

The Umpire

By H.G. Salsinger

LAST WINTER Kenesaw Mountain Landis announced that his office would publish the official base ball record book for 1943.

The news was received with cynical comments and pertinent questions. Why should Landis suddenly decide to take over the publication of the record book? He knew nothing about the publishing business. He knew nothing about type or composition, editing or make-up, presses or print paper, electrotyping or binding. Why, then, should he undertake the publication of one of the most intricate and exacting books that rolls off the presses each year, especially at this time when base ball needed guidance and representation more than at any other time in the history of the game?

The official record book, known as the Base Ball Guide, was published last year by J. G. Taylor Spink, who also publishes The Sporting News. The edition was the most complete and accurate ever gotten out, but Landis, who knew nothing about such matters, proposed to duplicate the Spink effort.

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Editor Landis

AS EDITOR and publisher, Landis went about his new duties in an unorthodox manner. He dictated long letters to the club owners and commanded them to furnish him with material for his book.

The club owners, besides paying two-thirds of the cost of the



"The Editor"

Landis experiment, were also ordered to dig up the material and send it to the Chicago headquarters, along with pictures.

While the judge was devoting part of his time to the mysteries of the publishing business, one minor league after another collapsed, and the club owners of the two major leagues were wrestling with the manifold problems that the war and the draft were creating.

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The Real Story

LANDIS' decision to publish the record book was prompted by petty jealousy that developed last summer when The Saturday Evening Post published an article, written by Stanley Frank, and labeled "Baseball Bible." It dealt with The Sporting News (Baseball Bible) and its founders, the Spinks. It was a factual history of the best-known sports publication in the country and, while the author was a bit too praiseworthy in spots, as writers often are when they become over-enthusiastic, the story was generally regarded as a fitting tribute to a family that has played an integral part in the development of base ball and the formation of the major leagues.

But, the story didn't please Landis. It irritated him no end. Frank referred to the Spink publication as "the unofficial conscience of base ball," and the "watchdog of base ball."

Landis bruises easily and you can imagine how deeply he was bruised by the Frank article, and an exploitation of the article by Dan Daniel, published in The Sporting News. The letterhead of Landis' official stationery reads "Baseball." Not "Commissioner of "Baseball," or "Office of the Commissioner," but "BASEBALL."

Being "BASEBALL," Landis was certain to consider the Frank and Daniel tributes as nothing less than rank treason, and Spink, who did not see the Frank story before it was published, and who had no authority to change the copy of the Daniel comments, "took the rap," as the boys say.

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Unwise Act

IN REMOVING Spink as the publisher of the official record book, Landis committed an act both petty and unwise.

Spink published the Baseball Guide of 1943, and while it lacks the indorsement and blessing of Landis it is as official as anything coming from "BASEBALL." It contains all the official records, plus pages of other valuable information.

Landis not alone lowered his own prestige with the club owners, but he alienated some of his staunchest supporters and got Spink and his publications many columns of invaluable advertising that he would never have gotten otherwise. At the same time Landis received similar columns of unfavorable publicity.

If ever an act developed into a powerful boomerang this one did.

As for the Landis official record book: The base ball season is nearing the halfway mark and the book hasn't been published yet, although we are informed that it will appear some time next week.