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The Sporting News Collection

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**C.C. Johnson Spink letter to Bill DeWitt Jr. about expanding The Sporting News coverage. November 2, 1966**

C.C. Johnson Spink

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November 2, 1966

AIR MAIL

Mr. William O. DeWitt, Jr.  
Cincinnati Reds  
415 Central Trust Bank Tower  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

Dear Bill:

On Bob Howsam's return from the meeting of general managers we had a discussion regarding changes in make-up of The Sporting News.

Bob and I hadn't been talking for more than two minutes before I realized that I had made a mistake when I didn't give you more information on the reasons for the necessity of making these changes.

Two weeks ago last Tuesday I flew to Cincinnati and Boston and back to St. Louis in one day for the specific purpose of discussing the format changes in The Sporting News, and reasons for those changes with both Mr. Giles and Mr. Cronin. I don't want to put words in the mouths of each man, but I truly believe that they understood the necessity of making the changes--even though neither approved the changes.

The reasons revolve around the economics of running a successful business. Just as some major league owners have been forced to permit the destruction of their playing fields by professional football teams so must we cater to the needs of increased sales of The Sporting News through the addition of information on all professional sports.

This expansion of news on other sports has proven so successful that our paid subscription total has risen in the past few years from 60,000 to 90,000 a week. At the same time, our newsstand sales have risen from a weekly average of 127,000 to 174,000.

While you might disagree with my decision to change the format I don't believe that you will disagree with my contention that this

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additional readership will benefit baseball.

This increase in circulation has been very gratifying but, as you know, man doesn't live by bread alone. In other words, in media such as newspapers, magazines, etc., the name of the game is advertising.

We are very proud of the fact that we have shown such a fine increase in circulation in recent years but we have not yet reached the point where prospective advertisers are knocking on our door.

While circulation is one roadblock to advertising, an even greater problem confronting our salesmen has been the image of The Sporting News. Try as we might, we can't seem to shake the opinion of many advertising prospects that The Sporting News is a trade paper designed only for inner baseball circles. These prospects picture our readers as being closely associated with the business of baseball, they don't visualize our readers as being above-average sports fans.

"If you are not baseball's trade paper, why is baseball your No. 1 news the year-round?" they keep asking our salesmen.

We finally became convinced that the only way The Sporting News would be recognized for the great consumer sports publication that it is would be to cover sports in seasonal perspective.

Now you might contend, "Yes, but you are making second class citizens out of baseball." Nothing could be further from the truth -- not when you view our actions with knowledge of the reasons for the change. Right now we are finishing up on the mailing of this week's issue of The Sporting News -- and it contains 21 pages that are packed full of fine features like our American League All-Star team (the National League is next week), reports from every major league city, the Arizona and Florida instructional leagues, the Winter Leagues, the Deals of the Week, etc. In contrast to our 21 pages, yesterday's St. Louis Globe-Democrat contained absolutely nothing on baseball.

I know you and the other major and minor league executives are concerned about the make-up of The Sporting News but I also know

Mr. William O. DeWitt, Jr., Cincinnati Reds

3

that you are even more interested in the number of people who continue to read about The Sporting News every week of the year. So are we!

We don't think we are being too optimistic when we forecast a readership increase of 100% in the next two years. This won't be done through pin-up pictures and sophisticated muck-raking -- it will be done through the presentation of all of the sports news that is fit to print.

We have already had one very encouraging reaction to the change in format. An eastern brewery is interested in sending The Sporting News to 15,000 service men at home and abroad once each month during the coming year. Frankly, we wouldn't have been considered for the promotion if we were not publishing The Sporting News in its present form.

As said before, you might disagree with my decision to change the format but I hope you will agree with my contention that the additional readership through the coverage of other sports will benefit baseball.

Kindest regards,

C. C. Johnson Spink  
Publisher

CCJS:hn