

# That's Your Way of Playing Rounders, Isn't It?

## THE RESPONSE OF THE ENGLISH PRESS TO AMERICAN BASEBALL TOURS TO ENGLAND, 1874-1924

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### Introduction

Major League Baseball (MLB) has, over the past decade, attempted to make inroads into the European market.<sup>1</sup> Its principle targets have been in Germany, where they have enjoyed moderate success, and Britain, where baseball remains only a very minor sport in the British sporting diet. However, these recent efforts are not the first time that American baseball promoters have sought to establish a following for the game in England. Indeed, the first tour of professional baseball players to England took place as long ago as 1874. Over the course of the half-century that followed, professional teams from the United States of America (USA) played a series of exhibition matches in England on three more occasions: in 1889, 1914, and 1924. On all four occasions, baseball failed to make the desired impact that the various promoters had hoped. The relative failure of baseball to establish roots in English sporting culture appears difficult to explain in the light of the increasingly broad and interdependent ties between England and the USA over the course of the four tours. To paraphrase Waddington and Roderick, it may appear surprising that a country which has so many linguistic and cultural ties with the USA should have proved so unreceptive to America's national sport.<sup>2</sup>

Through an extensive analysis of newspaper coverage, this article examines the relative failure of baseball to 'catch on' during the course of the four tours. There are numerous historical accounts of the development of baseball, but a significant shortcoming of this body of historical work is that many contributors to this debate provide simplistic, mono-causal explanations for the development of the game. Furthermore, very little

has been published on attempts made to establish the game in England.<sup>3</sup> Given that, from the outset, it was the English sporting diet that Americans most wanted to make an impression on, this seems to be a worthy area for debate. Some historians, who have briefly attempted to explain baseball's failure to catch on in England, have indicated that this is largely due to the different national characteristics of the Americans and the English.<sup>4</sup> Baseball has been viewed as being 'quintessentially American'. However, the notion that baseball is naturally suited to the American people — and therefore, naturally unsuited to the English — is to ignore the diverse social groups attracted to baseball, for whom the game's meaning will vary. One objective of this article is to demonstrate that in attempting to provide more adequate accounts of the relative failure of baseball in England, one should seek to avoid these kinds of reductionist, de-humanised 'explanations'. The article is presented in four parts, outlining the press response to the four tours respectively. Richard Holt notes the significance of the press in 'popularizing spectator sport and sustaining interest in it'.<sup>5</sup> The infrequent, but largely negative, press coverage afforded to baseball may have had a deleterious effect on American attempts to popularise the sport in England. Baseball was consistently regarded as merely a modification of an old English schoolgirl's game, rounders, and as a result, was seen as decidedly inferior to the number one English summertime sport, cricket.

### **The First Baseball Tour to England in 1874**

Baseball had replaced cricket as the most popular summer sport in the USA by the 1860s.<sup>6</sup> It was partly because Harry Wright — a leading professional with the Boston Red Stockings in the 1870s — was so 'impressed by the ease with which the new game replaced cricket in America' that he was 'led ... to think that British sportsmen would, if they saw baseball played at its best, undergo the same conversion'. In addition, as Melville points out, the tour was made, in part, as an 'attempt to assert its [baseball's] domestic standing by establishing its legitimacy abroad'.<sup>8</sup> In 1874, Wright played a significant part in the decision to provide exhibition games of baseball in England.

Wright brought on board Albert Goodwill Spalding<sup>9</sup> to help with arrangements for the tour. Spalding visited England in advance of the proposed tour and gained the approval of the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) for two teams — the Boston Red Stockings and the Philadelphia Athletics — to play a number of baseball exhibition games on various cricket pitches in England. These venues also included Lords, the home of the MCC. It is not entirely clear what the MCC hoped to gain from allowing another sport to be played on grounds under its jurisdiction. It would seem that they had little or no concern about the American tourists arriving to showcase baseball in England, despite cricket's rapid decline in popularity in

favour of baseball in the USA. Cricket was, in their eyes, the established sport in England and they seemed to have little to fear of this 'outsider' sport.

Acceptance of the baseball exhibitions came with the additional requirement that the American ball players play a cricket match against their hosts at the various cricket grounds. The reports that did appear in the English press concentrated, for the most part, on the cricket games. During the tour, an English reporter suggested that the 'mixed entertainment' — of playing both baseball and cricket — 'seems a mistake'.<sup>10</sup> It was indicative of the power of the MCC that Spalding felt constrained to agree to their demand that cricket matches be included in the tour.<sup>11</sup>

The tour made an inauspicious start at Liverpool where the tourists arrived from the USA in July 1874. The *Liverpool Daily Albion* reported that: 'There were not many spectators to witness the introduction of the new game ... Because the public do not seem to have been properly informed that the game was coming off.'<sup>12</sup> According to Spalding, he 'depended most' on 'Mr. Charles Allcock, the recognized cricket authority of England' for advanced publicity of the tour.<sup>13</sup> Unsurprisingly, Allcock 'was especially enthusiastic about the cricket'.<sup>14</sup> Thus, when the baseball teams arrived in England they 'found the British public thoroughly advised of the forthcoming cricket matches and only slightly informed about the exhibition ball games'.<sup>15</sup> Yet, despite the initial poor publicity, many thousand spectators attended most of the other games played at various cricket venues in Liverpool, London, Manchester, and Sheffield.<sup>16</sup>

