

MERRIMACK REPERTORY THEATRE

2015-16 SEASON

PLAYGUIDE

TINKER TO EVERS TO CHANCE

FEBRUARY 10 – MARCH 6



MEET THE PLAYWRIGHT:
Mat Smart on
theatre and baseball

THE CUBS:
Triumph, heartbreak, and
hope across the decades

JOHNNY EVERS:
One of the game's
greatest fielders

WRITTEN BY

Mat Smart

DIRECTED BY

Sean Daniels

SEAN DANIELS
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



ELIZABETH KEGLEY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

HONORARY PRODUCERS
SUSAN MITCHELL & JIM WALDO

PRESENTS

TINKER TO EVERS TO CHANCE

WRITTEN BY
MAT SMART†

FEATURING

JAMES CRAVEN **EMILY KITCHENS**

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FEBRUARY 10 – MARCH 6, 2016

The World Premiere of *TINKER TO EVERS TO CHANCE* was produced by Geva Theatre, Rochester, NY



MEDIA SPONSOR



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† Member MRT Patriot program

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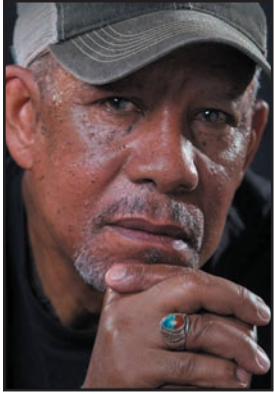
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PLAYGUIDE

THE CAST OF *TINKER TO EVERS TO CHANCE*



JAMES CRAVEN
(RJ)

MRT: Debut. Mr. Craven has been a company member at Penumbra Theatre since 1981. There he has professionally performed in all 10 of August Wilson's best known plays; the only actor in the world to do so. For five years he served as Penumbra Theatre's Company Manager

as well as an actor, doing double duty. He shared a 2012 Best Ensemble, IVEY Award for *Driving Miss Daisy*; a Jungle Theater production. In 2012, he was featured in *The Road Weeps*, *The Well Runs Dry* at Pillsbury House Theater, *Amen Corner* a Penumbra Theatre/ Guthrie Theater production and *Nellie* at St. Paul's History Theater. Nationally, he was lauded for his performance as Simon in Milwaukee Rep's production of *Whipping Man*. At Geva Theater (Rochester, NY) he received raves for Mat Smart's *Tinker to Evers to Chance*. In 2015, James performed in *Thurgood* at Illusion Theater, *Pussy Valley* at Mixed Blood Theater and *Choir Boy* at Guthrie Theater. He comes to Merrimack from principal shooting of the film *Viuda de Sangre* in Tucson. Next up; he returns to the Penumbra Theatre for *Sunset Baby*. James was the 2005 recipient of a Spenser Cheresshore Artistic Fellowship, a 2007 McKnight Theater Artist Fellowship and a 2011 Lunt-Fontaine/Ten Chimney's Theater Artist Fellowship, mentored by his friend Olympia Dukakis.



EMILY KITCHENS
(Lauren)

MRT: Debut **REGIONAL:** *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Helena), The Guthrie Theater; *Proof* (Catherine), *TheatreSquared*; *The Tall Girls* (Jean), Alliance Theater; *Tinker to Evers to Chance* (Lauren), Geva Theatre Center; *Grace, or the Art of Climbing* (Dell), Denver Center for the

Performing Arts; *Three Sisters* adapted by Sarah Ruhl (Natasha), Yale Repertory Theatre/Berkeley Repertory Theatre; *Clybourne Park* (Betsy & Lindsey), *A Christmas Carol* (Belle), American Conservatory Theater; *Lady Windermere's Fan* (Lady Windermere), *The Tempest* (Miranda), John Steinbeck's *The Pastures of Heaven* (Molly), *Much Ado about Nothing* (Hero), California Shakespeare Theater; *Julius Caesar* (Calpurnia), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Helena), Shakespeare Santa Cruz. **EDUCATION:** BFA from the University of Evansville, MFA from A.C.T. Other: Emily has served as an actor at The New Harmony Project several times. She wrote her first play, RAFT, last year and performed it in The 2015 Edinburgh Fringe Festival.



