



Bizarreness in Baltimore

By Mark Liptak

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Editor's Note:

Sox historian Mark Liptak's story below is about the bizarre events that have occurred while the Sox have played American League games in Baltimore. Starting in 1901 the Orioles played at American League Park located at the southwest corner of East 29th Street and Greenmount Avenue, later dubbed Orioles Park IV. It was here where the Sox faced the first incarnation



White Sox-Orioles game April 29, 2015. Photo courtesy of www.cnn.com

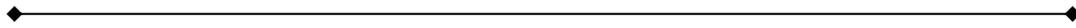
of the Orioles, which moved north to New York for the 1903 season and became the New York Highlanders which later morphed into the Yankees. While editing this piece I reminded Mark about a one-game stand the Sox had in Baltimore on August 17, 1972 where the Sox played in front of a nearly empty house, not unlike the Wednesday, April 29, 2015 Sox-Orioles afternoon matinee where the public was kept out of Camden Yards because of the emergency situation in Baltimore due to civil unrest.

The Sox were in the midst of a surprising A.L. West Division race, when G.M. Roland Hemond on August 17 acquired knuckleballer Eddie Fisher from the California Angels for Bruce Miller to get some pitching help. Fisher had won a ring with the 1966 Orioles and had also pitched with the White Sox from 1962–1966 making the All-Star team in 1965 and winning Fireman of the Year honors.

On the day of the trade, the White Sox were in the middle of a home stand at old Comiskey Park. But they had to make a one-game road trip to Baltimore to play the Orioles in a makeup game hastily scheduled on orders of A.L. President Joe Cronin.

This quick trip exemplified baseball economics for the beleaguered White Sox franchise in 1972, where every penny counted. The game played “under gloom and drizzle” drew a mere 655 fans, smallest crowd in Orioles history (now broken in 2015 with an official

attendance of zero). The Sox got just \$370 for their cut of the gate and incurred \$9,000 in expenses to fly to Baltimore and stay overnight, including \$27 per player for 1½ days' worth of meal money¹. The only saving grace was that the White Sox thumped the Orioles 6–1 with spot starter Dave Lemonds getting his third win. Upon their return, the White Sox played in front of 42,000 fans at a rocking Comiskey Park on Friday night, August 18. The near-sellout crowd reached a frenzy in an 8–1 win over Boston.



The Chicago White Sox have been playing baseball since 1900 when they moved from St. Paul. They've been playing in the American League since 1901. A lot of games have been played since then, a lot of cities visited. But one city far and away holds the crown for “strangeness” regarding events that have happened on the field...that’s Baltimore.

The latest of course was the totally surreal scene on Wednesday, April 29, when for the first time in history a major league game was played without any admissions. The social unrest in Baltimore caused the first two games of a three game series between the White Sox and Orioles to be cancelled and moved to late May. Only after calm was restored to that city and after speaking to city officials did major league baseball allow the third game of the series to be played...but with one condition. No fans were allowed inside. There were some people in the park, the media, scouts and some members of both front offices but no fans. That sets a record that can never be broken, only tied.

To say the situation was “unique” would be an understatement to be sure. It was so unusual that Sox announcer Hawk Harrelson was thinking about asking Sox television director Jim Angio to pipe in crowd noise (presumably through Harrelson’s headset) to make thing more “normal” for the long time broadcaster.

But this game, as bizarre as it, was by no means the only strange thing that has happened when the Sox have played in Baltimore...not by a long shot.

With that in mind, here are some of the other “Twilight Zone like” things that have happened to the White Sox when playing the Orioles.

April 15, 1954 - On September 28, 1953 the Sox behind Billy Pierce beat the St. Louis Browns 3-2 in the last American League game played in that city. Over the winter the franchise was moved to Baltimore and the schedule makers thought it would bring things full circle if the Sox played the new Orioles in their first home game in their



White Sox-Orioles first ever home game April 15, 1954. Photo courtesy of www.baltimoresun.com.

new city. With that the O's hosted the Sox and won 3-1 behind "Bullet" Bob Turley who beat Virgil "Fire" Trucks thanks to a complete game seven hitter with nine strikeouts. It was the first American League game played in that city since 1902.

May 18, 1957 - On this night the Sox had to catch a train to Boston and the Orioles agreed to end the game at 10:20 local time regardless of the outcome. The Sox trailed 3-0 going into the 7th inning when they scored four runs. That half inning was strange in itself because Sox manager Al Lopez used five pinch hitters and two pinch runners in it! Of the five pinch hitters, three singled and one walked to fuel the rally.

The Sox were still leading 4-3 in the 9th inning. Paul LaPalme was brought in to protect the lead. *With thirty seconds remaining until curfew* he elected to pitch to Dick Williams. League rules did not allow for a suspended game under these circumstances so the Sox could have legally stalled the final seconds away and won. Unfortunately they didn't. La Palme threw...Williams swung...home run. Tie game, which was then suspended and replayed from the start later on in the season.

August 6, 1959 - It was the third and final marathon game of the Sox championship season. The Sox battled the Orioles in Baltimore and played for 18 innings before curfew stopped the night game tied at one all. The game lasted only four hours. The most significant item to come out of it? The incredible performance by Sox starter Billy Pierce. Pierce pitched 16 *innings!* He allowed one run on 11 hits with seven strikeouts, facing 61 batters. Years later I asked him how he could do something like that. "It was something you didn't think about," he told me. "Al (Lopez) would ask me how I felt after every inning and I told him I felt fine, felt strong, so he just kept sending me back out there to pitch."