Voigt claims that the English response had regarded the American demonstration of baseball as being antithetical to English notions of sportsmanship and fair play, and that this 'explains why the trip was a financial failure'.<sup>17</sup> However, there is no evidence that the English — at least in the shape of the English press — reacted in this way, during this tour. Instead, it would seem that they just ignored baseball. Their preference was to report on the cricket matches between the Americans and their hosts. For example, *The Times* gave only scant attention to the tour. The *Sportsman*, a major London based publication covering all popular sports of the day, only provided brief coverage. The limited coverage concentrated more on the cricket matches between the American ball players and their hosts, and relatively little was afforded to the baseball part of the programme.

The limited coverage given to baseball drew comparison between it and the old English pastime of rounders. The *Liverpool Daily Albion* noted, for example, that 'baseball must already be familiar to everyone who knows the game of rounders'.<sup>18</sup> The *Daily News* (London) published letters from readers who suggested that the 'new' game the Americans were exhibiting was not new at all. For example, one reader claimed that 'the so-called American game of Base Ball is merely a modification of the game of "Rounders",

which is played in every village in Scotland at the present time'.<sup>19</sup> It is worth noting that around this time, rounders was played in Gloucester, Merseyside, Scotland and South Wales in particular. But, according to Benyon and Evans' history of rounders, 'there was little of an organised nature about the game' played in these locations.<sup>20</sup> As will become apparent, in the years that followed, the tendency to describe baseball in patronising terms (as rounders in disguise, as it were) became even more marked within the English press's coverage of baseball matches.

At the beginning of the tour, the *Liverpool Daily Albion* suggested that although 'it is extremely improbable that base ball is going to supplant cricket amongst us ... the game is one that is now pretty sure to be introduced in England'.<sup>21</sup> The *Manchester Guardian* shared this view, stating that 'we shall be surprised if it does not speedily become naturalised amongst us'.<sup>22</sup> The *Boston Post* (USA) went further, suggesting that 'several baseball clubs have formed in the north of England'.<sup>23</sup> However, evidence of the formation of these clubs cannot be found in the English press. The exhibition matches had no direct success in stimulating competitive matches amongst the native population.

### The 1889 'World Tour'

Despite the early body blow, baseball enthusiasts from the USA were still keen to try to develop the game in England. Fourteen years after the first tour, Spalding decided to organise a world tour of exhibition matches. The teams involved in this tour were the Chicago White Stockings, the team Spalding now managed, and an All America' team consisting of professionals from a variety of other teams.

The tourists left the USA in November 1888, returning in March 1889. Undoubtedly, the timing of the tour was in order to avoid a clash with the domestic baseball season. Spalding could not afford to disrupt the National League (NL) season, as had been possible in the tour of 1874 when the game was not so well established in the USA. The tourists played matches in Australia, Egypt, Japan and France, finishing with various matches in Britain in the early part of 1889.

Spalding invited an English journalist to tour with the teams in England.<sup>24</sup> The journalist was from the *Sportsman*, which was by now regularly 'selling over 300,000 copies a day'.<sup>25</sup> In addition, full-page advertisements for several of the games were displayed in copies of the same paper. Spalding was obviously attempting to guarantee more substantial press coverage than was afforded to the 1874 tour. The journalist from the *Sportsman* travelled with the entourage of American press, ball players and promoters on a special train commissioned by Spalding.

Baseball, like cricket, is a game played during the warmer months of

summer. By the time the tourists were in England it was toward the end of winter, which meant that exhibition matches were played in a climate not conducive to the game or spectatorship. This led some editorials to 'regret that sport-loving Englishmen have not been able to see the game under more favourable conditions'.<sup>26</sup> Of course, this was an obstacle Spalding could only have overcome if conditions in England were a priority. There was a distinct desire not to disrupt the domestic season in the USA, suggesting that the stability of the game there was of greater importance than its global diffusion.

For the most part, matches were played on county cricket grounds. Once again, therefore, the tour must have received backing from the MCC. However, no cricket matches were arranged as part of this tour. Matches were played at Edgbaston (Birmingham), the County Ground (Gloucester), Old Trafford (Manchester), Lords, and the Oval (Surrey). Some exhibitions were also given on football grounds at Bramall Lane (Sheffield) and Goodison Park (Liverpool). It is likely that this was done with the aim of trying to attract crowds of a different social composition. Association Football was extremely popular amongst the urban working classes - whereas cricket was still seen to have more appeal for the middle and upper classes. In addition, the Football League was enjoying a successful inaugural season in 1888-89, proving to be a major economic success story in terms of attracting paying spectators.<sup>27</sup> All of the exhibition games attracted several thousand spectators.<sup>28</sup>

