

Baseball in 1867

Two negro baseball teams were playing one day. "What's the score?" a spectator asked one of the players.

"Nineteen to nothing", the player answered.

"Beating you pretty bad, ain't they?"

"Oh, no", the player responded, "we all ain't had ah bats yet."

Such a situation as far as runs are concerned must have been more or less common back in 1867 when the first annual tournament of the Iowa State Base Ball Association was held at Burlington. Box scores of that tournament reveal from fifteen to twenty-nine runs per inning, and total scores ranging from thirty to one hundred and fifteen. Thirty-seven home runs were made by the winning team in the final game for the championship.

During the years immediately following the Civil War, baseball teams were organized very generally in Iowa cities and towns just as they were everywhere throughout the United States. The Civil War itself had stimulated interest in the game. Boys in camp sought recreation in this pastime during their leisure hours, and when the war ended these young fellows carried home their love for the game.

Baseball at that date required nine men on a side as to-day, but was played without gloves, masks, or

protectors, while pitchers tossed the ball to the batter in much the same manner as is now the practice in indoor baseball. These factors, doubtless, account for the phenomenal scoring power of the team at bat. Two scorers, one from each club, were needed to record the tallies. By 1866 several organized clubs in Iowa were engaged in hot contests and rivalry was keen.

In August, 1866, the Hawk-Eyes of Mount Pleasant defeated the Capital City Club of Des Moines sixty-six to forty-eight in a game that lasted three hours and forty-eight minutes. On another occasion the Hawk-Eyes defeated the Crescents of Burlington fifty-four to twenty-three. "A large number of ladies and gentlemen were present to witness the contest. Everything passed off pleasantly, and the game was handsomely played." The Hawk-Eyes, also, in two bitterly contested games, won from the Washington, Iowa, club.

The announcement of a State Base Ball Tournament to be held at Burlington in October, 1867, aroused considerable interest among the clubs that for two seasons had been playing regular matched games. Prizes totalling more than one thousand dollars for the first and second best teams in each of three classes were offered as inducements to draw players to the tournament. First prize for teams of the first class consisted of two hundred dollars in greenbacks and a rosewood bat valued at seventy-five dollars. One hundred dollars in greenbacks and

a silver ball valued at fifty dollars made up the second prize. Prizes for teams in the second and third classes, while not so large, were, nevertheless, attractive.

The tournament began at ten o'clock Tuesday morning, October 15th, with a game between the Crescents and Mechanics of Burlington, two teams in the second class. "Weather", said the local reporter, "was very fine"; and the roads and grounds were in "excellent order". The Crescents won this game forty-four to thirty after three hours of steady playing. In the afternoon, play was resumed at three o'clock with a game between the Active Club of Ottumwa and the Orchard City Club of Burlington, two teams entered in the third class. At the end of the fourth inning with the score forty-eight to twenty-five in favor of Ottumwa the game was called on account of darkness — to be resumed at nine o'clock the next morning. When the game finally ended the Actives had made a total of sixty-nine runs to their opponent's fifty-seven.

The big event, however, of the first day of the tournament was the game between the Scotts of Davenport and the Westerns of Burlington, two teams in the first class. Darkness ended the game at the close of the fifth inning with Davenport the victor by the score of forty-two to thirty-nine.

On the second day of the tournament the most exciting contest was between the Scotts of Davenport and the Hawk-Eyes of Mount Pleasant. "The

match', said a local paper, "was a fine one and the game skillfully played on both sides, though it was quite evident soon after it commenced that the Scotts had met rather more than their equals in the active, sturdy, and well-trained Hawk-Eyes. The sympathies of the spectators were about equally divided, and "fine plays by the members of either club were greeted with loud applause from the gentlemen and bouquets by the ladies." The Hawk-Eyes won eighty-three to fifty-seven.

"Another beautiful day greeted the base-ballers" on Thursday, the last day of the tournament. Final games in all classes aroused spectators and partisan followers to a high pitch of enthusiasm. Interest centered, though, in the game between the invincible Hawk-Eyes and the Westerns. "There was some brilliant playing by both clubs", said the reporter, "but, in the main, the Westerns were not able to cope successfully with the famous champion club of our sister city." The score by innings attests the truth of this statement.

<i>Innings</i> —	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	—	<i>Total</i>
Hawk-Eyes —	4	21	29	0	3	18	15	25	—	115
Westerns —	2	16	3	5	4	0	9	3	—	42

"The Hawk-Eyes have fairly won the first prize", declared the official report of the tournament, "and must be conceded the championship of the State until some more accomplished rivals wrest from them this proud distinction."

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