

Fair Dealing and Clean Playing: Ed Bolden and the Hilldale Club, 1910-1932

R ECENT STUDIES OF THE EVOLUTION of black sport have provided valuable insights into the symbolic meaning and value of athletics for urban black communities during the era of segregation. The formation of all-black teams fostered both community and racial pride, while participation in sports allowed blacks a rare opportunity to excel, as well as the chance to interact and compete with whites. Yet sport, particularly baseball, reflects not only an important aspect of black social and cultural history, but economic history as well. The successful organization of black baseball teams and leagues, despite facing unfavorable conditions that plagued nearly all black business enterprises during segregation, represented a significant achievement in black economic self-development.¹

¹ On the evolution of black sport, see Rob Ruck, Sandlot Seasons: Sport in Black Pittsburgh (Urbana and Chicago, 1987). The general history of black baseball has been well documented, most notably by Robert Peterson, Only the Ball Was White (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1970); John Holway, Voices from the Great Black Baseball Leagues (New York, 1975); Blackball Stars: Negro League Pioneers (Westport, 1988); and Black Diamonds (Westport, 1989); Donn Rogosin, Invisible Men: Life in Baseball's Negro Leagues (New York, 1983); Art Rust, Jr., "Get That Nigger off the Field!" (New York, 1976); James A. Riley, The All-Time All-Stars of Black Baseball (Cocoa, 1983); Jules Tygiel, Baseball's Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and his Legacy (New York, 1983); Harold Seymour, The People's Game (New York, 1990); and Phil Dixon with Patrick Hannigan, The Negro Baseball Leagues: A Photographic History (Mattituck, NY, 1992). On individual teams, see

The Pennsylvania Magazine of History & Biography Vol. CXVII, Nos. 1/2 (Jan./April 1993)

While most historical accounts have generally emphasized the impoverished nature of black teams,² the financial status of black baseball actually differed profoundly from city to city and from decade to decade. In Philadelphia, the Hilldale Club's profitability in the early 1920s suggests that factors such as location, timing, local competition, business acumen, and white influence crucially contributed to the success or failure of black baseball clubs. While Hilldale is chiefly remembered today for participating in the first Negro World Series in 1924 and for its president, Edward Bolden, who formed the Eastern Colored League in 1922, the team's history from 1910 to 1932 more significantly reveals how black baseball developed and prospered in the post-World War I era, faltered in the late 1920s, and eventually collapsed in the wake of the Depression.

Black baseball had existed in Philadelphia from the sport's earliest beginnings. The Philadelphia Pythians, Excelsiors, Orions, and Mutuals had teams after the Civil War, when blacks were increasingly restricted from participation in the newly formed white professional leagues. In 1887 the League of Colored Base Ball Clubs, an early attempt at an allblack league, had a Philadelphia representative. By 1906 there were nine professional teams operating within 100 miles of Philadelphia, including the Philadelphia Giants. Organized by Sol White, a black man, and two white sportswriters, the Giants dominated black baseball for several seasons until player defections and financial difficulties forced the team to disband in 1911.³

After 1910 New York and Chicago surpassed Philadelphia as the nation's leading centers for black baseball. In Chicago Rube Foster's

Janet Bruce The Kansas City Monarchs: Champions of Black Baseball (Lawrence, 1985); Ruck, Sandlot Seasons; James Bankes, The Pittsburgh Crawfords: The Lives and Times of Black Baseball's Most Exciting Team (Dubuque, 1991); and James DiClerico and Barry Pavelec, Jersey Game (New Brunswick, 1991).

² For examples of this view, see Tygiel, Baseball's Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy, 16-29; see also Rust, "Get That Nigger off the Field!" 16. Tygiel claims that "few if any Negro League franchises registered profits before World War II," 23.

³ On the Philadelphia Giants and the early days of black baseball, see Peterson, Only the Ball Was White, 16-64; Bruce, The Kansas City Monarchs: Champions of Black Baseball, 3-9. On Sol White, see Holway, Blackball Stars: Negro League Pioneers, 1-7; Bankes, Pittsburgh Crawfords, 7; Charles Alexander, Our Game (New York, 1991), 50-51; Chicago Defender, Feb. 2, 1918. White's History of Colored Baseball (Philadelphia, 1907) is considered to be one of the primary sources for the study of early black baseball.

American Giants began to dominate the national and local baseball scene in 1911. A highly regarded pitcher and manager, Foster had spent several seasons with Sol White's Philadelphia Giants and the Leland Giants of Chicago before leaving the Lelands in 1911 to organize the American Giants with the aid of John Schorling, a white tavern keeper and brotherin-law of Chicago White Sox owner Charles Comiskey. The team was installed at South Side Park, the old home of the White Sox which Schorling had purchased from Comiskey in 1910. Foster's masterful managing, superior baseball knowledge, and business skill enabled the team to build up a huge personal following in Chicago, often outdrawing the Cubs and White Sox on Sundays. Well paid and equipped, Foster's players spent the warm weather months in the Midwest and then played winter baseball in California or Florida, traveling by special railroad car. By 1915 the American Giants were probably the best black team in the nation.

Eastern baseball was dominated by the white-controlled Lincoln Giants of New York and the Brooklyn Royal Giants. The Lincoln Giants, formed in 1911 with the help of Sol White, were owned by sports promoters Ed and Jess McMahon. Named after an earlier black team from Lincoln, Nebraska, the club traveled the east coast, but spent each Sunday on its home grounds, Olympic Field, at 136th Street and 5th Avenue in the heart of Harlem. With commercial Sunday baseball illegal in New York until 1919, the team used various devices to avoid prosecution, such as admitting fans for free and then charging for programs. Lincoln built a club comparable to the Chicago American Giants and eventually defeated Foster's club in an unofficial world series of black baseball in 1913.

The Brooklyn Royal Giants were organized in 1905 by John W. Connors, a black café owner. By 1913 Nat Strong, a white booking agent who had begun his career in the late 1890s with the Cuban X Giants and later the Philadelphia Giants, had assumed ownership of the club. Controlling numerous teams and parks, Strong had virtually an ironclad grip on bookings in New York, enabling him to demand a fee of ten percent per game. Perhaps the most blatantly exploitive white owner involved in black baseball, Strong was constantly criticized by the black press, especially after supposedly claiming that no black player was worth more than \$75 a month. Refusing to obtain home grounds for the Royals, Strong relegated the team to traveling status, and Brooklyn never built

an ardent fan following comparable to the American Giants or Lincoln Giants.⁴

Other strong teams during the pre-World War I era included the Cuban Stars, Leland Giants of Chicago, Chicago Giants, West Baden (Indiana) Sprudels, St. Louis Giants, Kansas City Giants, Mohawk Giants of Schenectady, New York, and Indianapolis ABCs. Like the American Giants and Lincoln Giants, these clubs operated on a full-time basis, attracted the country's best black players, and sometimes played more than 175 games a year. Yet the meager financial resources of the black community were sufficient only to support a limited number of teams, and the majority found survival difficult. Lacking adequate support and finances, most clubs were unable to obtain home grounds and were forced to travel outside their own communities and to rely on white booking agents to find paying games on the road. Meanwhile, the few established salaried clubs monopolized players and opponents, leaving the less competitive black teams at a severe disadvantage.⁵

Following the collapse of the Philadelphia Giants in 1911, Philadelphia's black citizens lacked a strong professional team of their own to support. They could still see the two New York teams that traveled regularly to Philadelphia to face both white and black competition. The numerous white semiprofessional teams in Philadelphia and a large black population made the city an especially attractive stop for barnstorming black clubs. Blacks in Philadelphia also could attend dozens of semiprofessional games played in their own neighborhoods on Saturdays and holidays. Restricted socially and economically, few of Philadelphia's 85,000 blacks had the opportunity or desire to attend major league games at Shibe Park or Phillies Park. As Rob Ruck noted in his study of black sport in Pittsburgh, blacks "were much more likely to watch or play on

⁴ Bruce, Kansas City Monarchs, 8; Peterson, Only the Ball Was White, 60, 70, 103-10; Bankes, Pittsburgh Cravofords, 13-18, 70; Ruck, Sandlot Seasons, 115-23; John Holway, Voices from the Great Black Baseball Leagues (New York, 1975), 50; Holway, Blackball Stars, 7-35; Chicago Defender, July 12, 1913; Oct. 16, 1915; April 19, 1919; New York Amsterdam News, June 23, 1926; Aug. 25, 1927; April 11, 1928; Baltimore Afro-American, Sept. 18, 1915; Philadelphia Tribune, April 12, 1928; Jan. 2, 1926.

⁵ Peterson, Only the Ball Was White, 63-72; Ruck, Sandlot Seasons, 117; Chicago Defender, Dec. 13, 1919. According to Rube Foster, early salaried clubs included the Philadelphia Giants (\$850 total per month in 1903), the Leland Giants (\$250 total per week), the Lincoln Giants (\$325 total per week) and the American Giants (\$1,500 per month in 1911). the sandlots of their own or a neighboring community, where admission was a contribution to the passing hat . . . and players were neighbors, workmates, and kin."⁶

In this environment, the Hilldale Club was formed in the summer of 1910 in the borough of Darby, Pennsylvania, a black satellite community southwest of Philadelphia in Delaware County, just across the city line.⁷ The team's first manager was Devere Thompson, whose fourteen-yearold brother Lloyd was the team's second baseman. Most of the players were young workmen from Darby and nearby communities, whose ages ranged from fourteen to seventeen. One of the early Hilldale players, Thomas Jenkins, was employed as a bricklayer. After "handling about ten thousand of the clay squares Saturday morning," he would rush home to put on his uniform in time for an afternoon game.⁸ The team played in an open clearing in Darby at 10th and Summit streets. Players took up a collection after each game to meet expenses.

Little is known about Hilldale's first year. The earliest documented game was played on June 11, 1910, as the "Hilldale Field Club" suffered a 10-5 defeat at the hands of Lansdowne.⁹ Before the team's first season had ended, Devere Thompson left the team and was replaced by Ed Bolden, a young Philadelphia postal clerk from Darby. Bolden was not a baseball player, but he had nearly impeccable work habits and was said to possess "an efficiency record for case examination and floor-work

⁶ Ruck, Sandlot Seasons, 45. Although commercialized Sunday baseball was allowed in Chicago, St. Louis, and Cincinnati as early as 1902, it remained illegal in New York until 1919 and in Pennsylvania until 1934. See John Lucas, "The Unholy Experiment: Professional Baseball's Struggle Against Pennsylvania Sunday Blue Laws 1926-1934," *Pennsylvania History* 38 (1971), 170.

⁷ Charles Hardy, "Race and Opportunity: Black Philadelphia During The Era of the Great Migration, 1916-1930" (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1989), 169; *Chicago Defender*, Oct. 21, 1916; Aug. 9, 1919; *Philadelphia Tribune*, March 30, 1912. In 1910 the population of Darby Borough was 6,305, with 676 blacks comprising 10.7 percent of the population: *Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910*.

⁸ Philadelphia Tribune, Feb. 23, 1928. Jenkins joined the team in 1913 and was later a member of the Hilldale Corporation.

⁹ Philadelphia Inquirer, June 12, July 31, 1910; North American, June 12, 1910. The box score of Hilldale's first known game appeared in the June 12, 1910 Philadelphia Inquirer and North American. The only other documented game was played on July 30, 1910. More detailed coverage of Hilldale's first season probably appeared in the Philadelphia Tribune; unfortunately, no issues are extant before 1912.

unsurpassed and seldom equalled" at Philadelphia's Central Post Office.¹⁰ Quiet, yet ambitious, Bolden immediately began to make changes in the club's operation. As Lloyd Thompson remembered, "Bolden had a head for business and right off we began pooling our earnings, even though they didn't amount to much."¹¹

Bolden led his team to a 23-6 record in 1911, yet the club was virtually indistinguishable from the dozens of other black teams in the Delaware County and Philadelphia areas, most of which were unknown outside of their own communities. Publicity was difficult to obtain, as black teams were generally ignored by the white press. While the *North American*, for example, offered extensive coverage of white semiprofessional teams in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland, "giving the latest gossip" as well as "amateur notes," black teams seldom were mentioned unless they faced a white opponent. The tendency of the white press to refer to black players and teams as "duskies" further discouraged contributions.¹²

Seeking to expand the team's prestige and reputation, Bolden turned to the black press for publicity and began a campaign on the pages of Philadelphia's leading black weekly, the *Philadelphia Tribune*. Founded in 1884, the *Tribune* offered a single page of sports coverage, providing a forum for local black semiprofessional teams to air grievances, make announcements, or simply to promote themselves. Bolden bombarded the newspaper with press releases from March to October. Declaring that "we have good grounds, and give a good guarantee for a good attraction,"

¹⁰ New York Amsterdam News, March 7, 1923; Philadelphia Tribune, April 23, 1920; Philadelphia Independent, Oct. 7, 1950. Bolden continued to work at the Post Office until his retirement in 1946.

¹¹ Unidentified newspaper clipping, Sept. 22, 1953, courtesy of John Holway; *Darby, PA.* 1682-1982 Tricentennial (commemorative booklet) in Lloyd Thompson/Bill Cash Collection, Archives of Afro-American Historical and Cultural Museum, Philadelphia; *Philadelphia Tribune*, Aug. 29, 1914. The origin of the name Hilldale is not known. While the details of Bolden's early life are obscure, his background is suggested by his employment as a government postal worker, a socially elite civil service position that typically attracted well-educated blacks stifled elsewhere. See Hardy, "Race and Opportunity," 20-21.

¹² North American, May 15, 1910; May 21, 1911; May 19, 1912; Philadelphia Inquirer, July 10, 1910; Philadelphia Record, July 10, 1910. The North American's annual "Rosters of Local Amateurs" listed a total of approximately 800 teams in 1910, 1911, and 1912; less than ten were known to be black. Scanning the Philadelphia daily papers from 1910 to 1912, I found approximately twenty different black teams mentioned. Most faced white opponents regularly and represented the upper echelon of the local black baseball scene.