James Craven and Emily Kitchens in *Tinker to Evers to Chance*. Photo by Megan Moore

Q&A: MAT SMART

Mat Smart is a New York-based playwright, Cubs fan, and Chicago native. He is the recipient of the 2014 Otis Guernsey New Voices Award from the William Inge Center for the Arts, two Jerome Fellowships, and a McKnight Advancement Grant.



Where did this play, *Tinker to Evers to Chance*, come from?

The play came out of three of my great loves, which are theatre, baseball, and my mother. In a way, it's a play to honor those three things in my life. At the center, it's about family, a daughter's relationship with her mother. So I think people will have an "in" to the play, whether they like baseball or not.

What's the best thing about being a Cubs fan?

There's a lot of things! They play in one of the best two ballparks (the other one being Fenway of course). They have a rich, wonderful/terrible history.

The thing about being a Cubs fan now is that we're finally good again. Theo Epstein has built a team full of stud young players that are under contract for a long time. One of the great things about being a Cubs fan is the perennial feeling of *this could be the year*. But for real this time, this really could be the year.

So, in one respect, it's this great conversation about what happens when children grow up and move out...

One of the actresses that did an early reading was Scottish. She knew nothing about baseball (and trying to get her to pronounce "Aramis Ramirez" was impossible). But she really connected with the play, because she was in New York being an actress, and her mom was in Scotland, so she understood what that distance was about. It was cool for someone who had no idea about baseball—didn't even know the rules—to connect in that way.



Mat with mom Mary and sister Tifanie at a Cubs game, April 2015.

An essential question of the play is about the duty you have to yourself and your dreams, and the duty you have to the people that raised you. I think most times, the people that raised you want you to follow your dreams. And ideally, you could have both. It's something I always think about: As my folks get older, I want to be there for them. So it's a tricky balance to try and find the right thing to do.

It also uses a "play-within-a-play" device pretty ingeniously, which you might not expect in a baseball story...

When I write a play, I'm writing it to try and figure out a question I don't know the answer to. And for Nessa, the mother in the story... she's writing her own play to try and figure out her own questions.

What's the hardest thing about being a Cubs fan?

Learning how to not get too depressed when they lose. But it teaches you to love the game for the game, and not get too caught up in the outcome—which is ultimately a good thing. Because you know they're gonna break your heart. They haven't won since 1908. You learn to draw value from the game itself, and the experience, and the excitement of being outside in a beautiful ballpark with friends or family.

Do you see theatre and baseball as being connected?

One of the things I love about baseball is... I mean you sit there for three hours, and it really could be just *one moment* that determines the outcome of the entire game. And you really have to pay attention to every pitch if you want to see that one thing that could change everything.

Q&A: MAT SMART

I feel like a lot of our lives are like that: We have a routine, and often each day is like the next. But there are those moments in our lives where things tangibly change. You could ask someone, “what are those five moments in your life that made you who you are?”, and they can answer. And a play is really about those moments in someone’s life—the ones that change everything.

Anything you found unexpected in developing the play, or hearing audience reactions?

There’s this one sequence where we just listen, on the radio, to the 2003 NLCS Game 6: the Cubs against the Marlins. It’s a 3- or 4- minute segment with no actors onstage; just audio. Originally, I had wanted a clip from the actual broadcast of that game. But when we went to Major League Baseball for the rights, we found out just how much that was gonna cost—and it was gonna cost that much every time we did the show.

So Sean encouraged me to write my own version of it, where I write the play-by-play of that moment, and then we record it. And that was really exciting for me, because it let me tell the history of that game myself. The biggest surprise, though, was how much the audience enjoyed it and stayed with it. Nobody was like, “Why are there no actors onstage?” It really held people’s attention. Philip Hersh once said, “Baseball is the only game you can see on the radio.” I think that’s very true.

At some level, do you resent the Red Sox for all of a sudden becoming a winning team in 2004?

The one thing I feel super bummed about is that in 2003, the Cubs lost to the Marlins in the NLCS and the Red Sox lost to the Yankees in the ALCS. ‘Cause it was *so close* to being a Cubs-Red Sox World Series, when neither team had won for so long. That would have been an amazing... people were joking that the world would end in Game 7 in the 9th inning with the scored tied.