August 28, 1960 - The Sox started the day 2 1/2 games behind the Yankees in a pennant race, and trailed the O's 3-0 going into the 8th inning. With two out, Luis Aparicio, Nellie Fox and Roy Sievers ripped consecutive singles, scoring a run and putting the tying runs on base. Manager Al Lopez called on Ted Kluszewski to pinch hit.

"Big Klu" drilled the pitch from Milt Pappas into the right field stands for an apparent three run homer except for one small thing...third base umpire Ed Hurley called time!

Nobody remembered seeing him do it but he refused to change his call. Both Lopez and Fox were ejected in the confrontation afterwards with Fox being particularly enraged over what happened.

The next day Hurley was quoted in the newspapers as saying "I wish to heck I hadn't called it, I'd gladly take it back..." Hurley said he called time because he wanted to tell Sox players Earl Torgeson and Floyd Robinson that they were warming up in the wrong area.

End result was the Sox lost 3-1, and were now three games behind the Yankees. Kluszewski later recalled that this game was the one that broke the team's spirit that season as they finished in third place.



Umpire Ed Hurley. Photo courtesy www.wikipedia.org.

May 19, 1963 – Sox starter Ray Herbert’s consecutive scoreless inning streak ends controversially in Baltimore. Herbert, a 20 game winner in 1962, had thrown 38 straight scoreless innings when he faced the Orioles Johnny Orsino in the 3rd inning. Orsino then hit what appeared to be a home run to left field...or did he?

Both manager Al Lopez and outfielder Dave Nicholson argued that the ball never went over the wall and should have been a ground rule double. Herbert remembered that play years later, “We were in Baltimore and the Orioles catcher hit a disputed home run. I say disputed because in those days Baltimore had a metal railing that ran across the top of the left field fence. It was to help stop fans from falling over on to the field. Concrete posts held up the bar so there were gaps between the top of the wall and the rail itself. Our left fielder swore that the ball went through the gap between the wall and the railing into the seats. That should have been a ground rule double, but the umpire didn’t see it that way.” Herbert lost his scoreless streak but the Sox won the game 4-3 in 10 innings to get a double header split.

August 26, 1971 – It was the kind of thing that could only happen to the White Sox and only in Baltimore’s ‘house of horrors,’ Memorial Stadium. The Sox trailed 6-0 before mounting a big comeback that saw them take a 9-8 lead in the 9th inning thanks to a home run by Mike Andrews. With two outs, torrential rain hit the area and after a wait of almost an hour and a half, the game was called.

Because of rules in place at the time, the score reverted back to the last completed inning, the 8th, which saw Baltimore ahead 8-7. That’s the way the game ended.

May 13, 1975 – Sox starting pitcher Jim Kaat’s 12 game winning streak ends as he’s beaten 3-2 in Baltimore. Baltimore scored what turned out to be the winning run in the 5th inning on a double by former Sox outfielder Tommy Davis. Kaat had won his first five decisions in 1975 and his final seven decisions in 1974. The 12 straight victories was one of the longest streaks in team history.

May 18, 1983 – It was one of the most excruciating moments of his career. On this night Sox pitcher Rich Dotson tossed a one hitter. Only he *lost* the game 1-0. His only mistake came when “Disco” Danny Ford lofted a pitch down the right field line at Memorial Stadium that fell into the first row of seats along the line. The ‘blast’ went all of about 308 feet, an easy out in most other parks. The hit came in the 8th inning. Only one other Sox pitcher has ever thrown a one hitter and lost...that was Freddy Garcia in Minnesota in 2005.



(From left) White Sox pitchers Jim Kaat and Rich Dotson. Photos courtesy of www.ootpdevelopments.com and www.chicagofantasybaseballcamp.com respectively.

July 11, 1985 – The Sox blow a game and lose to the Orioles in Baltimore 7-6. The loss would have long-term consequences for the franchise because it eventually led to the firing of longtime G.M. Roland Hemond. With two outs and the Sox leading 6-3, “Bullet” Bob James, the team closer, hurt his right knee. In came journeyman relief pitcher Mike Stanton who was picked up out of the minors a few weeks before. Stanton didn’t get a man out and gave up a three run, game winning home run to Fred Lynn.

Up in the broadcast booth, Sox television announcers Don Drysdale and Hawk Harrelson were openly questioning the organization and those running it, if the ‘best’ they could do was Stanton. During that off-season, Harrelson was named the new G.M. replacing Hemond. Harrelson resigned after one season in charge.

July 30, 1995 – So this is what a good teammate does? In a game at Baltimore Sox DH John Kruk who unretired in May to take the Sox offer, decided to retire just as quickly. Kruk singled, raising his average to .308 for the year, then went back to the clubhouse, packed his bags and left the game for good. He did this before the game ended mind you, then told certain reporters it was no fun playing on a losing team that didn’t “have any heart.”

The venues change... American League Park to Memorial Stadium to Oriole Park at Camden Yards but the freak occurrences seem to continue just the same when the White Sox play in Baltimore. Just another chapter in the sometimes-convoluted history of the Chicago White Sox.

i. Richard Dozer “Baseball Under Glass” Chicago Tribune August 18, 1972