Bolden asked to hear from "all good, fast colored uniformed teams" in the area.¹³

While organized professional baseball in the early twentieth century attempted to curb rowdyism among its players in order to attract the patronage of the "better classes" to its games, community- and neighborhood-supported semiprofessional and amateur teams were less affected by this movement. Mostly unorganized and undisciplined, sandlot teams commonly walked off the field if an umpire's decision went against them. Frequent fights between players or among spectators-especially when bets had been placed-often required police to restore order.¹⁴ Bolden, in contrast, consistently emphasized the need for "clean baseball," warning managers that if they failed to "caution their men from using profane language and interrupting the games, their teams will be barred from our grounds."¹⁵ In 1913 a catcher for the Ardmore Tigers who had purposely knocked a Hilldale player unconscious was banned from the field, as Bolden announced that he would "take this stand against dirty ball players."¹⁶ To Bolden "clean baseball" meant the difference between success and failure, and he requested that his players be "gentlemen in uniform as well as off the ballfield."17

Impressed by Bolden's efforts, the crowds increased for Hilldale's games. Crowds of 1,000 to 3,000 were reported in 1912 and 1913 for holiday games (Decoration Day, July 4, Labor Day) and for contests with the South Philadelphia Giants, who dominated press coverage in the *Tribune*. Noting the growth in attendance, Bolden moved the team to a new playing field, at 9th and Cedar Avenue in Darby, that would become known as Hilldale Park. The team opened its grounds on May 16, 1914, and drew 3,000 fans for a Decoration Day game two weeks later.¹⁸

¹³ Philadelphia Tribune, March 23, 30, June 1, 22, 1912

¹⁴ Harold Seymour, Baseball The Golden Age (New York, 1971), 91, David Q Voight, American Baseball, vol 2 From the Commissioners to Continental Expansion (1966-1970, reprint ed, University Park, 1983), 68-72

¹¹⁵ Philadelphia Tribune, March 30, Sept 7, 1912

¹⁶ Philadelphia Tribune, Sept 6, 1913

¹⁷ Philadelphia Tribune, Oct 17, 1914

¹⁸ Philadelphia Tribune, Sept 28, 1912, June 7, July 15, Aug 30, 1913, April 25, June 6, 1914, North American, Aug 4, 1912 Newspaper estimates of crowd sizes were often exaggerated as well as inaccurate Rollo Wilson of the Puttsburgh Courier commented on this tendency in 1923 Assessing a crowd at Hilldale Park, he noted that the attendance was estimated at "7,000 to 50,000, dependent upon one's ignorance of how many people make 1,000 "Puttsburgh Courier, July 14, 1923 In comparing Hilldale's actual attendance from 1926 to 1932 to published estimates, I have noted a general tendency toward overestimation

Philadelphia's black men and women were increasingly motivated to take the short trolley ride to watch the young team in action. The *Philadelphia Tribune* noted that at the Decoration Day game "many of Philadelphia's professional men mixed with the large crowd that packed the Hilldale grounds until the overflow crowd had to go to deep center field."¹⁹

Large crowds, however, did not necessarily bring huge profits. Admission, if charged, was probably 10 cents, and may have been even less. In 1914 gate receipts from the grandstand at Hilldale Park ranged from \$20.00 to \$40.00 a game, with a high of \$57.59 for July 4. Collections added another \$3.00 to \$6.00 and refreshments contributed \$5.00 to \$15.00. With club expenses such as uniforms (\$3.75 apiece), a steamroller for the field (\$12.00), baseballs (two for \$1.68), an umpire (\$50.00 per season), park rent (\$50.00 semiannually), and the visiting team's share of the receipts, Hilldale's profits were modest. To raise additional money for the team, Bolden held a raffle and offered a ton of coal as first prize, \$5.00 in gold for second prize, and \$2.50 in gold for third. His fundraising efforts paid off. Hilldale ended the 1914 season with \$217.89 in its account and finished the following year with a balance of \$620.32.²⁰

The black baseball scene in Philadelphia teemed with several wouldbe champions. J. Arthur Norris, manager of the South Philadelphia Giants, noted the increase in competition in 1913, stating that "in the past five years, there has been an increase of colored clubs in and around Philadelphia."²¹ Few, however, had home grounds, and Bolden's control of Hilldale Park gave his club a unique advantage. (Of the fifteen leading black teams in Philadelphia in 1913, only four had grounds.) As Hilldale's prestige grew, the club became more attractive to traveling white teams that lacked their own playing fields. In 1914 Hilldale scheduled three games against white teams, even facing Deegan, a minor league pitcher owned by Connie Mack's Philadelphia Athletics, who made an appearance for a local semiprofessional club. Favoring neither black nor white teams, Bolden guaranteed visiting teams \$7 to \$15, noting "We cannot give visiting teams 50 percent; that is unreasonable but we bar no one."²²

¹⁹ Philadelphia Tribune, June 6, 1914, Chicago Defender, Oct 21, 1916 A trolley ride from City Hall in Philadelphia to Darby took approximately 45 minutes in 1916

²⁰ Hilldale ledgers, 1914 and 1915, Lloyd Thompson/Bill Cash Collection, *Philadelphia Tribune*, April 4, 1914

²¹ Philadelphia Tribune, March 22, 1913

²² Philadelphia Tribune, Aug 28, 1915, Hilldale ledger, 1915

As Hilldale steadily climbed to the top of the black baseball hierarchy in Philadelphia, Bolden attempted further improvements in his club by recruiting players from other sandlot teams in the area. Following the pattern of other local managers, the Hilldale leader used the pages of the *Tribune* to attract the attention of a desired player: "If Jackson, the left hand boy who pitched against Hilldale for the Bon Tons is idle, it will be to his advantage to communicate with Hilldale's manager."²³ Bolden acquired several new players in this fashion and began to rebuild the team of "small boys" to a more substantial and powerful club. During the next few seasons, he obtained players from the Morton Republican Club, the Evergreen Hall team of Woodbury, New Jersey, the Ardmore Tigers, and from other clubs in Camden and Philadelphia.

In 1915 Bolden guided Hilldale to another successful season, winning 20, losing 8, and tying 2. The team continued to prosper and began to receive preferential treatment on the sports pages of the *Philadelphia Tribune*. Box scores were printed for the first time in 1914, and in September 1915 the club even received its own column, "Hilldale Pickups." Bolden, however, realized that his team was still mainly a local phenomenon. Games were seldom scheduled outside of Darby, and although white teams were increasingly booked at Hilldale Park, most games were against black sandlot teams of a similar level of skill.

The club underwent substantial changes for the 1916 season. The grounds were improved, new blue-gray uniforms were ordered for the team, and a new grandstand was built. Admission was raised to 20 cents. More significantly, Bolden implemented a stern new set of rules. Absence from games, except for unavoidable reasons, was punishable by a \$5 fine—unless a three-day notice was given. Players were expected to attend practice twice a week, in addition to a thirty-minute practice before games.²⁴ Players were warned against insubordination and the use of alcohol: "No player shall indulge in any intoxicating liquor before the game nor at any time during his sojourn upon the field, nor on his way to or from the field. Neither shall he come upon the field under the influence of, or smelling of alcoholic liquors."²⁵

²³ Philadelphia Tribune, Aug. 17, 1912.

²⁴ Lloyd Thompson, "The Darby Hilldale Baseball Team," in *Darby, PA. 1682-1982 Tricentennial. Philadelphia Tribune*, Sept. 25, 1915; Feb. 19, March 11, April 8, 1916; Hilldale ledger, 1916.

²⁵ Hilldale ledger, 1916.

Under these stricter controls, Hilldale continued its success. The club began to advertise its upcoming games in the *Tribune*, and large crowds flocked to the ballpark. By May 1916 Philadelphia Rapid Transit began to run extra cars on No. 13, Walnut Street Line, all the way to Hilldale Park. As a press release to the *Tribune* noted: "Progress is the watch word of the hour and the local crowds augmented by large crowds of respectable fans from Philadelphia helps [*sic*] us to have a real live organization in a live town. Follow the Hilldale Flag."²⁶

In Chicago and New York, large crowds of less than "respectable" fans had caused numerous problems at black baseball parks. Parks often lacked adequate security and intoxicated spectators were especially uncontrollable. At Schorling Park, home of the Chicago American Giants, one observer witnessed fans buying whiskey in rest rooms, noting that the "actions of women in the ladies' rest room . . . is not fit to put into print."²⁷ In Baltimore patrons at Maryland Park were known to offer the players alcohol during the game. The black press constantly chastised fans for drinking, betting, vulgar language, fighting, and cushion throwing, and urged them to remain seated during on-the-field arguments.²⁸ Editorials in the black newspapers typically condemned fan conduct:

The way the men fans at the Giants park act is not only disgusting, but it is a fright. Sunday one threw a cushion into the box seats next to where I sat and it knocked a woman's hat off. Too bad that some people never know how to $act.^{29}$

Last Sunday I went to the ball game at Protectory Oval in the Bronx and was disgusted by a member of my race, drunk with "home-made" gin from Harlem making himself odious with the use of vulgar language and by standing in the aisle, cutting the view of many spectators.³⁰

In contrast Bolden attempted to provide a comfortable and orderly environment for patrons of Hilldale Park. In 1916, after several fans caused a disturbance at a game, Bolden swore out warrants on four of

²⁶ Philadelphia Tribune, April 15 (quote), May 20, 1916.

Momarchs, 51; Rogosin, Invisible Men: Life in Baseball's Negro Leagues (New York, 1985), 89. ²⁹ Chicago Defender, July 15, 1916.

³⁰ New York Amsterdam News, May 16, 1923.

²⁷ Chicago Defender, May 13, 1922. Until the 1920s, white organized baseball was similarly plagued by unruly fan behavior. See Seymour, *Baseball: The Golden Age*, 90-115.

²⁸ Chicago Defender, Oct. 21, 1915; Aug. 24, 1918; June 21, Sept. 6, 1919; May 22, 1920; June 4, Aug. 13, 1921; June 4, 1923; Baltimore Afro-American, Jan. 10, 1925; Bruce, Kansas City

the men, who were eventually prosecuted and fined. Attempts by park management to eliminate gambling were less successful. While public betting was banned in 1917, gamblers were again a familiar sight at Hilldale Park by 1923, even offering money to pitchers if they won their games. Finally, after a particularly violent fight between two gamblers resulted in injury to a park policeman, Bolden acted to increase security, and several betters, gamblers, and bookies were arrested.³¹

Bolden also continued to insist on disciplined behavior from his players. Through his weekly press releases and at special meetings at his home, Bolden encouraged and scolded his "boys" in enthusiastic fashion, urging them to "get plenty of practice and get right in the game to beat the big fellows on your schedule. Systematize, that's all."³² Following their most successful season to date (1916), the thirteen Hilldale players expressed their gratitude to their manager for his fatherly leadership and inspiration by presenting him with a \$100 diamond ring, purchased after the profits had been divided (two- thirds to players, one-third to the club). Bolden, however, was not through reorganizing and rebuilding the team. He pooled his share of the club's profits together with those of several of the "old fellows," who had been with the team since its inception, and incorporated the team in November 1916 as the Hilldale Baseball and Exhibition Company.³³

As president of the new organization, Bolden began using the corporation's capital to replace his local semipro players with experienced professionals from teams in New York and other cities. As the press release of May 12, 1917, noted, the team was "going through a form of evolution, [and] each game will bring rapid changes until in the near future we produce the real Hilldale team."³⁴ By late July most of the "old fellows"

³¹ Philadelphia Tribune, Jan. 13, Feb. 17, March 24, 1917; Baltimore Afro-American, July 27, 1923; Pittsburgh Courier, Aug. 4, 1923. The 1929 murder at Hilldale Park of a woman involved in the local numbers scene suggests that Bolden was unable to eliminate all the gamblers. See Philadelphia Tribune, May 23, 1929.

³² Philadelphia Tribune, Aug. 21, 1915.

³³ Hilldale ledger, 1916; *Philadelphia Tribune*, Feb. 3, 17, 1917. Tentative plans for Hilldalesponsored football and basketball teams were soon abandoned. The "old fellows" were Charles Freeman, George Mayo, Thomas Jenkins, Edward Bolden, Mark Studevan, Lloyd Thompson, George Kemp, and William Anderson. James Byrd became part of the corporation on Oct. 22, 1916. Most of the "old fellows" would remain with the original corporation until its demise in 1930.

³⁴ Philadelphia Tribune, May 12, 1917.

were relegated to full time corporation duties. They were replaced by veteran professional players on salary, including pitcher Doc Sykes, out-fielder Spottswood Poles, catcher-first baseman Bill Pettus, and second baseman "Bunny" Downs. Within a year, no local semiprofessional players remained. The expensive talent imported by Bolden resulted in a corresponding 5 cent increase in ticket prices at Hilldale Park, beginning in August 1917, yet attendance did not diminish.³⁵ Large crowds and higher salaries increased the prestige of the team and served to attract superior players to Hilldale. In 1917 and 1918, four professional players who would play significant roles in Hilldale's history joined the club.

Right fielder and leadoff hitter Otto Briggs of North Carolina joined Hilldale in 1917 and was named the team's captain. Briggs had played for the West Baden (Indiana) Sprudels, the Dayton Marcos, and local clubs before being signed by Bolden in 1917. A fan favorite for his steady play, Briggs remained with Hilldale for twelve years, with time out for military service in World War I. He managed the team in 1927 and 1928 and was also employed at the *Philadelphia Tribune* as circulation manager.³⁶

Left-handed hitting catcher Louis Loftin Santop from Texas, the first of the great black sluggers, was Hilldale's best known player in the postwar period. Santop had starred for a number of teams, including the Lincoln Giants and Brooklyn Royal Giants before joining Hilldale permanently in 1918. Known for his home run prowess, Bolden would later remember Santop as "the greatest star and best drawing card we ever had" and reportedly paid him a salary of \$450 a month. Santop played with Hilldale until 1926 when he was released and his playing career ended.³⁷

Pitcher Phillip Cockrell (Williams) of Georgia anchored Hilldale's pitching staff for fourteen years beginning in 1918. A right-handed spitball ace, Cockrell had pitched with the Lincoln Giants before coming to Hilldale. Highlights of Cockrell's illustrious career included five no-hitters, a 33-7 record against Negro League opponents between 1924 and

³⁵ Philadelphia Tribune, July 28, 1917

³⁶ Peterson, Only the Ball Was White, 319, Chicago Defender, Sept 27, 1924, Philadelphia Tribune, March 21, 1929 Briggs married Beatrice Perry, daughter of Chris Perry, founder of the Philadelphia Tribune

³⁷ Holway, Blackball Stars, 88-95, Peterson, Only the Ball Was White, 224, Chicago Defender, Sept 27, 1924

1926, and three shutouts against teams composed of major league players. Cockrell was Hilldale's last manager in 1932 and became an umpire after his playing days ended.³⁸

Third baseman William "Judy" Johnson debuted with Hilldale in 1918 as an eighteen-year-old rookie, receiving \$5 a game. Overmatched and inexperienced, he failed to make the team in 1919, and joined the Madison Stars in Philadelphia. He was finally reacquired by Bolden in 1921 and remained with the club for most of the next ten years. He went on to become one of the legends of black baseball for his fielding excellence and superior hitting. Johnson managed Hilldale in 1931 and 1932, scouted for the Philadelphia Athletics and Phillies, and was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1975.³⁹

With a vastly strengthened lineup, Hilldale began attracting nationwide attention. The leading black teams in the East—including the Lincoln Giants, Brooklyn Royal Giants, Atlantic City Bacharach Giants, and Cuban Stars—debuted at Hilldale Park in 1917, and the team received its first coverage in the *Chicago Defender*, the nation's leading black newspaper. Taking notice as well, white teams began to arrange games more frequently, although racial tensions were sometimes apparent and emotions ran high. Bolden, still insisting on "clean baseball," managed to maintain control over his players, as epitomized by the following account:

HILLDALE A CLUB OF CULTURE

Any one who attended the game on Saturday and witnessed the actions of the Fairhill players (white) and the Hilldale players (colored) cannot help but admire the colored boys for their *gentlemanly* conduct. It is true the umpire gave raw decisions on both sides, but the Hilldale boys did not open their mouths, they let their manager adjust matters. But that "beef trust" fry of the Fairhills kicked harder than a mule with seven pairs of shoes on

³⁸ Philadelphia Tribune, April 3, 7, 1951. Chicago Defender, Sept. 27, 1924; The Baseball Encyclopedia 8th ed. (New York, 1990), 2613-14. Cockrell's no-hitters were against the All Nationals of New York in 1919, the Detroit Stars in 1921, Chicago American Giants and Paterson Silk Sox in 1922, and Cape May in 1930. He was tragically murdered on March 31, 1951, in a case of mistaken identity.