But no, I don’t begrudge them at all. I’m happy for them. It makes me think the same thing could happen with the Cubs. It makes think, “Well, they broke the curse in Boston, we can break it in Chicago.”

And you’ve already said that Fenway is one of your favorite ballparks...

Top two. I’ve seen a game at every current major

league park. All thirty of them. And the two, bar none, best places are Wrigley and Fenway. Because you’re seeing baseball the same way people saw it 80 years ago and more.

Why do you write for the stage?

It’s about the communal experience. So many people do everything on a screen now. Theatre is an art form that’s like people around a campfire, coming together to understand why someone tells a story. You can really ask the big questions about life and being a person in the theatre, and have people be open and listen.



Mat standing in front of the John Joseph Evers Hall of Fame plaque in Cooperstown.

BASEBALL'S SAD LEXICON

By Franklin Pierce Adams

These are the saddest of possible words:

“Tinker to Evers to Chance.”¹

Trio of bear cubs, and fleeter than birds,

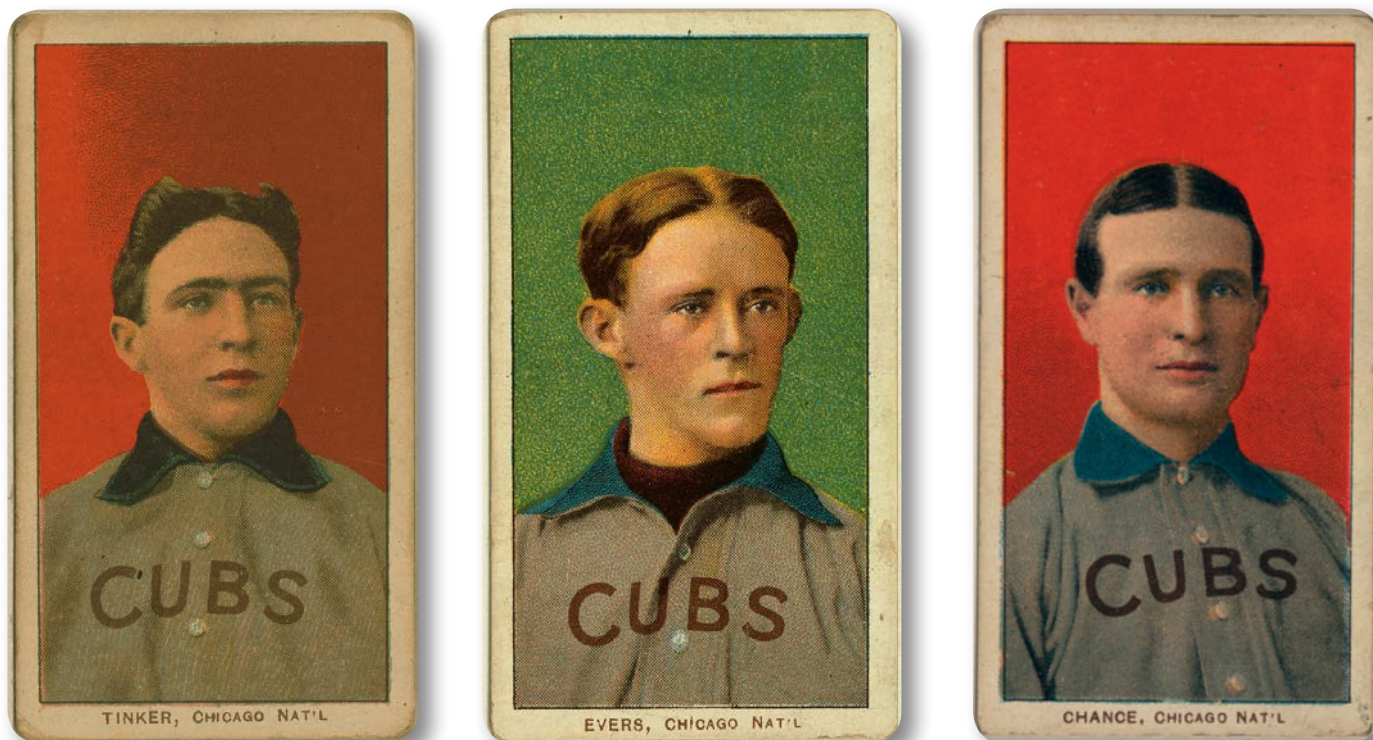
Tinker and Evers and Chance.