Notwithstanding the efforts of its promoters, the English press gave the tour minimal coverage. Not surprisingly, the *Sportsman* covered the tour. Even so, it did not begin to compare with the coverage it devoted to horse racing, Association Football and even cricket — which was out of season. *The Times* also gave greater coverage to other sports, but it did provide a brief report on each exhibition match played in England, as well as one 'lead' article that discussed the merits of the game. This article was written in the context of the tourists having already played in London on four separate occasions. As a result, it declared, 'everybody is now asking his friend in a doubtful kind of way what he thinks of baseball. Londoners are, or ought to be, now in a position to give their verdict upon this important question'.<sup>29</sup> The author proceeded to give his opinion on the likely place of baseball in the sporting diet of the English:

We are not prepared to say that it is altogether possible to judge without prejudice a game which the Americans have presumptuously preferred to cricket... As for the essentials of the game, it would be singular if they did not strike some chords of sympathy in the English breast, considering that they are the same as those of 'rounders' ... Consequently, we must have latent affinities for baseball.<sup>30</sup>

Apart from this article, the *Sportsman* provided the only significant coverage of the tour in the London based press. The *Evening Standard* (London), for example, gave only small paragraph accounts of a handful of the matches played. The local press in the north of England provided more comprehensive coverage. The same themes that appeared in *The Times* — that baseball was a form of rounders and that the Americans had dared to prefer it to cricket — were echoed in much of this coverage.<sup>31</sup> The *Lancashire Evening Post*, for example, provided an ethnocentric and prejudiced comparison of baseball and cricket:

Although American enthusiasts consider it [baseball] decidedly superior to the English game [cricket], it is not very likely that people in this country will share the opinion ... to compare it with cricket is a piece of audacity of which only an American can be guilty ... In cricket there is vastly more variety, a great deal more science, ever so much more of the picturesque; in short, language fails to describe its superiority.<sup>32</sup>

National pride and anti-American feeling lie not far beneath the surface of commentaries such as these. Nationalistic sentiments of this kind were quite commonplace in coverage of the exhibition games in the northern press. References would often be made to the apparent 'inferiority' of the USA, *per se*. The *Lancashire Evening Post*, once again, provided a good illustration of this, stating that, 'enough has been said to intimate to Brother Jonathan that we regard baseball as a very creditable pastime for a very young people, but as much out of place in England as a nursery frolic in the House of Commons'.<sup>33</sup> This condescending reference to the 'young people' of the USA is an example of the press adopting a 'we-they' ideology. The American baseball players were regarded as outsiders, and the English press were rather disdainful toward baseball.

The *Manchester Guardian* considered the game 'a sort of glorified rounders, but it is obviously more scientific'.<sup>34</sup> The *Lancashire Evening Post* was even more damning in their assessment, claiming that baseball was 'nothing but a pitiful fraud', because the game was simply rounders under another name.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps the response from this particular newspaper can be explained, in part, because rounders was still played and was growing in popularity in and around the Lancashire region at this time. The tourists were invited to play a game of rounders against the best players in the National Rounders Association (NRA). It was perhaps an obvious development to challenge the Americans to a game of rounders, since several in the English press were adamant that the two games had highly transferable skills. Adrian 'Cap' Anson, captain of the Chicago White Sox, argued that 'not only will we beat you at our game of baseball, but we intend

to completely thrash you at rounders as well'.<sup>36</sup> Both challenge matches (of baseball and rounders) were played at Goodison Park, Liverpool — the home of Everton Football Club. The Americans won the baseball match convincingly. To their undoubted surprise, however, they lost the rounders game and, according to the *Sportsman*, 'it was evident they were all abroad' in their attempts to play it.<sup>37</sup> As might have been expected, the following day the local press exacted retribution. After the Americans' defeat at rounders, a reporter in the *Liverpool Echo* gave the following assessment of baseball:

I take it for granted that you are seeking to know what we Englishmen think of your national game as played by its best exponents ... First and foremost we will suppose that we saw on Saturday afternoon about as complete an exhibition we are likely to get on these shores, saving, of course, that we take it up ourselves. See that sly hint, stranger? ... Baseball will never make cricket or football 'after pieces' in England. It doesn't fit the bill at all ... Of course, there is national prejudice to be considered. You don't seem to take to our cricket, and we - well, we won't say much about your baseball.<sup>38</sup>

The reference to American's as 'strangers' once again emphasises the emergence of an 'us' and 'them', common-sense perception symptomatic of established nationalist ideologies.

As has already been indicated, the power-base of cricket, the MCC, did not regard baseball as a significant threat to their game, after all exhibition games were played on cricket grounds that they still largely controlled. So, why did much of the English press ignore the tour or, on occasion, provide a quite xenophobic defence of cricket and attack on baseball? Perhaps this is best explained in terms of an 'axis' of imperialism and vestiges of a gentlemanly-amateur ethos. The American historian LaFeber argues that, at this time Tearful Europeans warned of an "American invasion" (an overwhelming offensive of US-made goods and multinationals).<sup>39</sup> The cricket supporting English press may have seen baseball, at least, as one of those 'American-made goods'. Especially since, as Birley points out, in England 'by the turn of the century cricket had come to assume profound political significance'.<sup>40</sup> Many journalists were certainly inclined to believe that the baseball tourists were attempting to impose 'their' game on 'our' national summertime sport, and this accounts for much of the negative comment.