³⁹ Holway, Blackball Stars, 150-66; Peterson, Only the Ball Was White, 237; Riley, The All-Time All-Stars of Black Baseball, 252; Bankes, Pittsburgh Crawfords, 152; Chicago Defender, Sept. 27, 1924. each foot. The score was 3-2 in favor of the white team, but the colored boys proved themselves to be gentleman, which was a greater victory.⁴⁰

By the close of the 1917 season, Bolden had seemingly realized his ambition of building a powerful, disciplined, and professional organization, both on and off the field. While Hilldale had beaten the leading black teams from New York, as well as strong local white clubs, it had yet to encounter white major league players. Games between major league teams and black clubs had been annual events in New York and other cities for years, and black teams had always held their own in the competition. As recently as 1915, the Lincoln Giants had beaten the National League champion Philadelphia Phillies and had defeated their ace pitcher, Grover Cleveland Alexander, in 1913.⁴¹

Now ready to put his club to the ultimate test, Bolden scheduled three games for successive Saturdays at Hilldale Park against the "All-Americans," a team composed of Philadelphia Athletic and other American League players. Taking no chances, Bolden supplemented his already strengthened lineup with a group of players from the Lincoln Giants and the Brooklyn Royal Giants. On October 6, 1917, before an "immense" crowd of 8,000 fans, Hilldale defeated the All-Americans by a score of 6-2. Although Hilldale would lose the following two games, the victory placed the team in the national black sports spotlight and represented the

⁴⁰ Philadelphia Tribune July 15, 1916 Bolden still insisted on gentlemanly behavior from his players, even in the later years of the club Jake Stephens, Hilldale's shortstop for much of the 1920s, remembered that "If you weren't a gentleman, you didn't play on his ball club When he called you in his office, you didn't do it again or you didn't play again (until) next year Your baseball ability didn't mean a thing, you had to be a gentleman" (John Holway notes, courtesy John Holway) Proper dress was important as well Bolden bought the young Stephens two suits and two Stetson hats when he first made the team in 1921 Rogosin, *Invisible Men*, 69

⁴¹ Chicago Defender, Oct 11, 1913, Oct 23, 1915, Holway, Blackball Stars, 61-78, Bankes, The Putsburgh Crawfords, 63, Rogosin, Invisible Men, 183-84 In 1917 pitcher Rube Marquard of the Brooklyn Giants was fined \$100 by team owner Charles Ebbets for pitching (and losing) against the Lincoln Giants The team issued a statement explaining its action

The Brooklyn team is averse to permitting its team, or any of its players, participating in games with Negroes There are only semiprofessional Negro teams, and when there is an outcome like yesterday's game, when Rube was beaten, President Ebbets believes it tends to lower the calibre of ball played by the big leagues in the eyes of the public, and at the same time make the major league team the subject of ridicule at the hands of the more caustic fans See Baltimore Afro-American, Oct 27, 1917, Chicago Defender, Oct 27, 1917

By the early 1920s, numerous defeats at the hands of black teams forced the commissioner of baseball, Kenesaw Mountain Landis, to issue a ruling that prevented major league teams from competing as a unit in the off season

pinnacle of Bolden's career up to 1917.⁴² G. Grant Williams, city editor of the *Tribune*, expressed the prevailing mood:

There are but few, if any, athletic associations in this vicinity that have made the success of the Hilldale Baseball Club at Darby. Just a few years ago they were playing in an open field . . . Several years ago they rented their present grounds and put in a few seats and a small grandstand. This year they extended the grandstand and today they have a park second to none of its class . . . Manager Bolden and his associates deserve unstinted praise for their business-like methods in handling the large crowds . . . and for everything they have accomplished.⁴³

The victory offered a glimmer of hope to Philadelphia's black population, still reeling from the effects of race riots in nearby Chester, and proved conclusively that black players, if given the chance, could excel in the major leagues.⁴⁴

The United States's entry into World War I transformed semiprofessional baseball in Philadelphia and other cities. Secretary of War Newton Baker's "work or fight" order on May 23, 1918, sent dozens of major league players scurrying to jobs in mills and shipyards, "particularly mills and shipyards that happened to have fast semipro baseball teams."⁴⁵ In Chicago at least six teams were said to have a minimum of three professional white players, including the Joliets, who were stocked with White Sox players in 1918. In Philadelphia workers at Cramp's Shipyard in Kensington went on strike to protest highly paid ballplayer-employees who, apparently, did nothing except play baseball for the company team. The increased interest in semiprofessional baseball resulting from the participation of professional players helped to spark an incredible growth in the development of industrial and company-sponsored teams between

⁴² Philadelphia Record, Oct 7, 1917, Philadelphia Tribune, Oct 13, 1917, Chicago Defender, Oct 13, 1917, Feb 22, 1919, Hilldale ledger, 1917 Other sources assessed the crowd at 12,000 fans The team earned \$1,966 39 for the Oct 6 game, \$1,560 69 for Oct 13, and \$1,397 17 for Oct 20 for a total of \$4,924 25 for the three games

⁴³ Philadelphia Tribune, Oct 13, 1917

" On the Chester race riots of 1917, see Hardy, "Race and Opportunity," 390 Within a year, competition for available housing would trigger racial violence in Philadelphia See Vincent Franklin, "The Philadelphia Race Riot of 1918," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 99 (1975), 336-50

⁴⁵ Robert Creamer, Babe The Legend Comes to Lafe (New York, 1974), 158-61

1918 and 1922. The *Chicago Defender* remarked in 1918 that "There are a greater number of high class clubs at present than ever was known, owing principally [to] . . . many big and minor leaguers . . . seeking work considered essential employment" and noted the increased attendance at semiprofessional games throughout the country.⁴⁶ With the proliferation of white teams, the stronger black clubs found themselves in demand by a greater array of opponents. In 1918 Hilldale scheduled fifty games, its highest total to date, against mostly white semiprofessional teams, while in Chicago one observer noted that he would not be surprised if the American Giants soon "depended on the other race altogether" for games.⁴⁷

Hilldale also benefited from the war's profound effect on Philadelphia's black inhabitants. The black population increased dramatically, as area industries, lacking their usual supply of immigrant workers, began to recruit black workers from the South. The subsequent Great Migration swelled Philadelphia's black population to 134,229 in 1920, a 58.9 percent increase from 1910. (In Darby Borough, the black population leaped 64.9 percent, from 676 to 1,114.) Because baseball had been popular among southern blacks, and the majority of black professional players were southern born, many of the new migrants began to patronize the black baseball parks in Philadelphia, New York, Chicago, and other northern cities. In addition to Hilldale, the Great Migration spurred the growth of numerous black enterprises in Philadelphia, including the Brown and Stevens Bank, the Dunbar Theater, the Hotel Dale, and three new black newspapers, the *Philadelphia Defender*, the *Philadelphia American*, and the *Public Journal*.⁴⁸

With an expanded base of support and greater range of opponents, Hilldale continued to prosper financially. The corporation had abandoned the cooperative plan during 1918 and became one of a handful of black teams to pay salaries.⁴⁹ Contracts typically ran from May through Septem-

⁴⁶ Chicago Defender, Aug. 31, Sept. 14, Sept. 21, 1918; March 1, April 5, 1919. On the impact of World War I on semiprofessional baseball, see Ruck, Sandlot Seasons, 39-46; Harold Seymour, The People's Game (New York, 1990); Seymour, Baseball: The Golden Age, 245-55; David Voight, American Baseball, 121-22.

⁴⁸ Hardy, "Race and Opportunity," 135, 314-78; Fourteenth Census of the United States: 1920.

⁴⁹ Chicago Defender, Dec. 13, 1919; Dec. 24, 1921. By 1920, according to Rube Foster, there were only five salaried clubs in existence: the Lincoln Giants, Hilldale, Brooklyn Royal Giants, Atlantic City Bacharachs, and the Chicago American Giants. By 1921 twelve teams paid a total of \$166,000 in salaries.

⁴⁷ Chicago Defender, Aug. 31, 1918.

ber, with pay ranging from \$100.00 to \$500.00 a month (roughly comparable to salaries paid in the minor leagues at the time). In 1918 the team paid \$6,699.05 in player salaries, nearly 35 percent of its expenses, yet it still realized a net profit of \$1,576.22 for a fifty-two-game season.⁵⁰

While World War I stimulated the growth and development of Hilldale and other semiprofessional teams, some black teams suffered temporary setbacks. Wartime limits on building materials prevented park improvements, and restrictions on sporting goods made equipment replacement difficult. Coverage of black baseball was drastically reduced as well, the result of a severe newsprint shortage that lasted until 1920. The wartime draft severely weakened both black and white teams. Foster's American Giants struggled through 1918, losing eight players to the draft. Hilldale was also hit hard as four players (Otto Briggs, Jess Kimbro, Specs Webster, and Spottswood Poles) were drafted and eventually served in France. Like white major league players, many black professional players took "essential" factory jobs to avoid the draft while continuing to play baseball.

The unprecedented interest in sports, especially baseball, continued unabated in the postwar period. In 1919 baseball at the semiprofessional and professional level achieved new heights in popularity and prosperity, and numerous black teams sprang up overnight in both the East and West. Despite slight gains in the economic status of urban blacks as a result of the war, most individual black investors lacked the necessary capital to undertake a business venture on their own. Following Hilldale's example, incorporation became an increasingly popular means for blacks to finance their own clubs and avoid white ownership. The St. Louis Giants, Winston Salem Giants, Pittsburgh Giants, Baltimore Black Sox, and Madison Stars of Philadelphia incorporated between 1917 and 1921, all selling shares at prices ranging from \$1 to \$100.⁵¹

⁵⁰ List of Hilldale's expenses for 1918 in Lloyd Thompson/Bill Cash Collection. *Baltimore* Afro-American, March 7, 1925. On salaries in the major and minor leagues, see Steven A. Riess, *Touching Base: Professional Baseball and American Culture in the Progressive Era* (Westport, 1980), 156-65. In the late 1920s, Hilldale's salaries ranged from \$125 to \$400. Since players were docked for various expenses, including equipment, salary advances, and transportation, they seldom received the full amount of their pay each month.

⁵¹ Chicago Defender, Dec. 29, 1917; Jan. 5, Oct. 19, Nov. 9, 1918; April 5, Sept. 6, 1919; Jan. 3, April 10, 1920; March 19, 1921; *Baltimore Afro-American*, Sept. 10, 1920; July 29, 1921; *Philadelphia Tribune*, Jan. 18, 1919; April 17, 1920. Specs Webster died of pneumonia in France in 1919.

Despite incorporation, newly formed black teams continued to be plagued by insufficient financial resources, an inability to secure adequate playing grounds, and competition from the established clubs. With limited discretionary income, black fans had little patience with the struggles faced by new franchises and refused to support teams that did not achieve instant success. Washington, for example, had the nation's third largest black population in 1920, yet still it was unable to support a professional team. In the impoverished South, black teams in Birmingham, Memphis, and other cities were restricted from playing white opponents until the Depression. They simply lacked the resources to compete financially with the established eastern and midwestern organizations, to which they often lost their best men.⁵²

With a strong player nucleus and a well-run business operation, Hilldale was firmly entrenched as the dominant black team in Philadelphia and rode the crest of the postwar semipro boom. Bolden, however, faced a series of challenges from newly formed local clubs that were financed by both whites and blacks. In 1917 the Peerless American Giants were organized under black ownership and installed at Delaware County Athletic Park, located at 9th and Cedar in Darby, directly across the street from Hilldale Park. The Peerless Giants faltered quickly, but a more serious threat was presented in 1918 by Nat Strong, the white owner of the Brooklyn Royal Giants. Noting Hilldale's financial success, Strong offered to "amalgamate" with the team. When Bolden refused, Strong retaliated by reviving the old Philadelphia Giants, using several of his own players, and placed the team in Darby at Delaware County Athletic Park. Interest was minimal, however, perhaps due to Strong's unpopularity among blacks, and the club was abandoned by 1919. In 1920 yet another team threatened Hilldale's domination of black baseball in the city. The Madison Stars, partially financed by John Gibson, a wealthy black theater magnate, featured a new park at 34th and Reed streets, as well as the endorsement of Rube Foster. Despite high hopes and expecta-

⁵² Bruce, Kansas City Monarchs, 30, 74; Rogosin, Invisible Men, 44, 93; Chicago Defender, April 19, 1919; Baltimore Afro-American, Aug. 22, 1921; Philadelphia Tribune, March 19, 1931. In Washington no fewer than three professional clubs (the Braves, Potomacs, and Pilots) were launched with high expectations between 1921 and 1932. The Braves even presented President Warren Harding with a gold pass for admission to their home games in 1921. The failure of Washington to support a black team may have been partially due to the popularity of the Washington Senators among black fans.

tions, the Stars faltered by mid-season, but functioned as a developmental team for Hilldale for a few seasons.⁵³

Bolden's increased power and influence in local baseball prevented serious encroachments on Hilldale's territory after 1920 and enabled the team to monopolize bookings with white teams. As Hilldale's drawing power grew, Bolden formed valuable alliances with leading white baseball promoters in Philadelphia and gained a foothold in New York after making peace with Nat Strong. Bolden, like Rube Foster (who once stated that while he preferred black umpires, "I cannot allow my preference to run away with my business judgment."), was a businessman first and a "race man" second.⁵⁴ Despite criticism, he continued to book games with local white teams while often ignoring other Philadelphia black clubs. He had no qualms about dealing with whites and realized that Hilldale's financial success was inextricably linked to their involvement. Since professional black teams in Philadelphia and elsewhere could not rely solely on the day-to-day support of their own fans, games with whites were a necessity for survival. Bolden summed up his philosophy in 1925: "Close analysis will prove that only where the color-line fades and co-operation instituted are our business advances gratified. Segregation in any form, including self-imposed, is not the solution."55

Despite his outwardly congenial relations with whites, Bolden never abandoned the black community. He participated in black fraternal organizations as a 32d degree Mason and Shriner and spoke publicly on a variety of subjects, including a "forceful" speech on "The American Negro, Immigration, and Race Consciousness" that he delivered before the Commonwealth Club of the YMCA in 1924. The Hilldale corporation gave generously to black causes, and the team took part in annual benefit and charity games for hospitals, churches, and war veterans. In addition, Hilldale continued to be linked to Philadelphia's most potent black voice, the *Tribune*. Bolden advertised Hilldale's games each week in the *Tribune*, and faithfully sent in press releases, game results, and box scores. The

⁵³ Hilldale ledger, 1916; *Philadelphia Tribune*, April 13, 1918; Jan. 24, Feb. 14, April 17, June 26, July 17, Aug. 28, 1920; Holway, Voices, 74; *Washington Bee*, June 8, 1918.