Ruthlessly pricking our gonfalon² bubble,

Making a Giant³ hit into a double⁴ –

Words that are heavy with nothing but trouble:

“Tinker to Evers to Chance.”



Baseball cards of Tinker, Evers, and Chance from the American Tobacco Company, circa 1909

¹ Cubs infielders Joe Tinker, shortstop; Johnny Evers, second base; Frank Chance, first base. One of the greatest double play combos in history, the phrase “Tinker to Evers to Chance” is the order the ball was thrown.

² gonfalon – banner or pennant

³ Franklin Pierce Adams wrote the poem at a New York Giants vs. Chicago Cubs game, during his career as a writer for the *New York Mail*, in 1910.

⁴ “Hitting into a double” means hitting into a double play.

MAKING JOHNNY EVERS' JERSEY

The jersey in Tinker to Evers to Chance is a meticulously crafted replica of an actual 1906 Cubs uniform. It's made by Paula Weaver, of K&P Weaver, LLC, the country's preeminent manufacturer of vintage baseball uniforms.

Before Paula starts making a pattern, she does a lot of research, gathering photographs and drawings from the period in question. She'll also use written records and descriptions. From there, she'll figure out which of the historical patterns matches closest, then make the necessary changes to fit the size and style needed.



Research photos for the 1906 Cubs jersey.

The Johnny Evers jersey used in our production is representative of the typical early-1900s style. Some notable features:

- The fabric is **wool**, not polyester
- The fit is **baggy**. (Since wool doesn't have the same stretch as polyester, uniforms had a loose fit so players could run, jump, swing, and throw freely.)
- Four **buttons** extend far down the front
- There's a **simple collar** (collars went out of vogue on baseball uniforms after the early 1900's).



Lauren wears her Evers jersey, passed down the generations. Emily Kitchens and James Craven; photo by Meghan Moore.

The woman behind the jersey is Paula Weaver, and she's the go-to person if you need a period baseball uniform.

Paula got into the historical sewing business when her husband joined a Civil War reenactment group. One reenactment event involved a game of old-time baseball, and a light bulb turned on for Paula. Today she sews about 85% of historical uniforms in the country. Her work includes uniforms for vintage baseball clubs, movie and TV wardrobes, special projects for Major League Baseball, as well as for theatres like MRT. It's not uncommon for her to work 12- or even 15- hour days, but with a job that perfectly combines her loves of sewing, history, and baseball, she doesn't complain too much.

STUFF YOU NEVER KNEW ABOUT BASEBALL UNIFORMS:

Some early jerseys included a **pocket**; they were eliminated, as the ball would sometimes fall in during play.

Narrow belt loops were ditched in favor of wide ones, because **infielders would grab at them** when trying to stop a runner

In the 1880's, uniforms weren't buttoned; they were **laced up** in the same manner as shoes.



Paula Weaver at work on a women's uniform at her shop in Orange, Connecticut.

To learn more about Paula Weaver and vintage uniforms, visit www.baseballamericaspastime.com



THE CHICAGO CUBS, 1906-1908



The Chicago Cubs of 1906. Johnny Evers is seated bottom row, center.
Boston Public Library McGreevey Collection

By the time 1906 rolled around, Cubs manager Frank Selee had already been rebuilding the team for years. The newly-emerged American League had siphoned off most of their talent by 1902, leaving them the disparaging nickname "The Remnants." But Selee was on a quest to make them great again, gathering in a whirlwind of new talent.

When Selee stepped down for health reasons, first baseman Frank Chance himself took on the role of

Manager while continuing to play. Chance was a seasoned and respected player, and now he called the shots.

It was a perfect storm. That 1906 season, the Cubs went 116 and 36: a winning percentage of .763, **the highest, to this day, in the history of baseball.**

Though they lost the World Series that year, they'd go on to win back-to-back in 1907 and 1908—and then never again.