In addition to the invidious comparisons made with cricket, more specific criticisms of the way baseball was played and administered were quite commonplace in the English press. Underlying many of these criticisms was an adherence to an 'amateur ideology'. This was particularly the case with the English middle- and upper classes in the late nineteenth century.<sup>41</sup>

Furthermore, the press, and many of those involved in cricket, considered that adopting what was deemed an appropriate attitude — 'playing the game' — was very much to the fore in cricket. Holt provides clarification of this point when stating that "'Not playing the game", which like so many other sporting expressions came quickly into general usage, referred not so much to the rules of play as to the manner in which the game was to be played'.<sup>42</sup> Hence, it is no surprise to encounter general criticism in the English press of the way in which baseball was administered and played. A sceptical (but, nonetheless broadly accurate) view of the financial motives of the touring teams, for example, was a recurrent theme with certain reporters. For instance, one correspondent suggested that the tourists should 'go home with it [baseball] ... Gather up what dollars you can before you go, but if you are not satisfied with the pile come next time with the same skill and dexterity in some livelier game'.<sup>43</sup>

It is undeniably the case that the English press considered cricket to be the 'national sport' of England. It was played by members of all social classes, in most regions. However, the class divisions in Victorian England were stark, and even though cricket was the 'national game', class divisions were very apparent within it. As Holt points out, 'county cricket ... never made any concessions to the requirements of the working-class'.<sup>44</sup> In addition, he argues, 'county cricket in the north was not quite 'cricket' in the south' and 'nor did the northern working-class invest the game with the same kind of Englishness that took hold in the south'.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, a we/they distinction was particularly prominent *within* English society. What many in the English press were purporting to be an 'English response' to baseball, was almost certainly a middle and upper class interpretation of how the 'English' responded to the game. This was even apparent in the northern-based press, despite, according to Holt, the different attitudes held toward cricket there.

After the tourists left England, in October 1889, a meeting was set up that sought to establish a national governing body for baseball in Britain. It seems that Spalding played some part in setting this up. *The Times* noted that he was 'in England on business' just prior to the meeting.<sup>46</sup> Barely a month after this report, a meeting was held 'to organise an association for the promotion and fostering of the game of baseball ... to be known as the National League of Baseball in Great Britain'.<sup>47</sup> In addition to his financial commitment to the game in England, Spalding provided copies of his 'Baseball Guide' — by now a seasonal best seller in the USA — for sale in the United Kingdom. Spalding makes no mention of his involvement in the establishment of this League in his book. Perhaps this is because the League, ultimately, was not as successful as Spalding might have hoped. Be that as it may, an indisputable fact, underestimated in other accounts,<sup>48</sup> is that baseball was established in England, albeit on a relatively minor scale, by the final decade of the nineteenth century.<sup>49</sup>

## The 1914 Tour and Growing Political Unrest in Europe

In 1913-14, a 'World Tour', led by John McGraw and Charles Comiskey and financed by *Spalding Bros.*, held exhibitions in Japan, the Philippines, Australia, Egypt, and then France. It ended with one exhibition game at Stamford Bridge, London, on 26 February 1914. The tour, therefore, was far more limited in England than the previous two. It is the timing of the match, though, that is of particular interest. The USA was developing significantly as a nation and Britain was in steep decline as a world power. Under these conditions one might anticipate that the response to this latest attempt to export America's national game' to England would be less than welcoming. However, there was also growing instability within Europe, and the British government was concerned with the need to develop a stronger alliance with the powerful American government.

As the tourists were welcomed to London, McGraw announced that 'baseball can be made a success in England if the public will realise that the game offers the same healthy interest to athletes and sportsmen as either football or cricket'. He argued that baseball's lack of development in England had been to the 'loss' of the 'English sporting public'. He was, however, still optimistic that baseball 'would eventually arouse great enthusiasm' in England.<sup>50</sup> The English press, as an entity, never shared this optimism. Although, Elfers argues, 'the tourists would garner more interest from the press and general public in England than in any other place, save perhaps Australia'.<sup>51</sup> He also holds that 'interest in these games had been brewing for months'.<sup>52</sup> Rossi similarly argues that baseball 'had been given ... an extensive build-up in the country'.<sup>53</sup> Neither Elfers nor Rossi provide any evidence to support their claims, and they are at odds with a report in *The Times* at the time, which indicated that, as far as the English press were concerned, the decision to even play one game in England was made only days before the tourists' arrival.<sup>54</sup>

Elfers holds that 'a large contingent of fans met the two teams' on their arrival in London, including 'large delegations from the British press and representatives from English club teams'.<sup>55</sup> Elfers, once again, provides no evidence to support his claims, and, in fact, there does not seem to be any evidence that 'English club teams' even existed at this time.