⁵⁴ Chicago Defender, Dec. 31, 1921.

⁵⁵ Baltimore Afro-American, April 11, 1925. In 1922 Bolden was the only black member elected to the board of governors of the Philadelphia Baseball Association, a white-dominated organization of 65 teams. See *Chicago Defender*, April 22, 1922.

Tribune, realizing the selling value of Hilldale, gave the team favorable coverage and staunchly defended Bolden from his occasional critics.

Like any other black citizen of this era, Bolden was not immune from race prejudice. In one incident, he was forced to use a freight elevator while attending a meeting of the Philadelphia Baseball Association in the early 1920s. Later, whites in Darby reacted with hostility and prejudice when his daughter Hilda was named valedictorian of Darby High School in 1924.⁵⁶ Despite the gains made by blacks during World War I, Bolden and his team often were confronted by discrimination during the 1920s in Philadelphia, still "a Jim Crow town, segregated in its restaurants, theaters, hotels."⁵⁷

The early 1920s, as one historian has noted, marked the "absolute zenith" of black baseball. The economic gains engendered by World War I, however slight, gave blacks greater discretionary income and leisure time than ever before, while interest in baseball, thanks to the postwar sports boom, was at a fever pitch. While major league attendance declined steadily in Philadelphia, as neither the Phillies nor the Athletics drew more than 400,000 fans between 1917 and 1921, Hilldale's attendance continued to grow, and the team regularly drew between six and eight thousand fans for Saturday and holiday games.⁵⁸ In March 1920 Louis Steele of the *Philadelphia Tribune* noted that "the strides made by the industrial and semiprofessional baseball teams in all big cities during the past season has [*sic*] thrown a harpoon into the attendance figures of the

⁵⁶ Philadelphia Tribune, Feb 10, 1917, April 19, June 7, 14, 1924, June 27, 1925, June 23, 1927, Aug 16, 1928, Sept 30, 1950, Hilldale ledger, 1920 Bolden also advertised in Philadelphia's white dailhes as well as the *Tribune*'s short-lived rival, the *Philadelphia American*

⁵⁷ Hardy, "Race and Opportunity," 233

⁵⁸ Rogosin, *Invisible Men*, 12, Ruck, *Sandlot Seasons*, 43-44, Frank Bilovsky and Rich Westcott, *The Phillies Encyclopedia* (New York, 1984), 476, Photocopy from *Baseball Dope Book* (1985), 42-43, courtesy Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Bruce, *Kansas City Monarchs*, 45 The Phillies and Athletics both finished in last place in their respective leagues in 1919, 1920, and 1921 There is evidence to suggest that the local absence of a strong professional team attracted whites to black ballparks In Kansas City white attendance at Monarch games began to diminish as the fortunes of the local minor league club, the Kansas City Blues, steadily improved Similarly, Hilldale's white attendance dropped in the late 1920s as Connie Mack built a powerful Philadelphia Athletics club that would eventually win the World Series in 1929 The Phillies, weakened by poor finances and a decaying park, continued to flounder as the "slum club" of the National League throughout the decade See Seymour, *Baseball The Golden Age*, 443, Voight, *American Baseball*, 43-44, 89-90, 247-48, *Philadelphia Tribune*, April 17, 1930 big leagues."⁵⁹ Local fans sensed that the best baseball could be seen not at Shibe Park at 21st and Lehigh or Phillies Park at Broad and Huntington but at Hilldale Park in Darby.

Hilldale Park was an odd wooden structure with a seating capacity of about 8,000. Until 1920 the outfield was dotted with trees and stumps. Center field was especially hazardous, with a "depression or hollow that dropped off abruptly about thirty feet inside the fence line" and a spring that trickled under the boards of the outfield fence.⁶⁰ The team covered the grandstand with a roof and removed the tree stumps in 1920. The corporation continued to finance other improvements. In 1924 the park was enlarged, fifty-six box seats were built, and the center field ditch was filled in. Judy Johnson recalled that the infield was particularly well kept by Hilldale's corps of groundskeepers: "We had the best infield that the big league players had ever played on—that's what they told us. The dirt—I don't know what it was, but it shone something like silver . . . A ball would very seldom take a bad hop unless someone dug a hole with his spikes."⁶¹

Admission to Hilldale Park after World War I remained low enough to insure the steady patronage of Philadelphia's largely working-class black community. Prices ranged from 25 cents to 55 cents between 1918 and 1921, considerably less than the typical 1920 major league prices of 50 cents for bleachers, \$1.00 for grandstand, \$1.25 for reserved seats, and \$1.65 for box seats.⁶² Cigars, sodas, cigarettes, peanuts, and occasionally ice cream were also sold at the park.

59 Philadelphia Tribune, March 20, 1920

⁶⁰ Philadelphia Tribune, Feb 28, 1920, April 4, 1925, Feb 14, 1928, Pittsburgh Courier, May 2, 1925, Baltimore Afro-American, Oct 15, 1920 In the early 1920s the field was occasionally used for football games during the off season Actual seating capacity and dimensions of Hilldale Park are not known Unrehable estimates appeared in Michael Benson's Ballparks of North America (Jefferson, 1989), 419 Hilldale pitcher Scrip Lee told John Holway that "Left field was about 350, it might have been a little bit longer Center field had a big tree, there was plenty of room back there for the outfielders to run" (Courtesy of John Holway) The Tribune estimated the distance to center field at 320 feet in 1925

⁶¹ Peterson, Only the Ball Was White, 123

⁶² Philadelphia Tribune, April 29, Aug 3, 1918, May 17, 1919, April 24, 1920, April 30, 1921 For major league ticket prices, see Riess, *Touching Base*, 32-34, Seymour, *Baseball The Golden Age*, 68 At black baseball parks in Atlantic City, Chicago, New York, Baltimore, Brooklyn, and Newark, during the early 1920s, ticket prices ranged from 25 cents for bleacher seats to 85 cents for box seats See *Chicago Defender*, April 30, 1910, Aug 9, 1913, May 31, June 7, Aug 30, 1919, April 10, June 5, July 3, 1920, Aug 13, 1921, *Philadelphia Tribune*, May 17, 1919, May 8, 1920, *Baltimore Afro-American*, June 23, 1922

January/April

With commercialized Sunday baseball illegal in Pennsylvania until 1934. Hilldale's home games were played on Saturday afternoons and holidays. Thursday games were also scheduled but drew smaller crowds, since few workers had the opportunity to attend a mid-afternoon weekday game. The team typically drew its largest home crowds for morning/ afternoon doubleheaders on Memorial Day, July 4th, and Labor Day. On Memorial Day 1920 a massive crowd of 20,000 became so uncontrollable that the umpire was forced to suspend the game in the eighth inning with Hilldale at bat. Subsequently, huge crowds were roped off or were restrained by mounted policemen.⁶³ Opening day games at Hilldale Park were also popular, and commonly attracted "beautifully gowned ladies" and Philadelphia's "professional men," the elite of black society. Local black celebrities, including Andrew Stevens, Jr., of Brown and Stevens bank, E. Washington Rhodes, an attorney and later editor of the Tribune, and G. Grant Williams, city editor until 1922, were typically chosen to throw out the first ball of the new season.⁶⁴

Declaring that "the best is none too good for Hilldale fans," Bolden built an exceptionally loyal group of supporters.⁶⁵ Observers from other cities, such as Rollo Wilson of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, were astounded at the sight of Hilldale fans eagerly waiting to buy tickets for the afternoon game of a doubleheader, minutes after the morning game had ended. Some Hilldale players were equally amazed that the team's fanatical followers would chance "losing their jobs to see Hilldale play a tight game or series" during the week.⁶⁶

⁶³ Philadelphia Tribune, June 5, July 3, 17, 1920, Sept 5, 1929, Baltimore Afro-American, Sept 10, 17, 1920, Seymour, Baseball The Golden Age, 363-66 The ban on Sunday games was strictly enforced in Philadelphia during the 1920s, and the entire Hilldale team was arrested at least once for violation of the law (in September 1920) The team usually scheduled games in surrounding Pennsylvania communities (Allentown, Harrisburg, and Bristol) where the ban was laxly enforced, or traveled to New York, Brooklyn, Newark, Atlantic City, or Baltimore As late as 1929 local semipro teams were still being prosecuted in Philadelphia for charging admission to Sunday games. On baseball's attempt to overturn Pennsylvania's blue laws, see Lucas, "The Unholy Experiment," 163-75

⁶⁴ Philadelphia Tribune, April 15, May 13, 1916, April 28, 1917, April 23, 1921 On Rhodes, Williams, and Stevens, see Hardy, "Race and Opportunity," 314-70

⁶⁵ Philadelphia Tribune, Aug 31, 1918

⁶⁶ Philadelphia Tribune, Dec 13, 1928, Pittsburgh Courser, June 6, 1925, Chicago Defender, Sept 19, 1924 Even the Chicago Defender, never an ardent supporter of Bolden or his team, acknowledged that Hilldale had "the most loyal bunch of fans in the country"

White fans, as well as blacks, were attracted by the superior brand of baseball played by Hilldale. Judy Johnson recalled that "in the later years of the Hilldales we had to put in an extra row of box seats for the whites,"⁶⁷ while pitcher Scrip Lee also noted the presence of "quite a few" white fans at the games.⁶⁸ Since the majority of Hilldale's games after World War I were played outside of Darby against local white semipro teams, white fans were more likely to see Hilldale in action at their own teams' playing fields.

The advent of daylight savings time in 1918 made weekday twilight games possible for the first time. The 6:00 to 6:30 p.m. starting time attracted hundreds of fans previously unable to attend afternoon games.⁶⁹ Hilldale found itself in great demand by the dozens of newly formed white semipro teams, all looking for a good attraction, and had no trouble filling its schedule. After 1919 the team regularly played between 150 and 190 games a year against a multitude of local black and white teams. The nature of the local semiprofessional baseball scene made extensive barnstorming trips unnecessary. Judy Johnson recalled that, compared to most black professional teams, Hilldale "didn't travel too much, because around Philadelphia there were so many teams-white clubs and leagues."70 While Philadelphia lacked Sunday baseball, Hilldale profited greatly by the city's central location, traveling with relative ease to Baltimore, Washington, New York, and New Jersey at minimal expense. As Frank Young of the Defender noted in 1924, "Hilldale can always make money on account of its location."71

⁶⁷ John Holway notes, courtesy of John Holway.

⁶⁸ John Holway notes, courtesy of John Holway. Eddie Gottlieb, a white promoter who later co-owned the Philadelphia Stars with Ed Bolden, also attested to the significant presence of whites at Hilldale games in the early 1920s: cited in Rust, "*Get That Nigger off the Field!*" 16. An item for "white tickets" in the Hilldale ledger book of 1926 indicates that segregated seating may have existed at Hilldale Park. Grandstand seating was segregated at the Kansas City Monarchs' park which they shared with the minor league Kansas City Blues until 1923. See Holway, *Blackball Stars*, 330.

⁶⁹ Ruck, *Sandlot Seasons*, 43; *Chicago Defender*, March 30, July 13, 1918; July 17, 1920. While twilight baseball had been tried in the western states before World War I, its appearance in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, and other cities was triggered by a need to accommodate the later hours of war workers unable to attend afternoon games. By September darkness limited most twilight games to seven innings. Semiprofessional teams attempted various lighting arrangements, but night baseball did not become a significant factor until 1930.

⁷⁰ Peterson, Only the Ball Was White, 10-11.

⁷¹ Chicago Defender, Feb. 16, 1924 (quote); Philadelphia Tribune, Sept. 1, 8, 1932. Sunday was typically the best paying day for black baseball. While Hilldale successfully drew on Saturdays, the failure of another Pennsylvania club, the Pittsburgh Keystones, was blamed on the absence

Hilldale's semipro opponents differed widely in quality. Some, like the Brooklyn Bushwicks, featured ex-major leaguers and thousands of loyal fans. Others were decidedly inferior and were beaten with little effort. Yet nearly every community, factory, church, and business had its own team, and Hilldale was willing to play them. Hilldale's 1921 season of 149 games reveals the diversity of competition. Only 56 games (37.5 percent) were played against black professional teams; the remaining 93 games were against dozens of local white clubs, including Bridesburg, Chester, Norristown, Paterson Silk Sox, Marshall and Ball, and Fleisher Yarn. The teams played in nearly every part of Philadelphia, including parks at 26th and Reed, 25th and Snyder, Fourth and Berks, and Broad and Bigler. In addition, the team played 47 home games at Hilldale Park, 36 games in New Jersey, 2 in Washington, 4 in Wilmington, Delaware, and 12 in New York and Brooklyn.⁷²

Playing conditions varied substantially. A Hilldale player might find himself in a major league park one day and on an open field during the next game (which led Judy Johnson to relate to James Bankes that he kept two pairs of baseball shoes: "one for good fields and one for bad ones").⁷³ In 1920 and 1921 Hilldale booked games with other black teams at Ebbets Field in Brooklyn, Phillies Park (Baker Field) in Philadelphia, and American League Park in Washington, but the club continued to schedule games at odd locations, including a recently plowed field in Norristown and at an open playground in Wilmington. Accommodations were occasionally harsh, especially when white teams restricted access to dressing rooms. In Bloomfield, New Jersey, the team lacked chairs to sit on and was forced to change while sitting on empty bottle crates. Jake Stephens, the team's shortstop, remembered using a stable in Norristown as a dressing room.⁷⁴

of Sunday baseball. See Chicago Defender, Dec. 16, 1922. Connie Mack maintained that the Sunday ban limited the ability of the Philadelphia A's to compete financially with other American League clubs. See Alexander, Our Game, 149; Bruce Kuklick, To Every Thing A Season (Princeton, 1991), 70-72.

