



Oregon Baseball Campaign

Make Way for the Coast League

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With the Philadelphia Athletics snugly [sic] tucked away in Kansas City and the St. Louis Browns apparently resting well in Baltimore, the Pacific Coast League, armed with a new president and revived interest, is shooting for the greatest year in its history.

The off-season appointment of Claire Goodwin to the Coast League presidency, succeeding Clarence "Pants" Rowland, and the announcement by Baseball Commissioner Ford Frick, in forming all sixteen major league clubs to silence talk of west coast invasion, following the move of Connie Mack's heroes to Kansas City, set the wheels in motion for a banner year on the coast.

The constant play in previous years which west coast newspapers have given stories of proposed moves into coast league territory, by major league teams has harmed the PLC [sic] beyond measure.

Not only have the stories taken up space which could have been used for promotion of the coast circuit, they have also led thousands of fans to believe that the Pacific Coast League is nothing but a grave yard for worn out major league ball players, discouraging countless potential ticket buyers.

Now that Frick has sounded his warning and all of the major league teams seem to be well planted with Boston, St. Louis, and Philadelphia becoming one-club cities it appears there won't be talk of a move for some time and the coast league can concentrate on building for the future.

Without a doubt the west coast is the fastest growing section in the United States and if left alone, and given a fair shake, could support a third major league, as impractical as it may sound.

Many baseball observers say that a third big league is impossible. It's interesting to note, however, that when Rowland vacated his job as Pacific Coast League President the point he stressed is that he felt the PCL would now be a successful third major league, if it had been granted its request for major league status in 1944.

New PCL president Claire Goodwin should be a great asset in the coast's drive for lost respect. The one-time Oakland business executive and sportsman has but one motive--to head a sound, hustling baseball league with the objective of someday having the league gain major status.

Hustle has become the by-word in the Pacific Coast League this year, with the Pepsi-Cola Company backing the PCL with \$20,000 in hustle awards.

The awards will be broken down as follows:

\$1,500 to the "hustlingest" team. \$200 to the player contributing the most to baseball on and off the field. \$200 to the most colorful player. \$200 to the rookie of the month. \$200 to the most

improved player. \$200 to the pitcher of the month. In addition, at the end of the season, \$2,500 each will be presented to the Pacific Coast League's most valuable player, manager, and umpire.

The hustle awards are just one of many steps the PCL has taken in the past few years. Obtaining open classification standing and dropping ties with American and National League teams have put the league a step closer to the top.

In reaching the top, the coast league will have to make it on its own and is apparently learning that as soon as it stops performing as a circuit of "farm teams" for the major leagues the better off it will be in the long run.

Only Hollywood and Los Angeles are now "tied up" with a big league club--Hollywood with Pittsburgh and Los Angeles with the Chicago Cubs. The Angels are owned by P. K. Wrigley of the Cubs while the Stars are operating with the Pirates on a working agreement.

The PCL has learned from experience that it's one thing to deal with the National or American loop and another to be a "farm team" to one of the sixteen big league clubs.

Hollywood, for example, lost Outfielders Tommy Saffell and Lee Walls, Pitcher Rodger Bowman, Shortstop Dick Smith, Catcher Jim Mangan, and First baseman Dale Long to the Pirates following the 1954 season. Mangan, Long, and Smith were on option from the parent Pirates and undoubtedly [sic] helped the Stars tie for the championship (Hollywood lost the PCL flag to San Diego in a playoff) but Walls, Saffell, and Bowman were sole property of the Hollywood club, and top notch at tractions on the coast.

However, since Hollywood and Pittsburgh have an agreement, the three aces went to the pirates [sic]. Being Hollywood property, Pittsburgh didn't just "steal" Walls, Saffell, and Bowman. In exchange, the Stars received Pitcher George O'Donnell, Catcher Bill Hall, Outfielder Gail Henely and First baseman Dale Coogan, plus an undisclosed sum of cash. At this writing, with the Pacific Coast League just underway, Coogan had already been shipped to New Orleans by the Stars, and Henely and Hall are regarded as second stringers. O'Donnell, who was first with the Stars before going to the Pirates, will probably help the team.

If any one of the three, Henely, Hall, or O'Donnell, do come into their own on the coast--back they'll go to Pittsburgh or another National or American League club. It's just one big circle, after the season is over the major league club calls up the top players in their farm system and sorts the best ones from the lot, returning those players which need experience and those who have had too much.