The day before the exhibition match was due to take place, it was announced that King George V was to attend. This is likely to have been a government inspired initiative, and relates to alliance formation. Some people in the press also wished to cultivate alliances by making the American tourists feel welcome. In this context, the *Sportsman* claimed that: 'never was the feeling of friendship between Englishmen and Americans stronger than it is today. And their [the Americans] visit, in emphasising the camaraderie among sportsmen, might do much to strengthen that feeling'.<sup>56</sup>

There was a significantly higher gate, approximately 'seventeen and eighteen thousand', than the tourists had achieved on any of the previous tours.<sup>57</sup> Gate attendance during the 1874 and 1889 tours ranged from between a few hundred and 8000. There was also much greater press coverage of the baseball in the English newspapers than for either of the two previous tours, although, much of the coverage of the game itself was still disparaging. For example, in an article entitled 'The Invasion of Baseball', it was argued that:

At such time when our political relations are so friendly with America it seems almost an unfriendly act to allege that their great national pastime leaves us cold ... It is, I think, a game for a warm climate and a people temperamentally more excitable than ours.<sup>58</sup>

While February was probably not the most appropriate month in which to hold an exhibition game, the newspaper seemed to overlook the fact that the same climatic reservations could also be applied to cricket. The *Standard* (London) was even more emphatic in their dismissal of baseball:

They [the Americans] are not satisfied, it is not compatible with their new-world pride ... to make use of anything that comes from the Old World. If they do condescend to adopt a thing of foreign origin it must first be Americanised, distorted out of all semblance to its native form. The English language is a case in point! The national game of baseball is a shining example of these methods of adaptation. It was once rounders.<sup>59</sup>

Notwithstanding the obvious need to garner good relations with the USA, the perceived growing cultural threat from America appears to have informed or conditioned the response of some writers in the English press. The *Sportsman* noted that 'it is not at all likely that cricket's supremacy is in any material danger'.<sup>60</sup> The newspaper attributed this, in part, to 'the truly American methods of the coaches', which 'received a share of comment not always favourable'. This is a reference to the rather zealous contribution that the coaches made during the game; shouting advice, and often insults, from the side of the pitch. According to several journalists, the 'style' of play that the baseball players and coaches evoked in their game was just not cricket' and, thus, not suited to the English — or rather, it could be argued, the English middle and upper classes.

English journalists were dismissive of what they considered to be the 'unscientific' aspects of batting in baseball. For example, *The Times* noted that 'in batting, in spite of all the gorgeous smiting that was seen, baseball does not compare with cricket'.<sup>61</sup> Such an attitude is resonant with the 'established' views regarding the different parts played by the gentlemen (the 'amateur' batsmen) and the 'players' (the artisan bowlers). The author went on to suggest that

baseball 'was not cricket. It cannot be said that the crowd showed any evidence of thinking that baseball is ever likely to supersede our national game'.<sup>62</sup>

The difference in the length of play was at the heart of several reports comparing baseball with cricket. For example, J. L. Griffiths, the American Consular General in London, speaking at a luncheon held for the players and members of the press, is reported to have commented that:

The respective merits of baseball and cricket were to him an interesting study. It would be impossible for an American at the most exciting point of a baseball match to take afternoon tea, discuss the latest prices or the latest plays. He would be incapable of it. But an Englishman could do it, and the fact that it took but two hours to play a baseball match, and two or three days to play a cricket match was sufficient evidence for the difference temperamentally of Americans and Englishmen.<sup>63</sup>

This account does not acknowledge that Association Football is over in less than two hours, and extremely popular in England. It is more a testimony to the fact that the dominant English culture was still imbued with upper/middle class values of the gentleman-amateur, as exemplified through cricket. Cricket remained an upper/middle class game holding sway, in the south of England especially, with the new upper-middle class businessman. Griffiths clearly regarded these dominant groups as the personification of Englishness.

The response to baseball in the English press was still an expression of middle and upper class values. In this respect, the *Daily News and Leader* suggested that because baseball was a 'peculiarly American sport' it was unsuited to the 'English people', and that 'baseball still remains, and will remain, as exclusively and peculiarly a Transatlantic dish as clams and crackers and canvasback'.<sup>64</sup> It would not be adequate, however, to explain the English rejection of baseball merely in terms of it being 'peculiarly American'. The fact that the English had been at the forefront of the 'modernisation' of sport process partly explains the generally negative response from the English press. This is something that is fundamentally connected with the power struggles between dominant groups within the two nations.

The increasingly powerful position of the USA after the First World War is indisputable. This period, Iriye argues, witnessed the 'pervasive impact of American popular and material culture' around the world.<sup>65</sup> He holds that:

What was notable after 1919 was that these developments accelerated and that American influence now became undisputed because of the decline of European prestige ... America, virtually unscathed by the war, was more than ever before the symbol of the new material and popular culture.<sup>66</sup>

It must be appreciated, however, that power can never be absolute and the continued display of resistance from English people to attempts to diffuse baseball, even after the war, at the very least, suggests that Iriye is incorrect to state that American influence was 'undisputed'. It is, rather, a question of degrees of influence. It is with this in mind that the fourth, and, for the time being at least, final exhibition tour of Major League baseball teams in England is considered.