⁷² Philadelphia Tribune, Nov. 12, 1921 (information abstracted from a list of Hilldale's games for 1921). Hilldale finished with a record of 68-23-2 against white teams in 1921 and 37-18-1 against black clubs. Twenty-three different teams defeated Hilldale in 1921, 16 white and 7 black.

⁷³ Bankes, The Pittsburgh Crawfords, 85.

⁷⁴ Philadelphia Tribune, May 31, 1924; July 26, Aug. 30, 1928; Chicago Defender, Sept. 20, 1919; Pittsburgh Courier, Oct. 3, 1925; John Holway, Black Diamonds: Life in the Negro Leagues from the Men Who Lived It (Westport, 1989), 15. From 1919 to 1931 Hilldale made only rare appearances at Shibe Park, although the New York Bacharachs leased the park on several occasions between 1919 and 1921. Several historians of black baseball have confused Shibe Park, the home

The world of "independent ball" was profitable for Hilldale, despite the occasional hardship. Typically, the team received a guarantee ranging from \$100 to \$500, with an option of receiving 40 to 50 percent of the game's receipts.⁷⁵ If the game was arranged through a booking agency, a promoter might take an additional 5 to 10 percent of the gross. In 1919 and 1920, however, independent baseball was especially prosperous as unprecedented numbers of Philadelphia-area fans flocked to semiprofessional games. The Tribune noted that "the managers of independent teams in and around Philadelphia reported record breaking crowds when Ed Bolden had his charges on exhibition at their parks."⁷⁶ The Nativity Catholic Club of Kensington reportedly drew between 10,000 and 12,000 fans for games with Hilldale in 1919, while games against Marshall Smith (Tioga and B Streets) and Shanahan (48th and Brown) drew equivalent numbers. The huge crowds, spilling onto the playing field after all available seats were taken, often made ground rules necessary, and routine pop flies falling into the crowd became ground rule doubles.⁷⁷

Racial incidents were surprisingly few, although some white teams and fans could not accept being beaten by a black team, even if the black club was obviously superior. A Hilldale fan remarked that "It is a bitter dose for white teams to be beaten by colored clubs. Watch the expression on some of the white fans' faces when their club is losing."⁷⁸ Some white teams used a variety of tactics to insure victory. During twilight games managers were known to instruct umpires to call the game as soon as the white team had taken the lead. Otto Briggs noted that if the umpire "fails to help and a close game is lost, they are called all kinds of names by the losing players and managers after the game . . . [and are] told they are N_lovers."⁷⁹ Stalling techniques were also commonly used, especially when rain was imminent. In a 1922 game the Pyotts, clinging to a slim lead in the late innings and sensing a thunderstorm, began calling for time to "adjust" their gloves and other equipment. When rain began to

of the A's from 1909 to 1954 (and the Phillies from 1938 to 1970), with Phillies Park (Baker Bowl), the Phillies' grounds from 1887 to 1938.

⁷⁵ These figures are based on my reading of the Hilldale ledger books from 1921 to 1924 which list the amount and percentage paid for each game.

⁷⁶ Philadelphia Tribune, March 20, 1920.

⁷⁷ Philadelphia Tribune, Aug. 23, Sept. 20, 1919; May 8, 29, 1920; Sept. 10, 1921.

⁷⁸ Philadelphia Tribune, May 31, 1928.

⁷⁹ Philadelphia Tribune, Dec. 20, 1928.

fall soon after, the game was immediately called, despite the protests of Bolden and his players. On other occasions Bolden pulled his team off the field when the umpire seemed to be trying to give the game to the "white lads."⁸⁰

Some local teams, like Strawbridge and Clothier, simply refused to book games with black teams, while others attempted to cheat them out of their proper share of the gate receipts.⁸¹ Donn Rogosin's *Invisible Men* describes an especially ugly racial incident as recalled by Judy Johnson:

Hilldale encountered a home umpire who happened to double as the local sheriff. "The ball'd be over your head and if there were two strikes, you'd be out," recalled Johnson . . . "And Santop went out to the pitcher and said, 'Throw a hard one, and I'll let it go by and hit him,'" Sure enough, the ball hit the umpire—in the groin. "He couldn't breathe and was choking; it broke up the game," remembered Johnson. "We had to get in the car with our baseball clothes and they chased us six miles down the road. I was really scared."⁸²

White major league players seldom took kindly to the prospect of being beaten by a black team. In 1918 a team claiming to be the Boston Red Sox forfeited a game to Hilldale after its pitcher, Joe Bush, attempting to hold a slim 4-3 lead in the ninth inning, used his spikes to rip the baseball and then refused to accept a new ball from the umpire. The *Tribune* noted that "the game was for blood, each team striving their utmost to down the other."⁸¹ The fierce competition characterizing postseason games with major leaguers made them especially popular with fans. In 1920 Bolden booked a series of six games at Phillies Park against all-star teams led by Babe Ruth and Casey Stengel. Hilldale won only one game, but fans had the pleasure of watching the two great sluggers,

⁸⁰ Chicago Defender, Oct 21, 1922, Oct 13, 1923, July 31, 1920 Racially motivated "sandlot riots" occurred in Philadelphia in June 1918 and July 1920 See Chicago Defender, June 15, 1918, Philadelphia Tribune, July 31, Aug 14, 1920

⁸¹ Putsburgh Courser, Aug 30, 1924, Philadelphia Tribune, July 31, Aug 14, 1920 Strawbridge and Clothier began playing black teams in 1924

⁸² Rogosin, *Invusible Men*, 134 The mid-Atlantic region was hardly a haven from race prejudice Jesse Hubbard, who played with eastern clubs during the 1920s, noted that "in Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, shoot, I'd just as soon be down in Georgia "Ibid, 128

⁸³ Philadelphia Record, Sept 15, 1918, Philadelphia Tribune, Sept 21, 1918 (quote) The "Red Sox" consisted of four actual Red Sox players, one Philadelphia Athletic, one Detroit Tiger, one Cincinnati Red, and two unknown players Macmillan Baseball Encyclopedia Ruth and Santop, compete. While Santop failed to homer, the *Philadelphia Record* reported that Ruth "cast one of 'Lefty' Stark's fast ones into Broad Street. The ball sailed far above the concrete barrier."⁸⁴

The growth of Hilldale coincided with similar developments of black professional teams in other cities during the postwar period. While Rube Foster had retired as an active player after 1918, the consistently powerful Chicago American Giants continued to dominate in the Midwest under his leadership, drawing immense crowds each Sunday at Schorling Park. For his successes both on and off the field, the *Chicago Defender* regularly lauded him as a "genius" who singlehandedly could save black baseball from white control. By 1918 Foster was the established leader of black baseball and controlled much of the booking of black teams in the Midwest.⁸⁵

Seeking to expand his influence and noting the increased black population in Detroit, Foster transferred players from his own team to help organize the Detroit Stars in 1919 and placed Tenny Blount at the helm. Initially depicted by the black press as a legitimate businessman, Blount was heavily involved in gambling enterprises in Detroit and was one of several black vice leaders connected with the promotion and financing of black baseball.⁸⁶ While the Stars were a financial success—16,666

⁸⁴ Philadelphia Record, Oct. 9, 1920 (quote); Philadelphia Tribune, Oct. 16, 1920; Chicago Defender, Oct. 16, 1920. Ruth was hitless in the first game, while Santop had two singles and a double. During the week of Oct. 4-10, 1920, both of Philadelphia's major league parks were occupied by black teams: Hilldale at Phillies Park and the New York Bacharachs and Chicago American Giants at Shibe Park.

⁸⁵ Chicago Defender, May 25, Aug. 31, Nov. 2, 1918; Rob Ruck, Sandlot Seasons, 123.

⁸⁶ Bankes, Pittsburgh Crawfords, 23-28, 91-96; Ruck, Sandlot Seasons, 136-69. Involvement of black underworld figures was less pronounced during the 1920s, although Baron Wilkins, owner of the Bacharach Giants, Alex Pompez of the Cuban Stars, and Dick Kent of St. Louis Stars all operated franchises. As economic conditions for blacks worsened during the Depression and available finances became scarce, black vice leaders, especially those involved in the illegal numbers lottery, invested in baseball as a money laundering scheme and to avoid paying income tax. These men, including Gus Greenlee (Pittsburgh Crawfords), Rufus Jackson (Homestead Grays), Abe Manley (Newark Stars), and Ed Semler (New York Black Yankees), virtually dominated the ownership of Negro League teams in the mid-1930s. Notably, neither Foster nor Bolden, the acknowledged powers of black baseball in the 1920s, had ties to illegal activities, although Bolden has been erroneously depicted as a vice leader in several histories, perhaps due to his later involvement with gambler/promoter Eddie Gottlieb. See especially Bankes, The Pittsburgh Crawfords, 28; Rogosin, Invisible Men, 17, 107. In Philadelphia, Smitty Lucas, a local "hotel man and cabaret owner" heavily involved in the Philadelphia numbers scene, organized the Eastern League All- Stars in 1927. Later known as the Philadelphia Tigers, the team was a member of the Eastern Colored League in the last year of its existence in 1928 and then disappeared soon after. See

admissions in 1919 and a net profit of close to \$30,000 in 1920—Foster eventually became disenchanted with Blount. He especially objected to the ballplayers' tendency to frequent Blount's gambling establishments. By 1925 the Detroit owner was involved in a bitter public feud with Foster and soon after relinquished the team's ownership.⁸⁷

Originally sponsored by the American Brewery Company, the Indianapolis ABCs had existed as a sandlot team for two decades before rising to prominence under C.I. Taylor in 1915. The oldest of four brothers renowned in black baseball, Taylor installed the team at Federal League Park in Indianapolis, began paying salaries, and challenged Rube Foster's American Giants for supremacy in the Midwest. Taylor's death in 1922 and subsequent player raids by other clubs nearly destroyed the ABCs, and the team never regained its earlier prominence.⁸⁸

The Kansas City Monarchs under J.L. Wilkinson were one of the few white controlled teams in the Midwest. Wilkinson had previously promoted the All Nations club, a multiracial team of blacks, Cubans, Mexicans, American Indians, and Asians that barnstormed throughout the Midwest until decimated by the wartime draft. In 1920 Wilkinson, as a leading baseball promoter, was invited to Rube Foster's meeting for a proposed Negro League. He was reluctantly awarded a franchise after Foster realized that no viable black investors were available in Kansas City. The Monarchs (named for an earlier Kansas City team) were subsequently formed from the remnants of Wilkinson's All Nations club and the baseball team of the black 25th Infantry regiment.

Perhaps the most honest white owner in black baseball, Wilkinson commanded the respect of both races. Unlike other white owners, Wilkinson kept a low profile and left public appearances to Quincy J. Gilmore, the Monarchs' black traveling secretary. Like Bolden he believed in "clean baseball" and would not tolerate fighting on his team. Paying generous salaries, Wilkinson built a team that would eventually surpass Foster's American Giants in stature. With a smaller black population

Philadelphia Tribune, June 30, Aug. 11, 1927; May 3, 1928; Hardy, "Race and Opportunity," 457-71.

⁸⁷ Baltimore Afro-American, Dec. 27, 1924; Jan. 3, 10, 1925; Chicago Defender, March 13, 1920; Feb. 12, 1921. In 1919, Hilldale made its first trip west, traveling to Detroit for a series against the newly formed Stars.

⁸⁸ Peterson, Only the Ball Was White, 226, 251; Baltimore Afro-American, Jan. 4, 1924.

than Chicago or Philadelphia, the Monarchs rarely drew as well as Hilldale or the American Giants, yet they were one of a handful of teams to survive the Depression, thanks to Wilkinson's investment in a portable lighting system, an innovation that would revolutionize both white and black baseball.⁸⁹

In the East neither of the two established white-owned New York teams, the Lincoln Giants and the Brooklyn Royal Giants, fared well after 1920. Lincoln had been divided into two teams in 1914, with James Keenan, a local sports promoter, obtaining control of the Giants and Olympic Field. The McMahons continued with the Lincoln Stars at Lenox Oval until 1917 and then dropped out of baseball altogether as they became heavily involved in the New York basketball and boxing scenes. In 1920 the Lincoln Giants were forced to vacate their grounds at Olympic Field in Harlem to make room for a new parking garage. Their new home, the Catholic Protectory Oval located at an orphanage in the Bronx at East Tremont Avenue near 180th, was miles away from Olympic Field and inaccessible to many black fans who had followed the team religiously in the 1910s.⁹⁰ Interest in black baseball waned in New York during the 1920s, as one observer perceptively noted in 1927: "To see a good baseball game in which colored men engage you now have to travel miles out of the district. In the days when the McMahons operated at Olympic Field . . . thousands of colored fans looked forward to the weekend with pleasurable anticipation. Now it takes a dyed-in-the-wood [sic] fan to make up his mind to trail all the way up to the Catholic Protectory Oval."91

Nat Strong continued to operate the Brooklyn Royal Giants in the 1920s, but he was indifferent to black patronage and seldom advertised or publicized his team. The Giants remained a traveling club in spite of Strong's control of several parks in the New York area, including Dexter Park in Brooklyn where his Bushwicks played each Sunday before enthusiastic crowds. Booking leading black teams against the Bushwicks and other white semipro clubs in the New York area, Strong reaped significant

⁸⁹ On Wilkinson and the Monarchs, see Bruce, Kansas City Monarchs, esp. 36-45, 67-77; Chicago Defender, Sept. 23, 1916; Holway, Blackball Stars, 327-43.

⁹⁰ New York Amsterdam News, April 18, 1923; Nov. 4, 1925; June 23, 1926; Chicago Defender, March 13, 1920; Philadelphia Tribune, Jan. 2, 1926; Holway, Black Diamonds, 158-60.