THE CHICAGO CUBS, 2003



The Cubs clinch the division series against the Atlanta Braves on October 5, 2003

In the spring of 2003, it was tough to see how the Cubs would make it to the postseason. But they started off strong with a 15-2 victory over the New York Mets on opening day, and by midseason, they were winning more than they were losing (though not by much).

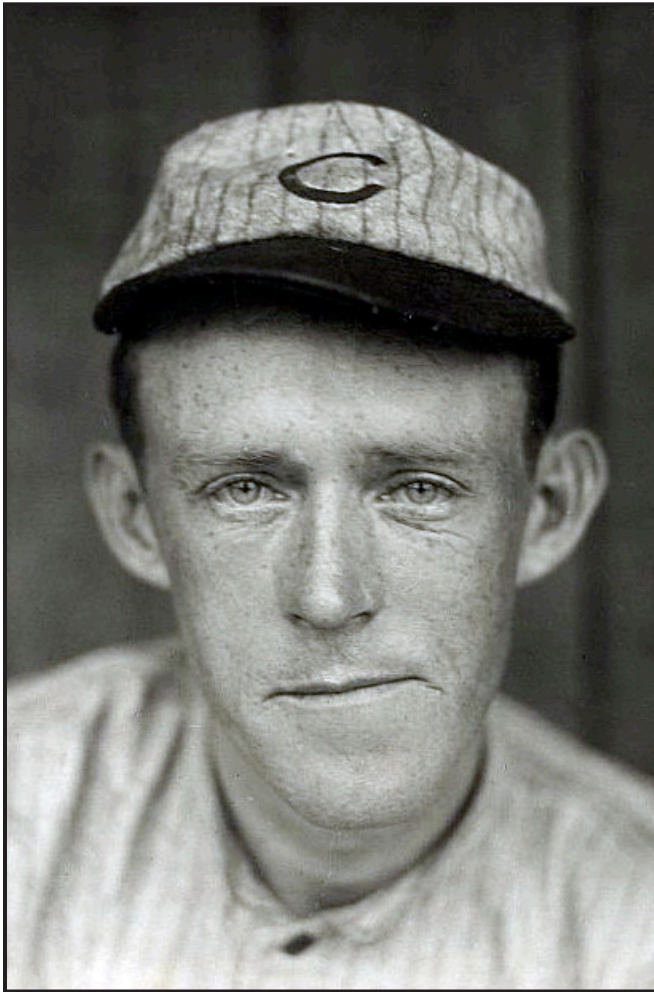
A set of key trades with the Pittsburgh Pirates in July were just what the Cubs needed to push them over the hump. With exceptional third baseman Aramis Ramirez and outfielder Kenny Lofton now on their side, the Cubs

overtook the Cardinals and the Astros for first place in the division, beat the Atlanta Braves in the playoffs, and **found themselves facing the Florida Marlins in the National League Championship Series.**

October 14, 2003: Game 6 of the NLCS. The Cubs are up three games to two. They've got home field advantage. Star pitcher Mark Prior is on the mound, and one more one win will send them to the World Series, for the first time since 1945.