### **The 1924 Tour and Increasing American Cultural, Economic and Political Dominance**

In 1924, a fourth tour, once again comprising Comiskey's White Sox and McGraw's Giants, took place. The tourists played matches in England, Ireland and France, in October and November. The games in England were played at Goodison Park (Liverpool) and Stamford Bridge (London) football grounds. A crowd of over 2,000 witnessed the game at Goodison Park on 23 October, and approximately 5,000 attended at Stamford Bridge the next day.<sup>67</sup>

The local press in Liverpool expressed surprise that baseball 'stirs the American blood so amazingly'.<sup>68</sup> On the whole, the local press here offered only basic descriptions of the game. Where reports did examine baseball in greater depth, there was a great deal of interest shown in the amount of money generated within the sport in the USA. Attention was often drawn to the vast wages of the American players. In the *Liverpool Echo*, for example, it was noted that, 'the finance of baseball in America is something which the sportsmen of this country can only dimly appreciate'.<sup>69</sup>

The southern-based press focused on the tour as an opportunity to analyse one aspect of the rapid expansion of American culture'. Perhaps this perception goes some way to explaining why George Bernard Shaw was asked to cover the tour for the London *Evening Standard*, despite the fact that he confessed to a dislike of sport, *per se*. He wrote, in an article entitled 'This Baseball Madness':

It was as a sociologist, not as a sportsman — I cannot endure the boredom of sport - that I seized the opportunity ... to witness for the first time a game of baseball. I found that it has the great advantage over cricket of being sooner ended ... As I left the ground one of my courteous hosts expressed a hope that I would come again. When a man asks you to come and see baseball played twice it sets you asking yourself why you went to see it played once. That is a totally unanswerable question. It is a mad world.<sup>70</sup>

Shaw's consideration, however tongue-in-cheek, that baseball had 'advantages' over cricket was something resolutely denied by most other reporters covering the games in England. For example, another reporter writing in the *Evening Standard* argued that:

If America is to inoculate us with this game, as apparently is the intention of the teams, who confess that theirs are propaganda efforts — it will have to be shown that there are feats in it that excel those of our first class cricketers. Stripped of formidable paraphernalia in the way of face shields, breast-pads, and huge gloves, and the shouting accompaniment known as "rooting", yesterday's game seemed infinitely less skilful than cricket.<sup>71</sup>

The famous cricketer, P. G. H. Fender, was also negative in his assessment of baseball. He argued that, 'if there is one principle more than another on which cricket and football rest in England it is that there shall be no talking either by the players or by the spectators'.<sup>72</sup> Once again, this seems to be a 'principle' rooted in a gentlemanly-amateur approach. Football players and crowds were very 'vocal' in their participation within the game. Even cricket, Birley argues, witnessed a growth in 'remarkably effective professionalism' at this time.<sup>73</sup> However, despite this, as Holt points out, the middle-class amateur still 'saw himself as someone who could hold his passions in check and for whom the enjoyment of the game was more important than the result'.<sup>74</sup> The denigration of baseball is undoubtedly related to the fact that established groups in English society saw sport, and particularly cricket, as one of the bastions of traditional values. Thus, whilst it is clear that the power balance did increasingly favour the USA, this was not so strong as to suppress all expressions of protest.

Some English newspapers still considered that baseball was little more than 'glorified rounders'.<sup>75</sup> *The Times* even made reference to the fact that such an assessment served to alienate many Americans: 'Many well-meaning Englishmen have severed promising friendships forever, or suffered severe personal injury, from Americans by casually remarking to enthusiastic baseball "fans", "Oh, that's your way of playing rounders, isn't it?"'.<sup>76</sup>

Following the opening two exhibition matches played in Liverpool and London, the tourists played exhibition games in Paris and Dublin. Before returning to the USA, they played the final game of their tour on 6 November at Stamford Bridge. King George, accompanied by the Queen, the Prince of Wales and Prince Henry attended the match. The game attracted over 10,000 spectators but, according to the *Sportsman*, 'the generality of the crowd were simply curious; they took but a placid interest in the display'.<sup>77</sup>

McGraw offered the view that baseball 'will be taken up seriously on this side in the course of the next few years'.<sup>78</sup> However, back in the USA, McGraw recognised that 'baseball will never gain a foothold there [England] until it is taught in the public schools'.<sup>79</sup> In fact, the tour did not prove to be a catalyst for growth in baseball's popularity in England. Indeed, it was the last such high profile attempt to establish the game in England. No other similar tour, consisting of Major League players, has taken on board exhibitions in England ever since.

## Concluding Points

It is clear that the English rejection of baseball involved numerous inter-related developments. Many of the English commentators regarded baseball simply as 'glorified rounders'. That much of the English press considered that the Americans were simply engaging in an old, English school-girl's game can be explained, in part, by notions of the established responding to a growing outsider. This is likely to have been bound up in feelings of cultural superiority over the young American society. Particularly since English people had already given organised, modern sports to the world. Perhaps the fact that the majority of sports played across the globe were essentially 'modernised' in England, contributed to strong feelings of 'we' identity amongst the English. By rejecting baseball, an outsider sport from a former colony, and retaining their 'own' sports, gave English people the opportunity to reinforce their 'established' cultural position in the face of growing political and economic influence from the USA. The fact that cricket was already well established in England was highly significant. This combination of factors, and the belief held by many English journalists that the American tourists were in England to usurp 'their' sport, led to an almost uniformly negative response to baseball. It is evident, too, that this response was bound up with changing power balances, and expressions of national identity. The nostalgic, patriotic stance of the English newspapers was so strong that the tourists enjoyed little respite when they arrived in 1914 and 1924. This was despite the increasingly friendly political relations between the governments fostered, largely, by the First World War. Many English commentators feared that they were losing ground culturally, politically and economically to the former colony, and this unease was expressed in some chauvinistic reporting on baseball. Despite the growing competitiveness of the play within cricket in England during the period outlined, most commentators considered that baseball was too commercialised, and the players too brash and competitive, for English tastes. Put simply, baseball was just not cricket'.