⁹¹ New York Amsterdam News, Aug. 25, 1927.

profits as he continued to operate the Royals on a shoestring budget. While he proudly stated that "the colored teams get more money here (at Dexter Park) than at any other place," Hilldale and other clubs were charged a high booking fee (10 percent) and were paid a flat guarantee rather than receiving a percentage of the receipts.⁹²

The ascension of the Bacharach Giants, first in Atlantic City and later in New York, temporarily threatened white control of black baseball in New York. Originally based in Jacksonville, Florida, the team was brought north in 1916 by two Atlantic City politicians, Tom Jackson and Henry Tucker. The club was named in honor of Mayor Harry Bacharach of Atlantic City, who supported the club at the urging of Jackson and Tucker. In the early years of the club (1917-1918), the Bacharachs' close proximity to Philadelphia led many Hilldale players to play for both teams: at Hilldale on Saturdays and at Bacharach Park in Atlantic City on Sundays.⁹³

The Bacharachs collapsed in 1918 but were revived in 1919 by John W. Connors, the former owner of the Brooklyn Royal Giants, and Baron Wilkins, the notorious leader of Harlem's underworld and owner of the "Exclusive Club" cabaret. Wilkins had backed various baseball clubs as well as boxer Jack Johnson. He was said to have won \$250,000 on Johnson's July 4, 1910, championship fight against James Jeffries. Offering higher salaries than either Keenan or Strong, the Bacharach owners began to entice players away from the Royal Giants and Lincoln Giants and temporarily broke the white hold on black baseball in New York. Strong, who supposedly accused Wilkins and Connors of undermining his business by offering "coons" more money, became embroiled in a bitter struggle to block the team's move from Inlet Park in Atlantic City to New York and attempted to prevent the club from obtaining bookings. The owners' powerful contacts with white major league players and

⁹² New York Amsterdam News, Jan. 17, 1923; June 23, 1926; June 27, 1928 (quote); Philadelphia Tribune, April 12, 1928; Baltimore Afro-American, Feb. 11, 1921; Ruck, Sandlot Seasons, 118. Hilldale usually received \$600 for a Sunday doubleheader at Dexter Park, considerably less than what the team would have earned on a percentage basis, although Bolden claimed that he "never paid Mr. Strong one cent for booking the Hilldale Club." Hilldale ledgers; New York Amsterdam News, Jan. 17, 1923.

⁹³ Chicago Defender, March 18, 1922; Philadelphia Tribune, Jan. 2, 1926; May 28, 1932; James DiClerico and Barry Pavelec, Jersey Game (New Brunswick, 1991), 140; Peterson, Only the Ball Was White, 67; Holway, Blackball Stars, 32; Rogosin, Invisible Men, 28.

officials (including Hal Chase and Charles Ebbets) forced Strong to give up, but by 1923 the team had returned to Atlantic City under its original owners, Henry Tucker and Thomas Jackson.⁹⁴

In Baltimore and Pittsburgh, the development of professional black teams closely paralleled Hilldale's rise from the sandlots. Formed in 1910, the Baltimore Black Sox obtained their own playing field (Westport Park) about 1917 and slowly built a reputation as a strong team. Incorporated in 1921, the club moved to a new park (Maryland Park) and began paying salaries and attracting professional players during the following year. Like Hilldale, the team had a significant white following in the early 1920s, but the enthusiasm and support typical of Philadelphia's black fans were lacking in Baltimore.⁹⁵ As the *Baltimore Afro-American* noted, the city had a reputation as a "poor sports town" and had "never been on the colored baseball 'map' to the extent that its location and colored population justified.⁹⁹⁶

While less exploitive than Nat Strong, the white owners of the Black Sox, Charles Spedden and tavern owner George Rossiter, contributed to the apathy of many Black Sox fans. Their insensitive policies alienated many of their black patrons who constantly complained of the wretched condition of Maryland Park, the home of the Black Sox during the 1920s. The seats were said to be dirty, the roof full of holes, the grandstand unpainted and foul smelling, the infield rough, and the outfield full of weeds. The lack of black park employees also discouraged greater patronage. The Black Sox owners claimed the "experiment" of black employment in the box office had been abandoned because they had "not found them satisfactory in the rapid handling of change" and were "most always short when the count up is made."⁹⁷ While more black employees were eventually hired by the Black Sox management, the owners faced constant

⁹⁴ Chicago Defender, April 26, May 10, 31, June 7, 14, July 5, 1919; Jan. 1, 1921; Philadelphia Tribune, May 28, 1931; March 10, 1932; New York Amsterdam News, July 14, 1926; Baltimore Afro-American, May 19, Dec. 22, 1922; March 16, 1923; June 6, 1924; Pittsburgh Courier, May 31, 1924. The Bacharachs obtained the use of Ebbets Field in Brooklyn and Shibe Park in Philadelphia on numerous occasions from 1919 to 1921 as a result of their contacts in white organized baseball.

⁹⁵ Baltimore Afro-American, April 22, June 17, July 29, 1921; Feb. 10, March 10, Aug. 4, Nov. 3, 1922; April 18, Oct. 3, 1925; Philadelphia Tribune, Jan. 2, 1926; Holway, Voices, 68.

* Baltimore Afro-American, Aug. 5, 1921; June 9, 1922.

⁹⁷ Baltimore Afro-American, May 18, 1923.

criticism from the black press for a variety of abuses, including offering "special reservations" for whites.⁹⁸

The rise of the Homestead Grays of Homestead, Pennsylvania, was largely attributable to a single individual, Cumberland "Cum" Posey. First achieving national stature as a star basketball player-coach with the Loendi Club of Pittsburgh, Posev eventually became a remarkably successful black sports entrepreneur, comparable to Ed Bolden, managing and promoting the Homestead Grays, a Pittsburgh-area sandlot team formed in 1910. Posev had joined the team as an outfielder in 1911. became captain soon after, and by World War I had assumed full control of the team's promotion and finances. Beginning with a young sandlot club like Bolden's early Hilldale teams, Posey strengthened the Grays by gradually importing professional players. Lacking home grounds, Posey's Grays traveled throughout western Pennsylvania as an independent club, indifferent to organized black baseball. By the mid-1920s, the Grays were the equal of any of the established black teams in the East or West. Homestead made its first appearance in Philadelphia against the Lincoln Giants in 1927 and debuted against Hilldale in 1928.99

While Posey and Bolden both built powerful and financially successful organizations, their personalities and behaviors differed markedly. In stark contrast to the quiet and sportsmanlike Bolden, Posey was short-tempered, argumentative, considered by many to be a poor loser, and obsessed with winning at all costs. In 1926 Romeo Dougherty of the *New York Amsterdam News* offered a particularly damning indictment of Posey and his tactics: "They say he spends half of his time copping or trying to cop players from other teams to help strengthen the Grays. Well, that same tendency gave Posey his world-beating basketball team. Posey has been a menace to sport ever since the day the bug of being a big promoter entered his brain."¹⁰⁰ Hardly phased by criticism, Posey continued to aggressively pursue the best players regardless of their team affiliation.

⁹⁸ Baltimore Afro-American, Jan 11, Sept 5, 1925, Chicago Defender, Oct 11, 1924, Philadelphia Tribune, April 25, 1929, Feb 12, 1931, Holway, Voices, 67, John Holway notes, courtesy of John Holway

⁹⁹ Baltimore Afro-American, Oct 17, 1925, New York Amsterdam News, Aug 17, 1927, Philadelphia Tribune, Sept 13, 1928 On Posey, see Holway, Blackball Stars, 299-326, Ruck, Sandlot Seasons, 124-36

¹⁰⁰ New York Amsterdam News, Jan 27, 1926 For similar criticisms of Posey, see Chicago Defender, Feb 26, 1921, New York Amsterdam News, Jan 19, 1927

As Hilldale's fortunes eroded in the late 1920s, the Grays' continued to rise. By 1930 Homestead had supplanted Hilldale as the leading black team in the East.¹⁰¹

Finally, two teams of black Cubans provided formidable competition in the East and West. The popularity of baseball in Cuba resulted in the formation of numerous teams of both blacks and whites. While lighter skinned Cuban ballplayers were accepted by the major leagues in 1911, black Cubans continued to be barred, traveling instead to the mainland to compete against black American teams and white semipros. The two leading Cuban clubs, both known simply as the "Cubans" or "Cuban Stars," were operated by Harlem numbers boss Alex Pompez in the East and by Abel Linares and others in the Midwest. Usually lacking home grounds, both Cuban teams were forced to travel constantly and were underpaid by the standards of other black teams.¹⁰²

Despite the efforts of the black press, publicity remained a continuing problem for all teams. In Philadelphia, Otto Briggs noted that some blacks only read the white daily papers and "very seldom go to see colored teams play."¹⁰³ Another sportswriter agreed that the black press was not reaching enough fans, remarking that "It is not uncommon to hear even youngsters calling the names of white players with ease—while it would give them a headache to name a Negro star."¹⁰⁴ The *Tribune* noted that a group of young black children attending their first Hilldale game as

¹⁰¹ Philadelphia Tribune, Oct 6, 13, 1927 The growth of another Pittsburgh team, the Crawfords, also paralleled Hilldale's development Formed as a sandlot outfit in the mid-1920s, the team ascended the local semipro ranks and later became a professional, salaried club in 1930 under Pittsburgh numbers boss Gus Greenlee On the Crawfords, see Ruck, Sandlot Seasons, 46-62, 137-69, also Bankes, The Pittsburgh Crawfords

¹⁰² Rogosin, *Invisible Men*, 152-77, Peterson, *Only the Ball Was White*, 60-62, Bruce, *Kansas City Monarchs*, 14, *Philadelphia Tribune*, March 21, 1929 A light-skinned Cuban, Ramon Herrera, played for the Cuban Stars in the Eastern Colored League and for the Boston Red Sox of the major leagues in 1925-26

¹⁰³ Philadelphia Tribune, Dec 27, 1928

¹⁰⁴ Philadelphia Tribune, June 30, 1932 As early as 1913, the Chicago Defenderhad attempted to cover the national black baseball scene, while smaller weeklies, including the Tribuneand the New York Amsterdam News, consistently offered box scores and information on local black teams By the mid-1920s, newspapers including the Pittsburgh Courier, Chicago Defender, Baltimore Afro-American, Kansas City Call, Indianapolis Ledger, Pittsburgh American, Indianapolis Freeman, New York News, New York Amsterdam News, and the Tribuneoffered a page or more of weekly sports, with cartoons, commentary, and photographs On the black press, see Rogosin, Invisible Men, 87-89

guests of Bolden "had heard of the Cobb, Speaker, Hornsby, and Babe Ruth and other pale-faced stars but knew not that they had players of their own group who could hold their own with any stars of any league."¹⁰⁵

While only four of the ten most prosperous black franchises of the early 1920s were white owned, white capital continued to be important to black baseball. No black team was immune to what Donn Rogosin called the "structural problem" of black baseball: its reliance upon a relatively small, economically oppressed population base with little leisure time or discretionary income. Black fans were simply unable to support a professional team on a day-to-day basis, and Bolden, as well as others, realized that financial involvement with white promoters, agents, and teams was necessary for survival.¹⁰⁶

With the increase in the number of strong teams and a more favorable economic climate for blacks, Rube Foster felt conditions were ideal for the formation of a black professional league patterned after the white major leagues. In Foster's view, a league would successfully reduce the influence of white booking agents and the dependency upon white teams as opponents. Foster also believed that a cooperative organization that respected contracts was necessary to curb owners from "raiding" or inducing players to "jump" their current club for more money elsewhere.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Philadelphia Tribune, Aug 30, 1928 Despite organized baseball's color barrier, a number of blacks in Philadelphia and other cities remained fans of white professional teams While Bruce Kuklick has asserted that blacks in Philadelphia were "not fans of the A's or Phillies" (Kuklick, *To Every Thing A Season*, 82), the *Tribune*on several occasions denounced "colored adorers of the Athletics" and "blind and cringing Negroes" who believed black teams to be inferior to white clubs In 1932 one commentator claimed that one-fifth of the 30,000 fans at Yankee Stadium for game 2 of the World Series were black On blacks' interest in white baseball, see *Philadelphia Tribune*, June 13, 27, 1925, June 16, Oct 16, 1926, Feb 12, 1927, April 4, July 25, 1929, April 17, 1930, Oct 6, 1932, Bruce, Kansas City Monarchs, 53-55, Rust, "Get That Nigger Off the Field"5

¹⁰⁶ Rogosin, Invisible Men, 26, Ruck, Sandlot Seasons, 116-22, Philadelphia Tribune, Sept 19, 1925, Jan 28, 1932

¹⁰⁷ Bruce, Kansas Cuty Monarchs, 13-14, Peterson, Only the Ball Was White, 113-14, Holway, Blackball Stars, 21, Chicago Defender, Oct 4, 1919 Leagues had been attempted in 1886, 1887, and 1908, yet all collapsed within a single season Before Foster, BF Mosely, a black attorney and secretary-treasurer of the Leland Giants, launched an unsuccessful attempt in Chicago to form a "Negro National Baseball League of America" with eight teams in 1910 See Peterson, Only the Ball Was White, 62-63, Bruce, Kansas Cuty Monarchs, 7 Some contemporary observers suggested that Foster's league-forming motives stemmed from a desire to extend his booking power over the entire Midwest In the fall of 1919 Foster invited all clubs from the East and Midwest to participate in the formation of a new league. He received a lukewarm response from the eastern clubs but found enough western interest to form the National Association of Colored Professional Base Ball Clubs (usually referred to as Negro National League or NNL) in February 1920. League members, including the Chicago American Giants, Indianapolis ABCs, Detroit Stars, Chicago Giants, St. Louis Giants, Dayton Marcos, Cuban Stars, and Kansas City Monarchs, agreed to respect player contracts and to play a schedule of games to determine a league champion each season. With Foster as president and in control of the league's finances and scheduling, the Negro National League had a successful inaugural season in 1920. For refusing to join the new league, eastern clubs, including Hilldale, the New York Bacharachs, the Lincoln Giants, and Brooklyn Royal Giants, were "outlawed" by Foster. The NNL president accused the independent eastern clubs of encouraging contract jumping by creating dissension and dissatisfaction among players and forbade his league teams from scheduling games against them.¹⁰⁸

Foster was especially incensed by Bolden's signing of three American Giants players after the 1919 season. The two men publicly clashed for the first time in 1920 after Foster, seeking revenge, attempted to jeopardize Hilldale's standing in the East. Bolden published an open letter to the NNL leader in the August 21, 1920, *Philadelphia Tribune*, claiming that Foster had "a belligerent attitude toward our club" and "sought to place us in disfavor" in the East by asking other clubs to boycott Hilldale. Showing no interest in Foster's organization, Bolden noted that if NNL teams chose to boycott Hilldale Park they would only be hurting themselves financially.¹⁰⁹

By the end of the 1920 season, Bolden's attitude toward the new league softened. The NNL showed evidence of stability and had already induced the New York Bacharach Giants to join the organization. Fearing that his own players might be vulnerable to contract offers from raiding NNL teams, Bolden opted for the protection of the league by joining as an associate member in December 1920 after paying a \$1,000 deposit. As

¹⁰⁸ Ruck, Sandlot Seasons, 124; Chicago Defender, March 13, 1920. A second organized league, the Negro Southern League, was formed in 1920. See Rogosin, Invisible Men, 7-10; Peterson, Only the Ball Was White, 101.