Source: The Cubs by Glenn Stout

JOHNNY EVERS

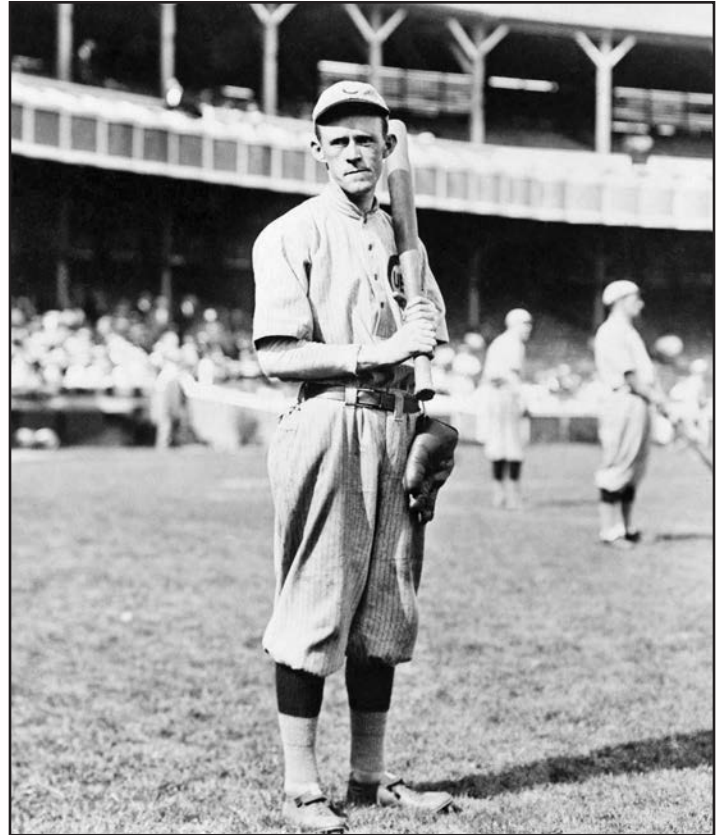


Second Baseman Johnny Evers

Second baseman Johnny Evers played for Chicago from 1902-1913. He wasn't a great home run hitter—he racked up just twelve in his whole career—but he was a master of “inside baseball.” He was a good hitter, an excellent fielder, and he could draw walks and steal bases.

His nickname “the human crab” originated from the unorthodox way he shuffled over to field a grounder, but it stuck because it matched his personality. Notorious for fighting umpires and a longtime enemy of on-field teammate Joe Tinker, Evers had an abrasive disposition.

In 1942, he suffered a stroke that left him wheelchair-bound until his death in 1947, the year after his induction into the Hall of Fame.



Originally from Troy, New York, Evers played with Chicago for over a decade.



Evers on the field, 1909. National Baseball Hall of Fame Library.

Source: The Society for American Baseball Research, www.sabr.org

TWO CURSED TEAMS

A decades-long losing streak. A seemingly unreversible curse. Sound familiar?

Though the Red Sox have managed to turn their fortunes around, for the better part of a century, they shared in the misery of being a cursed team. But the way the curses began were quite different:

The curse on the **Chicago Cubs** began on October 6th, 1945 when a man named Billy Sianis bought two tickets for the Cubs game at Wrigley Field. Billy owned a popular Chicago bar named Billy Goat Tavern, where sports fans tended to gather. The name had recently been changed from the Lincoln Tavern, when Sianis adopted a goat who had wandered into his tavern. Sianis named this goat Murphy, and it was Murphy he brought to the Cubs game on that October day. Sianis and Murphy headed to the game, prepared to support the team they both so loved. When Sianis went to enter Wrigley Stadium with his beloved pet, he was denied access and told **he could not bring Murphy into the Stadium**. As the pair was escorted from the Stadium, Billy Sianis left his curse - a curse that still holds to this day- "The Cubs will never win a World Series as long as the goat is not allowed in Wrigley."



Billy Sianis and his goat Murphy, the origin of the Cubs' curse.

Numerous attempts have been made to reverse the curse: goats have been brought into the park. Goats have been paraded across the country. Severed goat heads have been delivered. So far, nothing has worked.



Babe Ruth, or The Great Bambino

In 1919, the owner of the **Boston Red Sox**, Henry Frazee, began selling players to the weak New York Yankees, in order to obtain money to produce Broadway shows, the most successful being *No, No, Nanette*.

Among these players was the young George Herman Ruth Jr., known as **Babe Ruth** or The Great Bambino. As Frazee continued selling players to the Yankees, the New York team went from being a non-entity to a fierce opponent, and the **eighty-six year Red Sox curse began**. The Yankees won several World Series titles, while the once dominant Red Sox did not win a pennant until 1946.

The curse was finally broken with the historic 2004 World Series win.