The main themes identified in this article have no doubt exacerbated the problems associated with diffusion of culture in a way that American music, food and clothes, for example, have not experienced to the same degree. From the outset, newspaper coverage of baseball in England was limited — and at times when the tourists were given greater coverage the same themes appeared: baseball was merely glorified rounders, the game was not as scientific as cricket, and the players — and in some instances the Americans in the crowd — were far too ungentlemanly in their behaviour for the sport to ever catch on in England. That there was very little let up during the latter two tours in 1914 and 1924, when diplomatic relations with the USA were particularly friendly, is indicative of the fact that the established ground within the English press was occupied by cricket loving middle and upper

class men for whom cricket was the embodiment of sport. That baseball has continued to struggle is further evidence that this ground is still occupied by the established groups in English society. Even during periods of time when cricket's popularity has been on the wane, there has been little or no success in establishing anything other than shallow roots for baseball in England.

## Endnotes

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- 1 Major League Baseball International, *Major League Baseball International. 2001 Annual Report*, New York, 2001, pp. 15-19.
- 2 Ivan Waddington and Martin Roderick, 'American Exceptionalism: Soccer and American Football', *Sports Historian*, vol. 16, no. 2, 1996, pp. 42-63.
- 3 Although, there have been articles published on attempts during similar periods in time, to establish baseball in Australia. See, for example, Bruce Mitchell, 'Baseball in Australia. Two Tours and the Beginnings of Baseball in Australia', *Sporting Traditions*, vol. 7, no. 1, November 1990, pp. 2-24; Bruce Mitchell, 'A National Game Goes International: Baseball in Australia', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 9, 1992, pp. 288-301.
- 4 James E. Elfers, *The Tour to End All Tours. The Story of Major League Baseball's 1913-1914 World Tour*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 2003; David Voigt, *America Through Baseball*, Nelson Hall, Chicago, 1976.
- 5 Richard Holt, *Sport and the British. A Modern History*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989, p.307.
- 6 Daniel Bloyce, 'Baseball: Myths and Modernization', in Eric Dunning, Dominic Malcolm and Ivan Waddington (eds), *Sport Histories: Figurational Studies in the Development of Modern Sport*, Routledge, London, 2004, pp. 88-103; George Kirsch, *The Creation of American Team Sports. Baseball and Cricket, 1838-72*, University of Illinois Press, Chicago, 1989.
- 7 Voigt, *America Through Baseball*, p. 93.
- 8 Tom Melville, *Early Baseball and the Rise of the National League*, McFarland, North Carolina, 2001, p.56.
- 9 Spalding was one of the best pitchers of the era, but he became a very successful businessman, and even at this time he was starting to build his sports goods business.
- 10 *Daily News*, 4 August 1874, p. 7.
- 11 Peter Levine, A. G. Spalding and the Rise of Baseball. *The Promise of American Sport*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1985; Albert G. Spalding, *America's National Game* (re-print), Bison Book, Nebraska, 1911/1992.
- 12 *Liverpool Daily Albion*, 31 July 1874, p. 5.
- 13 Spalding, *America's National Game*, p.179.

- 14 Spalding, *America's National Game*, p. 179.
- 15 Spalding, *America's National Game*, p. 179.
- 16 One match was also played in Dublin, Ireland.
- 17 David Voigt, *American Baseball. From Gentleman's Sport to the Commissioner System*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1966, p. 48.
- 18 *Liverpool Daily Albion*, 31 July 1874, p. 5.
- 19 *Daily News*, 17 August 1874, p. 6.
- 20 Ian Benyon and Brian Evans, *The Inside Story of Baseball*. No publisher identified, 1962, p. 3.
- 21 *Liverpool Daily Albion*, 31 July 1874, p. 5.
- 22 *Manchester Guardian*, 3 August 1874, p. 9.
- 23 *Boston Post*, 19 August 1874, p. 2.
- 24 See the *Sportsman*, 3 January 1889.
- 25 Holt, *Sport and the British*, p. 131.
- 26 *Evening Standard*, 14 March 1889, p. 5.
- 27 Holt, *Sport and the British*, pp. 160-1.
- 28 See various copies of *The Times*, March 1889.
- 29 *The Times*, 18 March 1889, p. 9.
- 30 *The Times*, 18 March 1889, p. 9.
- 31 Interestingly, Mitchell indicates that a similar reaction from the Australian press was afforded toward the exhibition games played there. The Australian press gave extensive coverage to the games and large crowds attended. Some Australian newspapers derided baseball; and several journalists made comparisons between baseball and rounders, and considered the former in rather a negative light as a result. In addition, several commentators were critical of the commercial aspects of the game, and Spalding's 'millionaire' status. Despite the derision in some quarters, Mitchell argues that the tour was a catalyst in the establishment of organized baseball in Australia. Mitchell, 'Baseball in Australia', p. 19.
- 32 *Lancashire Evening Post*, 14 March 1889, p. 1.
- 33 *Lancashire Evening Post*, 14 March 1889, p. 2. 'Brother Jonathan'<sup>1</sup> was a common form of reference to the people of the USA at this time, to be replaced by Uncle Sam some time later.
- 34 *Manchester Guardian*, 13 March, 1889, p. 8.
- 35 *Lancashire Evening Post*, 23 March 1889, p. 3.
- 36 Cited in the *Liverpool Echo*, 25 March 1889, p. 3.
- 37 *Sportsman*, 23 March 1889, p. 1.
- 38 *Liverpool Echo*, 25 March 1889, p. 3.
- 39 Walter LaFeber, *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations, vol. II. — The American Search for Opportunity 1865-1913*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993, p. 21.
- 40 Derek Birley, *The Willow Wand. Some Cricket Myths Explored*, Simon & Schuster, London, 1989, p. 3.