¹⁰⁹ Philadelphia Tribune, Aug. 21, 1920.

an associate Hilldale was not formally a league member, but the club was allowed to play league teams traveling East or could visit NNL clubs in the West. More significantly, Hilldale and the other NNL franchises agreed to respect contracts and to refrain from player raids.¹¹⁰

With Foster firmly in control, Bolden would have no influence in league affairs. Hilldale's participation in the NNL was limited to several visits from western clubs in 1921 and a week-long trip to Chicago and Detroit in 1922. Annoved by the high cost of western travel expenses and the loss of lucrative games against outlawed eastern clubs, Bolden noted in disgust that "we have received more money for a twilight engagement in Philadelphia, where the players could walk to the park, than a Sunday game in the West, with over a thousand miles' railroad fare to cover!"¹¹¹ After the 1921 season, he prepared to withdraw Hilldale from the league with plans to raid NNL teams.¹¹² Foster, however, quickly retaliated with a threat to sign away Hilldale players and, as the pro-Foster Chicago Defender warned, "unless Manager Bolden comes into the fold he may find his club wrecked."113 Facing the loss of several players, Bolden capitulated and remained in the league for a second season, to the glee of the Defender: "This means that Hilldale has decided to remain in baseball . . . No one wanted to see a great ball club like Bolden had built up wrecked . . . Bolden was farsighted enough to see his mistake."114

After Hilldale's second season as an associate member, Bolden felt that his team had achieved sufficient financial security to resist Foster. In December 1922, citing the "decided disadvantage of membership," he submitted his resignation from the NNL and demanded the return of his \$1,000 deposit.¹¹⁵ Foster accepted Hilldale's withdrawal but he refused to return the deposit, citing his awareness of Bolden's plans to raid NNL teams. Bolden bolted and on December 16, 1922, at the YMCA Building at 1724 Christian Street in Philadelphia, he formed his own organization, the Eastern Mutual Association of Colored Clubs (Eastern Colored League or ECL) with Hilldale, the Baltimore Black Sox, Brooklyn Royal

¹¹⁰ Peterson, Only the Ball Was White, 86; Chicago Defender, May 8, Dec. 11, 1920; Pittsburgh Courier, Jan. 23, 1923; Baltimore Afro- American, April 22, 1921.

¹¹¹ New York Amsterdam News, Jan. 17, 1923.

¹¹² Ibid.; Chicago Defender, March 4, 1922.

¹¹³ Chicago Defender, March 4, 1922.

¹¹⁴ Chicago Defender, March 11, 1922.

¹¹⁵ Baltimore Afro-American, Dec. 8, 1922.

Giants, Lincoln Giants, Cuban Stars, and Atlantic City Bacharachs as members. Predicting failure, the NNL refused to recognize the new league and criticized its preponderance of white owners.¹¹⁶

For Bolden, the ECL's newly elected chairman, the new league was a necessary step to free Hilldale and other eastern clubs from Rube Foster's iron rule. Participation in Foster's western league was an expensive proposition that offered Hilldale "no benefits, no protection," while an eastern-based circuit with easily accessible cities and lower travel costs would be far more profitable.¹¹⁷ As Bolden explained to the Tribune in 1923: "The fans have loyally supported the club and there is little doubt that they will continue doing so, but I think they are entitled to better competition among our own clubs; and the best way to secure it is through an organized circuit."118 Eastern clubs were now free to play teams outlawed by Foster, and could sign western players without fear of repercussion. In the ensuing months, eighteen players jumped to the more prosperous eastern-based teams. Hilldale's already powerful lineup was strengthened by the addition of several new players: outfielder Clint Thomas and second baseman Frank Warfield from the Detroit Stars. catcher Biz Mackey from the Indianapolis ABCs, and pitcher Rube Currie and utility man George Carr from the Kansas City Monarchs.

While Foster and Bolden squabbled on the pages of the black press, the Eastern Colored League enjoyed a successful first season. Not surprisingly, Hilldale won the pennant with a 32-17 record against league teams.¹¹⁹ Leaving most of the field decisions to team captain John Henry Lloyd (and later Frank Warfield), Bolden's shrewd acquisitions had

¹¹⁶ Chicago Defender, Dec. 16, 1922; New York Amsterdam News, Jan. 17, 1923; Holway, Voices, 28-29. While the ECL had only two teams financed entirely by blacks (Hilldale and the Cuban Stars), whites exerted considerable influence in the background of Foster's NNL. In addition to J.L. Wilkinson's ownership of the Kansas City Monarchs, the St. Louis Giants were financed by whites, despite the presence of a black "owner," and John Schorling continued to hold the lease to the American Giants' home at Schorling Park. In 1933 Rollo Wilson noted that "Mighty few teams have been entirely financed by Negro capital, if you want to know the truth. There have been many instances of so-called Negro 'owners' being nothing but a 'front' for the white interest behind them": Pittsburgh Courier, Sept. 24, 1933, cited in Ruck, Sandlot Seasons, 116.

¹¹⁹ Baltimore Afro-American, Aug. 10, 1923; New York Amsterdam News, Jan. 17, June 20, 1923; Bruce, The Kansas City Monarchs, 32. On the Foster/Bolden feud, see especially New York Amsterdam News, Jan. 17, 1923; Baltimore Afro-American, Feb. 16, 1923; Feb. 8, 1924.

¹¹⁷ Baltimore Afro-American, Dec. 1, 22, 1922; Jan. 25, 1924; Chicago Defender, Jan. 12, 1924. ¹¹⁸ Philadelphia Tribune, Dec. 1, 1923.

resulted in a highly disciplined club. Jake Stephens, the club's shortstop, remembered how Hilldale always "played like a team. There was so much cooperation; everybody knew his job. The main thing was to win ball games, regardless of how you did it."¹²⁰

With an overall record of 137-43-6, Hilldale had, perhaps, its greatest season in 1923. The club climaxed an amazing year by taking 5 of 6 against a barnstorming Philadelphia A's team. Hilldale fans as well as supporters of the KC Monarchs, the NNL pennant winner, began to clamor for an East-West series to decide the true champion of black baseball. Foster, however, refused to consider the idea unless the ECL agreed to respect player contracts. The two leagues finally reached a settlement in September 1924 and staged their first world series in October. Hilldale, winner of the ECL playoffs, was defeated by the western champions, the Kansas City Monarchs, in nine games played at Philadelphia, Baltimore, Kansas City, and Chicago. In the 1925 World Series, Hilldale defeated the Monarchs in five games.¹²¹

Despite high expectations and national attention, attendance at the 1924 and 1925 World Series was disappointing, as both leagues had begun to suffer losses at the gate. While the black press blamed the attendance drop on fans' disgust with the leagues' consistent problems with erratic umpiring, unbalanced schedules, inaccurate statistics, poor publicity, and uncooperative owners, the true cause lay in the declining economic status of the black population. With the onset of the mid-decade industrial depression, blacks in Philadelphia and other cities began to lose the economic gains achieved during World War I, and the always fragile foundation of black baseball began to crumble.¹²²

Attendance and ticket prices had failed to keep pace with the corresponding increases in salaries, park rentals, and railroad expenses. Gate receipts for NNL teams fell steadily from a high of \$251,724.88 in 1921 to a three-year low of \$193.669.17 in 1923. In 1924 all western teams lost money. The ECL, with shorter travel times, lower expenses, and

¹²⁰ Holway, Blackball Stars, 9

¹²¹ Puttsburgh Courser, Sept 1, 1923, Baltimore Afro-American, March 30, July 13, Aug 10, 1923, Aug 29, Sept 12, 1924, Chicago Defender, Aug 30, 1924

¹²² Philadelphia Tribune, Aug 16, Nov 1, 1924, Oct 24, 1925, Nov 6, 1926, Puttsburgh Courter, Sept 6, 1924, Hardy, "Race and Opportunity," 71, 101, 368, Peterson, Only the Ball Was White, 120 Total World Series attendance fell from a high of 45,857 for ten games in 1924, 20,067 for seven games in 1925, and 21,369 for eleven games in 1926

greater reliance upon twilight games with white semipros to "take care of the overhead," fared better but would soon feel the pinch of the industrial depression. The Lincoln Giants reportedly lost \$13,000.00 in 1925, while the owners of the Bacharach Giants, behind in their financial obligations, had their park in Atlantic City temporarily closed by the police in 1927. Interest in independent ball also began to wane as white fans tired of seeing their clubs constantly defeated by the professional black teams, and eastern teams found it increasingly difficult to fill their schedules.¹²³

At Hilldale Park attendance declined steadily between 1926 and 1930, from a high average of 1,844.9 per Saturday and holiday game in 1926 to 652.7 in 1930. The corporation was forced to borrow in 1925, 1926, and 1927 to open the season and lost \$21,500 in 1927.¹²⁴ In two editorials for the *Tribune* local black politician Ed Henry accused the Philadelphia black community of indifference, noting that the "club is honored everywhere but here" and urged greater support of the team.¹²⁵ As the team began losing more games in 1926 and 1927, Bolden faced increasing hostility from the fans. Meanwhile, as chairman of the Eastern Colored League, he was confronted by an endless stream of problems involving player discipline, umpires, uncooperative owners, and scheduling. Striving mightily to keep his team and league afloat, while maintaining his full-

¹²³ Baltimore Afro-American, March 7, Sept. 5, 1925; Chicago Defender, Nov. 29, 1919; Pittsburgh Courier, Oct. 17, 1925; July 16, 1928; Philadelphia Tribune, Feb. 26, March 19, June 23, 1927; June 7, July 5, 1928; Feb. 4, 1932; New York Amsterdam News, June 29, July 6, 1927. The Pittsburgh Couriertermed 1925 as "one of the most disastrous years for black teams in the last ten": Pittsburgh Courier, April 17, 1926.

¹²⁴ Philadelphia Tribune, March 29, 1928; New York Amsterdam News, March 28, 1929. The Hilldale ledgers contain detailed financial information for 1926-32 seasons, including ticket sales for games at Hilldale Park. These figures are based on my calculations from these records. Total Attendance

	Total Attendance		
	for Saturday/Holiday Games	Dates	Average
1926	46,123	26	1844.9
1927	41,366	26	1591.0
1928	39,572	25	1582.9
1929*	38,411	28	1371.9
1930	14,361	22	652.8
1931*	27,711	25	1108.4
1932	3,735	11	339.5

*some games estimated.

⁽Excludes Thursday games at Hilldale Park and preseason games.) ¹²⁵ Philadelphia Tribune, Oct. 24, 1925.

NEIL LANCTOT

time post office position, Bolden was unable to withstand the strain. He suffered a nervous breakdown in September 1927, only thirteen months after western leader Rube Foster's mental collapse.

While the specific nature of Bolden's condition is unknown, he remained out of both team and league affairs for several months. Acting quickly, the Hilldale corporation chose Charles Freeman to replace Bolden as president. Bolden's return in March 1928 initiated a bitter struggle within the corporation that eventually climaxed in Bolden's reelection as president, the ousting of Freeman, and the simultaneous withdrawal of Hilldale from the Eastern Colored League.¹²⁶ Declaring that "we are through losing money in an impossible league," Bolden made plans to operate the team as an independent organization in 1928.¹²⁷ His disgust with league affairs was palpable: "When one man quits this week and then comes back a few weeks later and when one team plays forty home games and another four, then it is time for a halt."¹²⁸

Hilldale's return to independent baseball was successful, and the team was reportedly the only eastern club to remain profitable in 1928. Attendance, however, continued to drop as a crippling recession devastated the black community in Philadelphia, resulting in vacated black stores and food lines for the unemployed. Ignoring economic realities, the *Tribune* blamed the attendance decline on the disbanding of the Eastern Colored League, claiming that black fans had lost interest in independent ball.¹²⁹ In August 1928 the Eastern Sportswriters Association proposed the formation of a new league and appealed to Bolden, as "the man of the hour . . . the one individual . . . who can work order out of the present chaos."¹³⁰ Encouraged by press support, Bolden launched the American Negro Baseball League in January 1929, with Hilldale, Baltimore Black Sox, Lincoln Giants, Cuban Stars, Homestead Grays, and the Bacharach Giants as members.

Despite the return of league baseball, attendance remained modest as Philadelphia's economically oppressed black citizens increasingly found

129 Philadelphia Tribune, Jan 10, 1929, July 5, 1928, Hardy, "Race and Opportunity," 361

¹²⁶ Philadelphia Tribune, Sept 29, Dec 15, 1927, March 15, 1928, New York Amsterdam News, Sept 28, Nov 30, Dec 14, 1927

¹²⁷ Puttsburgh Courser, March 17, 1928

¹²⁸ New York Amsterdam News, April 25, 1928

¹³⁰ Philadelphia Tribune, Aug 16, 1928, New York Amsterdam News, Aug 15, 1928

baseball more a luxury than a necessity. Already burdened with a heavy payroll and decreased patronage, Hilldale became embroiled in a series of disruptive controversies during the season. In May 1929 Lena Mitchell Strickland was shot and killed by Clifton Voinges, her estranged commonlaw husband, during the third inning of a Hilldale/Homestead game.¹³¹ Late in the season, a Hilldale player suffered a fractured skull in a brawl with two other teammates outside a "questionable house" on 15th and Naudain streets. This incident caused Randy Dixon, sports editor of the *Tribune*, to note that "All is not well in Hilldale camp. The fans sense it. The players admit it. And, the results prove it."¹³²

Perhaps most damaging was Bolden's failure as president to secure an all black umpiring staff for the new league. Both the NNL and ECL had experimented with black umpires, but neither kept them on a permanent basis, claiming that "race" umpires lacked experience and authority. (Reportedly, no black umpires had been used in the 1924 World Series.) Most teams, like Hilldale, used one black and one white umpire at their home games. By the late 1920s, as race relations worsened in Philadelphia and other cities, the black press became less tolerant of the presence of white umpires.¹³³ The *Tribune* forcefully addressed the subject in a 1927 editorial but, as usual, avoided directly criticizing Bolden and Hilldale: "Regardless of the reason for colored ball games having white umpires it is a disgusting and indefensible practice . . . It will require much thought and perhaps time and money . . . but the owners of ball clubs owe [it] to their patrons to discontinue a practice that is a reflection upon themselves, the ballplayers and the Negro race."¹³⁴

By August 1929, however, the American Negro League's failure to correct the situation caused the usually supportive *Tribune* to criticize Bolden and Hilldale harshly:

In order to maintain order and discipline it is necessary-according to the reasoning of Hilldale's management-to have a white man oversee the

¹³⁴ Philadelphia Tribune, Sept. 8, 1927.