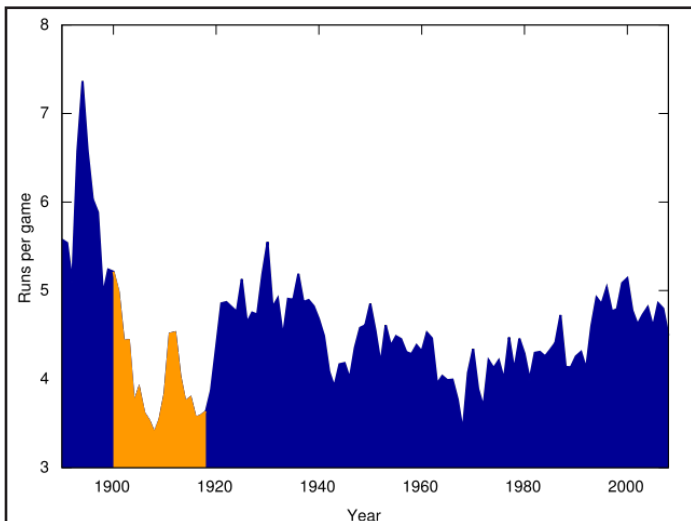
GLOSSARY OF TERMS IN *TINKER TO EVERS TO CHANCE*

Moisés Alou: Outfielder who played 17 years in the major leagues, with a career batting average of .303. His three-year stint with the Cubs is largely remembered for the “Steve Bartman incident,” in which a fan (named Steve Bartman) accidentally blocked Alou’s attempt to catch a foul ball in the first row of the stands.

Cardinals: The St. Louis Cardinals, the Cubs’ greatest rival team. Both teams are founding members of the National League Central division. The team holds 11 World Series championships, the second highest in all of baseball.



Dead Ball Era: Period in baseball from around 1900 to 1920, characterized by low scoring, and an emphasis on pitching and defense. The reason the era came about is unclear, but possible contributing factors were the new “foul strike” rule; the prevalence of the spitball pitch (which was banned in 1920); and generally improved defensive skills.



Graph showing the average runs scored per game in the dead ball era (orange).

Leon Durham: First baseman and outfielder who played for the Cubs from 1981-1988. Much like the Red Sox’s Bill Buckner, Durham is remembered for an incident in which a grounder passed straight between his legs during the 1984 NLCS.

LaGuardia: Airport located in Queens, New York; one of three in the New York City metro area.

Marlins: The Florida Marlins (now Miami Marlins), NL East team formed in 1993. The team has won 2 World Series, despite never having won a division title (it clinched the Wild Card spot both times).



The logo of the Florida Marlins, before they became the Miami Marlins.



Old Style: Beer brewed by Wisconsin’s Pabst Brewing Company, popular in the Chicago area.

Old Style beer, ubiquitous at Cubs games

Maker’s: Maker’s Mark is a small-batch bourbon whisky distilled in Loretto, Kentucky. Recognizable by the red wax seal on the bottle.

Mark Prior: Cubs pitcher from 2002-2006, with a single-season ERA of 2.43 in 2003. Prior was haunted by repeated injuries in his post-Cubs career, bounced between minor league assignments until his retirement in 2013.



Pitcher Mark Prior

Stroke: Death of brain cells caused by a cutoff of blood flow to the brain. Symptoms can include partial paralysis, slurring of speech, and confusion or disorientation.

White Sox: Chicago's other baseball team. A cross-town rivalry amongst fans has existed since the early 1900's, when the White Sox emerged as part of the newly-formed American League. The Cubs lost to the White Sox in the 1906 World Series.



Wrigley Field: Home ballpark of the Chicago Cubs, built in 1914; nicknamed the "Friendly Confines," it's one of the two oldest ballparks in the country, featuring a hand-operated scoreboard and the iconic brick-and-ivy outfield wall. With a seating capacity of 41,160, Wrigley was the last major league ballpark to install electric lighting (in 1988).



Chicago's Wrigley Field



Wrigley's brick outfield wall is famously covered in vines of ivy.

SUGGESTED FURTHER READING

- "Decade later, Game 6 still hard to forget," by Carrie Muskat, mlb.com. <http://m.mlb.com/news/article/62909144/>
- *The Cubs* by Glenn Stout, photographs edited by Richard A. Johnson
- *A Nice Little Place on the North Side: A History of Triumph, Mostly Defeat, and Incurable Hope at Wrigley Field* by George F. Will
- *Johnny Evers: A Baseball Life* by Dennis Snelling

THANK YOU

Thank you to those who contributed their time, energy, and work to this PlayGuide:

Mat Smart
Paula Weaver