he wanted the league to succeed. After the AAGPBL became successful however, Wrigley sold his stake in the league. Wrigley realized that professional baseball was not going to collapse due to the war, and no longer believed the AAGPBL to be necessary. Meyerhoff, the marketing man for the AAGPBL took over ownership after Wrigley wanted out after the second season. Under Meyerhoff the league grew in popularity and many of the rule changes took place. The AAGPBL reached the height of its popularity under the ownership of Meyerhoff, but after the war ended and attendance started to slip a little, Meyerhoff gave up his ownership of the league.³⁷

In 1951, the league moved to independent team ownership. The league began its decline, the major marketing campaign for the league was no longer useful (marketing the women as temporary fill-ins for the men), and the teams wanted rights over their own players rather than through the league. The infrastructure of the league

³⁵ Macy, 89-98.

³⁶ Mary Pratt, "The All-American Girls Professional Baseball League," in Women in Sport: Issues and Controversies, ed. Greta L. Cohen et al. (Port City Press, 2001), 121.

³⁷ Pratt, 121-130.

began to collapse. There was no longer widespread, coordinated marketing for the league, and some fans lost interest. There also was no longer a league scouting system, it was up to each team to fund scouting and to find new players, which for some of the teams was very difficult. Additionally, when the league owned the teams and the player contracts, parity of the league could be ensured; the league was able to balance the talent between the teams. When the teams were sold to individuals, the teams that could offer the best contracts got the best players. The high standards that had been set by the league in the early years had begun to decline. The teams with the most money secured the best players, this not only led to less competition in the league, it also meant that some of the local stars who had been great attractions for those local teams relocated due to better offers. There was no longer parity in the league, some of the players left the league after the war to go home, and it was harder to build close relationships with the communities because players were being traded and some were opting to go to other teams for more money.³⁸

One of the greatest reasons for the league's failure was the re-emergence of prewar conceptions about masculinity and femininity during the postwar period. Society and the US government was telling women to go back home after the war, and to allow the men to go back to work. There were not enough jobs for the men and women, so women were being encouraged by the government to give up their jobs for the men returning home from the battle fronts. Girls were also encouraged to stop playing little league or sandlot baseball, and the public as a whole began to ignore women in baseball. Women were expected to return themselves to the traditional roles of femininity. It was no longer acceptable for women and girls to be playing baseball.

³⁸ Pratt, 121-130.

Stephanie Coontz, author of The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgic Trap explains that after World War Two, entertainment such as “Leave it to Beaver” and “Ozzie and Harriet” shaped the new American view of what a family should be, and since the women in these television shows took care of their families and stayed home rather than playing baseball, then American women were expected to follow suit. She also explains that fear from the Cold War was the driving forces behind conformity in the United States. People who did not “fit in” were often investigated by their neighbors and sometimes by the government as well. People were afraid of being seen as communists and feared that people who were different may be communists; therefore when the majority of women stopped playing baseball, it created an even greater pressure to put an end to women in baseball.³⁹

After The AAGPBL

The AAGPBL opened many doors for women, but since its demise, battles against sexism continue to be fought. In 1975 the Committee on the pediatric Aspects of Physical Fitness, Recreation, and Sports came out with guidelines for girls and athletics. The guidelines explained that prepubescent girls and boys could play sports together, that girls could play against other girls at any age (that physical fitness did not have a bad effect on the health of the females participating), and that girls of high enough talent could play on a boys team if it was accepted at the school or within the community.⁴⁰ However, the traditional roles ideas of femininity that had subsided

³⁹ Stephanie Coontz, The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgic Trap (New York: Basic Books, 1992) 23-41.

⁴⁰ There were questions about whether or not physical fitness would be bad for girls, especially pertaining to menstruation and future pregnancy and childbirth.

during World War Two had made a comeback during the 1950s and it was not socially acceptable for females to play sports, especially not with males.⁴¹

Girls were barred from Little League and court cases ensued. In Haverill, Massachusetts a young girl played in a Little League game, and the girl was not only kicked off the team, but the coach was fired and the games that she played in were erased from the official records.⁴² Title IX was passed in 1972 and raised many questions about sexism in sports.⁴³ Title IX raised the social consciousness of sexism in sports, and allowed for more opportunities for women, yet a great deal the attention that Title IX created was focused on softball rather than on baseball. The common social attitude towards baseball continued to be that baseball was for men, but Title IX did help create a place for females to share their love of the game by creating softball opportunities for many people that would not have had the opportunity otherwise.⁴⁴

In 1992 Jim Glennie attempted to establish another women's baseball league. The American Women's Baseball League (or the AWBL), but that league eventually failed. As founder, Glennie put up his own money for the league, and he struggled fielding two traveling teams the only year of the league's existence. In 1993 there was an effort to put together an exhibition team of women, and since the AAGPBL, the Silver Bullets have been the most popular venture of women into baseball. The Silver Bullets were able to get funding from a sponsor, and had some media attention due to the novelty of the team, but the Silver Bullets struggled. The team record after the first year

⁴¹ Melvin L. Thomas, "Participation in Sports by Girls," *Pediatrics* volume 55 Issue 4 (1975) 563.