¹³¹ Philadelphia Tribune, Jan. 24, May 23, Aug 8, Sept. 5, 12, 1929

¹³² Philadelphia Tribune, Sept. 5, 1929.

¹³³ Philadelphia Tribune, Nov 10, 1927; June 27, 1929; Chicago Defender, Dec. 31, 1921; Baltimore Afro-American, Aug. 22, 1925; Pittsburgh Courser, Nov. 1, 1924. Peterson, Only the Ball Was White, 90; Bruce, Kansas City Monarchs, 28-30; Hardy, "Race and Opportunity," 180. As early as 1921 Hilldale fans had questioned the use of white umpires. See Chicago Defender, June 18, 1921.

NEIL LANCTOT

game. It is a reflection on the ability and intelligence of colored people. Are we still slaves? Is it possible that colored baseball players are so dumb that they will resent one of their own race umpiring their game? Or is it that the management of Hilldale is so steeped in racial inferiority that it has no faith in Negroes? Aside from the economic unfairness of such a position the employment of white umpires at Negro ball games brands Negroes as inferior. It tells white people in a forceful manner that colored people are unable to even play a ball game without white leadership. It is a detestable mean attitude. There is no excuse for it. Hilldale depends on colored people for its existence. If the management lacks sufficient racial respect to employ Negro umpires the public should make it listen to reason.¹³⁵

Stung by local criticism and tiring of the struggles with the league, his own players, and within the corporation, Bolden quietly began to dissolve the Hilldale club during the winter of 1930. The American Negro League collapsed in February and Bolden, confident that Hilldale could no longer exist in its present form, did not renew the lease at Hilldale Park. He began to ship the team's property to Passon Field at 48th and Spruce, in Philadelphia, where he expected to launch a new team, "Ed Bolden's *Hillsdale* Club," financed by local white promoter Harry Passon.¹³⁶

Meanwhile, with the 1930 season ready to begin, the fate of the Hilldale club remained undecided. Finally, three members of the corporation, James Byrd, Lloyd Thompson, and ex-president Charles Freeman, joined together to block the dissolution of the club and succeeded in obtaining a new lease at Hilldale Park. Hilldale's last minute revival, compounded by the Lincoln Giants' move to Philadelphia, forced Bolden to abandon his plan for a new team.

To most observers Bolden seemed all but finished. Despite his eagerness to please the fans, build a winning team, and organize a successful league, Bolden's willingness to make concessions to white promoters and backers had made him increasingly unpopular. Randy Dixon of the *Tribune* provided a devastating critique of the Hilldale president's twentyyear career:

The history of the success of the erstwhile postal clerk reads like a dime best seller. He led a group of mediocre performers through the pitfalls of

¹³⁵ Philadelphia Tribune, Aug. 1, 1929.

¹³⁶ Philadelphia Tribune, April 18, 1929; March 27, April 3, 10, 17, 24, 1930; Public Ledger, Feb. 18, 1930; Pittsburgh Courier, April 19, 1930.

public opinion, built up a real following and guided the Hilldale Corporation to the heights of Negro baseball . . . Bolden proved himself a traditional if not typical cullud man by playing "Uncle Tom" and taking his advantages to the Nordic faction. He cut the Negro Press off his list. He favored the white brethren on all sides . . . When the American League folded up, Bolden came through with a subsequent statement that Hilldale had dissolved. The Daisy dynasty had ended. He got Nordic backing. Made arrangements to take something that had been nurtured by colored people and was a colored institution and bend it in such a manner as to fill the coffers of the Nordic. Not maliciously or intentionally perhaps, but such was the case or almost the case. Lloyd Thompson had stepped in and thwarted Bolden at every turn and now the man who was once a king is now a piker and Ed Bolden is through. We mean THROUGH!¹³⁷

Hampered by a late start, the 1930 Hilldale team paled in comparison to previous editions of the club. With the team's existence in doubt until late spring, several players, including Judy Johnson, Jake Stephens, Oscar Charleston, and Chaney White, defected to Cum Posey's Homestead Grays, and new manager Phil Cockrell was left with a severely weakened lineup of inexperienced youngsters and fading veterans. Local interest was minimal and by August the team was taken off salary. Disgusted fans denounced the "Darby Daisies" (as they were increasingly referred to) as "an apology for a real ball club."¹³⁸

Except for barnstorming teams, such as Posey's Homestead Grays and Wilkinson's night-baseball-playing Kansas City Monarchs, the Depression had left much of black baseball in tatters. Numerous teams disbanded or went bankrupt as attendance fell sharply, paying games became rare, and salaries were cut or eliminated altogether. In the East the Atlantic City Bacharachs were dissolved in 1930, while the Lincoln Giants lost their home grounds at the Catholic Protectory Oval in 1931. Struggling to operate in the absence of its founder, Rube Foster, who remained institutionalized until his death in December 1930, the Negro National

¹³⁷ Philadelphia Tribune, April 24, 1930. Bolden's reputation for favoring whites partially stemmed from his controversial hiring of Bill Dallas, a white Philadelphia sportswriter, as umpiring supervisor for the Eastern Colored League in 1925. See *Philadelphia Tribune*, March 28, April 4, 11, 1925.

¹³⁸ Philadelphia Tribune, Aug. 7, 21, 1930; Hilldale ledger, 1930. For earlier references to "Darby Daisies," see Philadelphia Tribune, Sept. 26, 1925; March 6, 1926; April 30, 1927; May 10, 1928.

League collapsed in 1931, leaving no professional black baseball league for the first time since 1919.¹³⁹

Despite the efforts of Lloyd Thompson and his associates, Hilldale ended the 1930 season on the verge of bankruptcy. Lacking the finances to attract superior talent, Thompson turned to John Drew, a wealthy black Delaware County politician and businessman who had made his fortune by starting a bus line in Darby, which he later sold to Philadelphia Rapid Transit at a substantial profit. Drew realized that investment in Hilldale would not only be a popular public relations move but a chance to restore the team to its past glory and profitability. The original Hilldale corporation was dissolved, and on March 11, 1931, the team was reincorporated as the Hilldale Club, Inc., with Drew as principal owner with 197 shares and Byrd, Freeman, and Thompson holding one share apiece.¹⁴⁰ Commencing his comprehensive rebuilding project, the diminutive Drew explained his philosophy to the Tribune: "The initial plank in my base ball platform is that the Negro player has never received his worth in monetary consideration . . . I will never be satisfied to operate baseball along lines that have produced nothing but failure. The player is the source of the game. The Negro player has never received enough salary for his contribution to the game."141

Drew reinstituted salaries and succeeded in coaxing back Judy Johnson (as player-manager), Nip Winters, Jake Stephens, and other former Hilldale players. Investing over \$14,000 at Hilldale Park, Drew added a clubhouse with plumbing facilities, administrative offices, a ladies' rest room, and purchased two large cars for team travel. Arrangements were made for radio station WELK to broadcast Hilldale news, and Drew even enlisted Oscar DePriest, the country's only black congressman, to throw out the first ball on opening day.¹⁴² Under Drew's ownership Hilldale had its last great season in 1931. The team compiled a 120-31-4 record and regained much of the goodwill lost after the disastrous 1929 and 1930 seasons. Despite a substantial increase in average attendance,

¹³⁹ Philadelphia Tribune, March 6, Aug 28, 1930, Peterson, Only the Ball Was White, 83-84

¹⁴⁰ Philadelphia Tribune, Feb 26, May 7, 1931, Lloyd Thompson, "Darby's John M Drew Business Man, Pioneer Bus Line Owner," in Darby, PA. 1682-1982 Tricentennial, Certificate of

Incorporation, March 11, 1931, Lloyd Thompson/Bill Cash Collection

¹⁴¹ Philadelphia Tribune, March 5, 1931

¹⁴² Philadelphia Tribune, March 5, 26, April 2, 23, May 21, Aug 6, 1931

from 652.7 in 1930 to 1108.4 in 1931, crowds at Hilldale Park failed to approach their pre-1930 standards. Randy Dixon noted: "Negro club owners and players have been hard hit this season [owing] mostly to the depression wave. The clubs have played top notch ball but the old gold is not there as in the past."¹⁴³

Once again several sportswriters advocated a new league to cure black baseball's ills. In January 1932 Cum Posey founded the East-West League with Hilldale, the Homestead Grays, Baltimore Black Sox, Cleveland Stars, Newark Browns, Washington Pilots, Detroit Wolves, and Syd Pollock's Cuban Stars. Posev planned daily league games, radio broadcasts of results, monthly salaried umpires, and an outside agency to compile statistics, but the Depression's devastating effect upon the black community doomed the league to failure. Attendance at league cities fell to an all time low, and Hilldale drew only 910 fans on opening day. By mid-June, as attendance dropped to 200 fans per Saturday and under 50 for weekday games, Drew lowered ticket prices and took the team off salary. Financial losses continued to mount, and on July 18, 1932, the club disbanded, a week after playing its final game at Hilldale Park before a crowd of 196 fans.¹⁴⁴ In a terse statement to the press explaining his decision, Drew perceptively noted "present conditions are such that the fans do not have money to spend on baseball."145 The Tribune, like others, mourned "the passing of one of America's greatest baseball organizations" and noted that "Philadelphia needs Hilldale. It is a business institution which has contributed much to the financial advancement of Colored citizens."146

¹⁴³ Philadelphia Tribune, Sept 10, 1931

¹⁴⁴ Philadelphia Tribune, Sept 10, 1931, Jan 28, March 3, June 16, 23, 30, July 21, 1932, Hilldale ledger, 1932, Alexander, Our Game, 155-59, Bill Rabinowitz, "Baseball and the Depression," Baseball History, An Annual of Original Baseball Research, Premier Edition, Peter Levine, ed (Westport, 1989), 49-59 Organized baseball was also hit hard by the Depression In 1932 twelve of the sixteen major league clubs lost money in a period characterized by one historian as "the worst time baseball and professional sports had experienced in the twentieth century"

¹⁴⁵ Philadelphia Tribune, July 28, 1932 Webster McDonald, a star pitcher with Hilldale and other clubs, blamed the demise of Hilldale on Drew's refusal to pay 10 percent to Nat Strong for lucrative Sunday dates in New York Drew, however, routinely paid 5 percent to Eddie Gottlieb, a Philadelphia area promoter and associate of Strong, for booking a number of Hilldale games in 1931 and 1932 See Holway, *Voices*, 81-82, Ruck, *Sandlot Seasons*, 118, Letter to Ed Gottlieb, July 25, 1932, Bill Cash/Lloyd Thompson Collection

146 Philadelphia Tribune, July 28, 1932

NEIL LANCTOT

The remaining Hilldale players jumped to other professional clubs. Judy Johnson signed with Gus Greenlee's fast-rising Pittsburgh Crawfords, while others joined a new "Hillsdale" club under Charles Freeman which briefly secured local bookings. Meanwhile, Ed Bolden had resurfaced in 1932 as manager of the Darby Phantoms, a local boys' team that he hoped to build into a new Hilldale. By 1933 Bolden had abandoned the Phantoms to return to professional black baseball as a part owner of the Philadelphia Stars which would soon join Greenlee's new Negro National League. Mostly owned by Eddie Gottlieb, a powerful white sports promoter and booking agent in Philadelphia, the Stars successfully operated until the mid-1950s, although they never evoked the passionate emotional response in the black community that Hilldale had once elicited. Bolden remained with the club until his death in September 1950, just as professional black baseball neared its own demise, a victim of the recent integration of the major leagues.¹⁴⁷

The accomplishments of Ed Bolden's Hilldale team between 1910 and 1932 instilled a new sense of racial pride in the black population of Philadelphia. The corporation, "working for a combination solely controlled by colored men and maintained by our race," had offered tangible proof that black-run enterprises could succeed, make a profit, and benefit the community.¹⁴⁸ The *Tribune* best expressed the significance of Hilldale. Its "accomplishments have made glad the heart of every school boy of our race, and we believe impregnated many with the determination to duplicate their stand, and soar to the heights they have reached in their chosen profession . . . The ability of Negroes to do things on a par with the best of any group has again been clearly demonstrated."¹⁴⁹

Hilldale's remarkable success, occurring at a time when the majority of Philadelphia's black businesses failed, was largely due to the efforts of its manager and president, Ed Bolden. His canny business sense and reputation for "fair dealing and clean playing" had placed his team at the very top of black baseball in the mid 1920s. Worsening economic condi-

¹⁴⁷ Philadelphia Tribune, Feb. 18, March 31, June 23, Aug. 4, 11, 1932; Holway, Voices, 80-84. On Eddie Gottlieb, see Ruck, Sandlot Seasons, 115-22. Gottlieb was a highly successful basketball coach of several teams, including the South Philadelphia Hebrew Association and the Philadelphia Warriors.

¹⁴⁸ Philadelphia Tribune, Feb. 23, Sept. 28, 1918.

¹⁴⁹ Philadelphia Tribune, Dec. 1, 1923.

tions and the fragility of all black enterprises, however, proved more potent than Bolden's considerable entrepreneurial skills. The post-World War I boom that carried Hilldale and other black businesses in Philadelphia to prosperity in the early 1920s would eventually fade, and the middecade industrial recession initiated a steady decline in attendance at Hilldale Park which Bolden was powerless to stop. The onset of the Depression virtually destroyed professional black baseball in Philadelphia and other cities, only to be revived through the investments of black vice leaders or white owners.

Bolden's forty-year career, from 1910 to 1950, encompassed the beginning and virtual end of professional black baseball. As Roscoe Coleman, sports editor of the *Philadelphia Independent* noted, his death "ended an era in race baseball and the attempt on the part of its pioneers and successors to elevate it to a big time level."¹⁵⁰

Philadelphia

NEIL LANCTOT

¹⁵⁰ Philadelphia Tribune, May 10, 1919; Philadelphia Independent, Oct. 7, 1950 (quote). On Philadelphia's black business community during this period, see Hardy, "Race and Opportunity," 314-78.