

Office of the Commissioner
MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL



ROBERT D. MANFRED, JR.
Commissioner of Baseball

July 20, 2015

JUL 27 2015
BY: _____

Dr. David J. Fletcher
SafeWorks Illinois
1806 Market Street
Champaign, IO 64822

Dear Dr. Fletcher:

Thank you for your letter of March 23, 2015, requesting removal of George "Buck" Weaver from Baseball's Ineligible List. As I understand the historical record, there is no serious dispute that on September 21, 1919, 9 days before the 1919 World Series was to begin, Mr. Weaver participated in a meeting in Chick Gandil's room at the Ansonia Hotel in New York to discuss a scheme to fix the World Series. Gandil was quoted in a 1956 article in Sports Illustrated as follows:

They all (the seven or eight White Sox players in attendance) were interested and thought we should reconnoiter to see if the dough would really be put on the line. Weaver suggested we get paid in advance; then if things got too hot, then we could double-cross the gambler, keep the cash and take the big end of the Series by beating the [Cincinnati] Reds. We agreed this was a hell of a brainy plan.

On September 30, 1919, the day before Game 1 of the World Series, Mr. Weaver attended another meeting at the Sinton Hotel in Cincinnati with seven of his teammates. All were unhappy because the money promised the players had not been produced. At that meeting, one of the gamblers arranging the fix revised the terms of the bribes to the players. The players apparently accepted the new terms.

Despite Mr. Weaver's statements to the contrary, the great weight of scholarly research we have discovered confirms Mr. Weaver's presence at these meetings and his awareness of the scheme to fix the 1919 World Series. As noted above, there is at least some evidence that he took an active role in proposing the design of the scheme.

Following indictment of the eight White Sox players for throwing the 1919 World Series, Judge Landis was approached by the Major League Baseball owners to oversee the game with a special responsibility to ensure the integrity of Major League Baseball competition on the field. Judge Landis accepted the job as "Commissioner" and was empowered to investigate "any act, transaction or practice charged, alleged or suspected to be detrimental to the best interest of the national game of Baseball" and "to determine, after investigation, what preventative, remedial or punitive action is appropriate in the premises, and to take such action either against Major Leagues, Major League Clubs or individuals,

as the case may be..." The eight White Sox players were acquitted of criminal charges relating to a conspiracy to throw the 1919 World Series. Nonetheless, in discharge of his new duties, Judge Landis issued his decision to place all eight Major League players on Baseball's Permanently Ineligible List:

Regardless of the verdict of juries, no player who throws a ballgame, no player that undertakes or promises to throw a ballgame, no player that sits in conference with a bunch of crooked players and gamblers where the ways and means of throwing games are planned and discussed and does not promptly tell his Club about it, will ever play professional baseball... [R]egardless of the verdict of the juries, baseball is entirely competent to protect itself against crooks both inside and outside the game.

Judge Landis determined that the best interest of the Game was threatened not only by players who acted, undertook or promised to throw games but also by players who participated in discussions with other players and gamblers concerning the ways and means of throwing games without reporting such schemes to appropriate authorities. This concept was widely understood and accepted within Major League Baseball, was later codified in our rules as applicable to "any player or person connected with a club" and is now part of Major League Rule 21(a).

I am aware of the views of researchers and commentators who have argued that Mr. Weaver's offenses were of a lesser degree of moral turpitude than those of his comrades in the efforts to fix the 1919 World Series. Judge Landis, of course, did not agree. I am also aware of those who disagree that the punishment of placement on the Ineligible List should fall upon one who knows of a corrupt scheme but does not report it. Major League Baseball, as an institution, has not and does not agree, as evidenced by our long-standing and well-known rule. It seems to me that it is impossible to accurately recreate the sense of threat to the integrity of Major League Baseball posed by the events of 1919 as it was understood by Commissioner Landis in 1920. Commissioner Landis faced circumstances which easily could have proved fatal to the game. He took action within the powers granted to him by the Major League Clubs to protect the best interest of the game. I do not believe that the force and scope of his decision is unrelated to the fact that Major League Baseball has not suffered a similar game-fixing scandal since that time. For these reasons, I will not re-open Mr. Weaver's case.

In the course of our research concerning this matter, we discovered a letter by Commissioner Giamatti to a South Carolina State Senator who had written asking for a review of the Permanently Ineligible status of Shoeless Joe Jackson. Commissioner Giamatti wrote:

The events surrounding the 1919 World Series and its aftermath cannot be recreated, in my opinion, in sufficient detail and depth to provide a firm enough basis to take an action today that could change Mr. Jackson's place in history. To think otherwise is to pretend to some kind of omniscience. I, for one, do not wish to play God with history. The Jackson case is now best given to historical analysis and debate as opposed to a present-day review with an eye to reinstatement.

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I believe that Commissioner's Giamatti's analysis of the Jackson case applies with equal force to Mr. Weaver's situation. I, therefore, decline to give additional consideration to this matter.

Thanks again for writing to me.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert D. Manfred, Jr." with a period at the end. The signature is written in a cursive style.

Robert D. Manfred, Jr.