⁴² Thomas Boslooper and Marcia Hayes, *The Femininity Game* (New York: Stein and Day Publishers, 1973) 71.

⁴³ Title IX was an educational amendment that focused on eliminating gender discrimination in school sports.

⁴⁴ Amy Ellis Nutt, "Swinging for the Fences," in *Nike is a Goddess: The History of Women in Sports*, ed. Lissa Smith et al. (New York, Atlantic Monthly Press, 1998), 50.

of play was 6-38, nobody was hitting over .220, and there was no pitcher had an ERA (Earned Run Average) below 4.5.⁴⁵

The effect that the AAGPBL had on future generations as well as the reasons that the league was pretty much forgotten between 1954 and the passing of Title IX is a matter of historiographic discussion. During my research it was hard to find sources that mentioned the AAGPBL at all between 1954 and 1972, yet information about the league published after 1992 is readily available. The lack of resources between 1954 and 1972 as well as the erasure of the league from social consciousness during those same years raises questions as to whether or not the existence of the league affected future generations, and why there was a dramatic increase in sources after 1992? After researching the history of the league, as well as the issues that surrounded its success and collapse, there is no question as to whether or not the league impacted future generations. Many of the sources used in researching this topic were written by fans of the league (such as Susan E. Johnson's When Women Played Hardball), the league impacted the people that were involved with it, and through them, it had an impact on future generations. The dramatic increase in sources that occurred after 1992 was largely due to the feature film A League Of Their Own, (a film based on a true story about the league) which allowed a whole new generation to become fans of the AAGPBL. Although the league was erased from social consciousness, it lived on through the people that were had been involved in league as well as people such as Penny Marshal, the director of A League Of Their Own.

There are a number of reasons that the league could have fallen out of social consciousness, but Emily Yellin, the author of Our Mothers' War: American Women at

⁴⁵ Ardell, 96-97, 121-122.

Home and at the Front During World War II offers a persuasive argument that not only women baseball players trivialized after the war, but women's efforts as a whole were trivialized. Women did not have it easy during the war, working a double shift (one shift at a paying job and another shift at home), rationing food and gas, and fulfilling the spaces that the men left behind was hard work. Yellin also explains that one reason that the war time efforts of women, such as the AAGPBL may have exited America's collective memory after the war only to reemerge again later was because until the sacrifices of men were acknowledged, many women did not feel that it was appropriate to acknowledge the sacrifices of women.⁴⁶ Social pressures made women return home after the war, propaganda explained that a good woman was a wife and mother who stayed home, cooked, cleaned and took care of her family. The government ran a full campaign trying to encourage women to get out of the work force and to return home, often endorsing the idea of marriage and family life. Jean Faut was one of the many players to leave the league to be with her husband. The social pressures and propaganda are often credited as part of the reason that consciousness of the league was subdued.⁴⁷ The league got a little notice after the passing of Title IX, some notice through the emergence of women's history and feminist scholarship in the 1970s, and then again, when A League of Their Own came out and when the women of the AAGPBL were finally recognized in the National Baseball Hall of Fame. An entire section of the National Baseball Hall of Fame is now dedicated to the AAGPBL and women in baseball.⁴⁸

Reflections

⁴⁶ Yellin, 377.

⁴⁷ AAGPBL Players Association "Player Biographies," <http://www.aagpbl.org/articles/biographies.cfm?ID=4>

⁴⁸ Madden

Until the release of A League of Their Own, I was not aware of any women in professional baseball. Professional sports had always been a man's world in my mind. After watching the movie, I was inspired. The movie and the league were examples that women could make it in a man's world. For me, as an athlete, it is hard to understand that the only reason that women were allowed to play baseball in the league was to fill the void that the men had left. The league was not created for the women who played, it was created as a patriotic symbol and a filler for the time when men's baseball experienced a labor shortage.⁴⁹

As a former college softball player, and now as a high school softball coach, I continue to hope that someday female athletes will be able to garner the same endorsement deals and salaries as their male counterparts. I believe that it is important for women to work hard to gather consumer support, because with consumer support, women have the chance to create leagues that are competitive with men's leagues. Women will need to break stereotypes and social constructs of masculinity and femininity to gain consumer support, but barriers are beginning to break now. Women such as Jennie Finch and Mia Hamm are starting to raise awareness of females in sports. Both athletes are extremely popular and their names are even recognized outside of their own sports. Although these two women as well as others are beginning to change the social constructions of masculinity and femininity, women as a whole continue to battle to be accepted as athletes. Sports in general are still seen as masculine endeavors. The social constructions of gender are changing, but without a driving force, without sizeable consumer support, the changes will happen slowly.

⁴⁹ Macy, 1-9.

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