It's the right of the big league club to bring up players from their farm teams--after all, that's why they have them, it's the key to success in baseball as horse trader Branch Rickey has proven in St. Louis, Brooklyn, and is attempting in Pittsburgh.

San Diego, Oakland, and Seattle were recently associated with the Indians, Giants, and White Sox, respectively, but have now become independent.

San Diego definitely proved the point last year that a coast league team can win on its own. While Hollywood was loaded with players from Pittsburgh, the Padres had only one regular on their team who was on option from a major league club, Outfielder Harry Elliott from the St. Louis Cardinals.

This year the border city team will begin their title defense minus only one regular lost to the majors, the same Harry Elliott. Hollywood, on the other hand, was forced into a “youth movement” as the lowly Pirates picked off the better veterans.

Losing only one regular off of a PCL championship team to the big leagues is a real oddity. Seattle, for example, lost nine players and their manager to the majors when they won the flag in 1951. Skipper Rogers Hornsby went to the St. Louis Browns to take over as field general and took Outfielder Jim Rivera, a PCL product, and First baseman Gordon Goldsberry along with him. The Chicago White Sox, who were then connected with the Suds, took Third baseman Pete “Rocky” Krsnich, Pitchers Marv Grissom and Hector “Skinny” Brown, and Outfielder Ed McGhee. The Boston Braves stepped in to take Pitcher Bob Hall and Cleveland drafted Catcher Joe Montalvo.

The loss of Manager Hornsby to the majors wasn’t unusual. Casey Stengel, Paul Richards, Bucky Harris, Charley Dressen, Stan Hack and Fred Haney are present day big league managers which have been plucked from the coast league after successful seasons. Dressen, who managed at Oakland, was the only manager lost to the majors, following the 1954 season, although Stan Hack, long time Chicago favorite, was called up by the Cubs from Los Angeles during spring training of the ‘54 season.

The aforementioned case of Seattle losing top flight players after a winning year isn’t unusual. The season before, 1950, Oakland captured the PCL flag and lost seven players from their team. Bob Hofman, Artie Wilson, Ray Weatherly, Ray Noble, George Bamberger, and Allen Gettle were all taken by the Giants, then affiliated with the Oaks, and George Metkovich went to Pittsburgh.

That same year thirty players were brought up from the PCL, and eight are still in the National or American League: Hofman (Oakland) with the New York Giants; Frankie Baumholtz (Los Angeles) with the Chicago Cubs; Steve Souchouck (Sacramento) and George Zuvernik (San Diego) with the Detroit Tigers; Harry Simpson (San Diego) with the Kansas City A’s, and Jim Busby (Sacramento) with the Chicago White Sox.

Now that the Pacific Coast League has adopted the open classification standing and right for any player to sign the no-draft clause, stopping any major league team from drafting him, it has come a step further in keeping its own talent. The open classification rank also raises the draft price from \$10,000 to \$15,000.

It’s no secret that the west coast is, and has been for quite a few years, the greatest major league baseball player producing section in the country. California is represented by far more players in the big leagues than any other state. Gil McDougald, Jackie Jensen, Del Crandall, Ray Boone,

Andy Carey, Duke Snider, Mike Garcia, and Bob Lemon are just a very few of California's home grown products.

If the PCL could advance into such a position that they would be appealing to their own young baseball talent they could become the greatest league in baseball.

In an attempt to attract and keep their talent the coast league is striving to better their standing and this year marks the kick-off in all-out drive. Almost every club in the league made several deals during the winter months and has improved its personnel. Many of the parks have also undergone a "face lifting" to become more appealing to the fan.

Certainly every major league ball player who lives on the west coast during the off-season months would be willing to play ball on the coast if the PCL club could match salaries with the majors.

One advantage the coast league enjoyed this year was the absence of big league clubs training in California, and stealing the spotlight.

In previous years, with American and National League ball clubs in California, baseball interest slacked off when the major league team pulled up stakes and headed east.

However, no big league club trained in California this year and only two major league teams, the Cleveland Indians and New York Giants, visited the state for exhibition games, playing two in Los Angeles and three in San Francisco.

So, after a successful spring training period and with good interest in early season play, it looks like the Pacific Coast League is on the rise--and they are giving warning to their two big brothers to move over.