- 41 Eric Dunning, 'The Dynamics of Modern Sport: Notes on Achievement Striving and the Social Significance of Sport', in N. Elias and E. Dunning (eds), *Quest For Excitement. Sport and Leisure in the Civilising Process*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1986, pp. 205-223; Eric Dunning and Kenneth Sheard, *Barbarians, Gentlemen and Players*, Second Edition, Routledge, London, 2005; Holt, *Sport and the British*.
- 42 Holt, *Sport and the British*, pp. 98-9.
- 43 *Liverpool Echo*, 25 March 1889, p. 3.
- 44 Holt, *Sport and the British*, pp. 175-6.
- 45 Holt, *Sport and the British*, p. 266.
- 46 *The Times*, 6 September 1889, p. 8.
- 47 *Sportsman*, 10 October 1889, p. 4.
- 48 Spalding, *America's National Game*; Voigt, *America Through Baseball*.
- 49 Daniel Bloyce, 'Just Not Cricket': Baseball in England, 1874-1900, *International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 207-218.
- 50 Cited in *Daily News and Leader* (London), 25 February 1914, p. 10.
- 51 Elfers, *The Tour to End All Tours*, p. 227. This rather contradicts Elfers' own view that the Japanese, in particular, had demonstrated considerable interest in the tour. Indeed, he argues that 'nothing, *absolutely nothing*, prepared the tourists for the reception they received in Japan', Elfers, *The Tour to End All Tours*, p. 108.
- 52 Elfers, *The Tour to End All Tours*, p. 227.
- 53 John Paul Rossi, 'A Glorified Form of Rounds: Baseball in Britain, February 1914', in Alvin L. Hall (ed.), *Cooperstown Symposium on Baseball and the American Culture*, Westport, 1991, pp. 243-255, p. 247.
- 54 *The Times*, 23 February 1914, p. 13.
- 55 Elfers, *The Tour to End All Tours*, p. 228. Though, it is interesting to note that exhibition matches were played against established Australian teams during the tour. However, tension obviously still existed for many in Australia, as during the forthcoming War, Mitchell notes that in some quarters, particularly because this was a time of conflict, the fact that baseball was played was considered 'disloyal' to cricket and, as such, to the mother nation, Mitchell, 'A National Game Goes International', p. 293.
- 56 *Sportsman*, 26 February 1914, p. 6.
- 57 *Sportsman*, 27 February 1914, p. 6.
- 58 *Daily News and Leader*, 27 February 1914, p. 10.
- 59 *Standard*, 28 February 1914, p. 10.
- 60 *Sportsman*, 27 February 1914, p. 6.
- 61 *The Times*, 27 February 1914, p. 8.
- 62 *The Times*, 27 February 1914, p. 8.
- 63 *Sportsman*, 26 February 1914, p. 6.
- 64 *Daily News and Leader*, 27 February 1914, p. 1.
- 65 Akira Iriye, *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations, vol. III. The Globalizing of America, 1913-1945*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993, p. 122.

- 66 Iriye, *Globalizing of America*, p. 112.
- 67 *Sportsman*, 25 October 1924, p. 7.
- 68 *Liverpool Echo*, 23 October 1924, p. 12.
- 69 *Liverpool Echo*, 22 October 1924, p. 5.
- 70 George Bernard Shaw, 'This Baseball Madness', *Evening Standard*, 4 November 1924, p. 7.
- 71 *Evening Standard*, 25 October 1924, p. 6.
- 72 Cited in *Evening Standard* 25 October 1924, p. 9.
- 73 Birley, *The Willow Wand*, p. 3.
- 74 Holt, *Sport and the British*, p. 174.
- 75 *Sportsman*, 25 October 1924, p. 7.
- 76 *The Times*, 25 October 1924, p. 6.
- 77 *Sportsman*, 7 November 1924, p. 3.
- 78 Cited in *Evening Standard*, 24 October 1924, p. 9.
- 79 Cited in *New York Times*, 3 December 1924, p. 17.