

Fairmont Town Ball – 1930s

Bill Dudding, a former Fairmont Martins baseball player from the 1950s era, recently contacted the MCHS regarding the Fairmont's 1930 amateur baseball town team, at that time called the Cardinals, and their run to the state tournament in reference to the success the current Fairmont Martins baseball team is enjoying. Upon researching the 1930 team, some quite interesting facts were uncovered.

Back in 1930, the Fairmont Cardinals amateur baseball town team played in the Minnesota-Iowa League. Their season was divided into two parts with divisional champions for both the first and second half of the season. Their players and manager were not necessarily just made up of local talent but some came from the surrounding Midwest states as well as from Minneapolis-St. Paul.

The Fairmont team was made up of players by the name of "Scrub" Anderson, Jack Connolly, Marty O'Neill, Dick Wade, "Lefty" Wienke, Harry Strong, "Poss" Owens, Wally Swanstrom, Eddie Deal, Ronny Golden, and player/manager Elmer Miller. Golden and O'Neill were graduates of St. Paul Central High-School, Wienke was also from the Twin Cities, Connolly was a left handed pitcher from Waseca that joined the team after pitching for Albert Lea, Miller was from Ohio, and Deal was from Jamestown, North Dakota, but apparently lived in Elmore .

Miller had a rather interesting career prior to joining the Cardinals, and O'Neill was successful in another endeavor following his time in Fairmont. Player/Manager Elmer Miller had a stint in the major leagues before coming to Fairmont, most notably with the New York Yankees. He played in the same outfield as Babe Ruth and Bob Meusel. Miller batted .267 and appeared in the 1921 World Series against the New York Giants as a lead-off batter.¹ His efforts in the 1921 season were perhaps a bit overshadowed by fellow outfielder Babe Ruth who managed 59 homers while batting .378, although Miller did contribute four home runs. His professional career also included playing for the St. Louis Cardinals and the Boston Red Sox. After O'Neill's amateur baseball career, he officiated high school and college football games and then went on to become a play-by-play sports broadcaster. He was inducted into the *Minnesota Baseball Association's Hall of Fame* in 1963 and into the *Museum of Broadcasting Hall of Fame* in 2010.²

The "Little World Series" of 1930 pitted the Fairmont Cardinals against the Estherville Eagles. It was comprised of a five game series that would determine the Minnesota-

¹ <http://www.baseball-almanac.com/teamstats/roster.php?y=1921&t=nya>

² www.pavekmuseum.org/oneill.html

Iowa League Champion. This was to be followed by the Minnesota state amateur baseball tournament. Estherville wouldn't qualify for that as they were an Iowa team, and the Fairmont team had never previously made an effort to go to the tournament as they considered the cost of the trip to be prohibitive.

The Fairmont Cardinals had a less than stellar performance in the 1930 "Little World Series" against the Estherville Eagles. The hitting and pitching of the Eagles, combined with some bad breaks for the Cardinals, were too much as Estherville took the series three games to one making them the 1930 Minnesota-Iowa Baseball League Champions.

Nonetheless, the Fairmont team decided to enter the Minnesota State Amateur Baseball Tournament and was slated to play at Lexington Park in St. Paul. The Twin Cities media carried stories on Miller, Golden and O'Neill. Miller was called an old favorite as he was known for previously playing for the St. Paul Saints. Golden and O'Neill were also well known as being former St. Paul Central High-School stand-out athletes.

In the state tournament, the Fairmont Cardinals went up against the Northern Pacific team for the state championship. Although Northern Pacific team managed seventeen hits off of two Fairmont pitchers, it just wasn't enough. The Cardinals heavy hitting Harry Strong, a former Mankato Blue Sox and Sioux City Stockyards player, coupled with Jack Connolly's pitching and timely hitting, proved more than the Northern Pacific Railroaders could handle as the Cardinals prevailed by a score of ten to eight. In contrast to their "Little World Series" loss to Estherville, this win gave them the Minnesota State Tournament Class A Title.

The era of those barnstorming independent town baseball teams has evolved over the years as has the game of baseball. The likelihood of a former major leaguer managing or playing for a Minnesota town team today is highly improbable. On the other hand, maybe A-Rod and some of the other major leaguers currently facing suspensions might benefit from a change of scenery.

Nevertheless, the lore of baseball's past involving those players, their travels, and their experiences are what make baseball aficionados continue to study and love the game.

For more information on this topic, or to become a member, contact the Pioneer Museum in Fairmont.

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diet Wednesday. The A's will have to face another clever moist ball flinger if the St. Louis Cards win the National League title for Burleigh Grimes is getting his mail at the Cards' headquarters nowadays.

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THE FAIRMONT CARDINALS are all set to battle somebody's ball club Sunday at Lexington Park, St. Paul, for the state championship. Marty O'Neill, Ronney Golden, Lefty Wienke and Jack Connolly were slated to leave this morning for the Twin Cities. The first three of the above named call the Twin Cities their home, so they'll be doing their stuff for the home folks Sunday.

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