

BASEBALL DURING WORLD WAR II



By Preston Phillips

RESEARCH QUESTION:

- What effect did WWII have on baseball?
- How did baseball effect WWII?
 - Baseball stars sent overseas
 - Military baseball overseas
 - Prisoner of War baseball

GREEN LIGHT LETTER

- Baseball was in “golden years” , attendance and popularity at an all-time high
- WWII threatened to destroy baseball in America
- President Roosevelt wrote a letter to the baseball commissioner
- The American morale needed baseball

BASEBALL STARS TURNED SOLDIERS

- 500 Major League players including:
- Minor Leagues went from 40 leagues to 12
- I gained the utmost respect for the “greatest generation”

MILITARY BASEBALL



MILITARY BASEBALL

- Over 100 official military games and countless pick-up games
- Morale booster
- Kept soldiers out of trouble
- Training

POW BASEBALL

- 130,000 soldiers and 19,000 civilians held prisoner during WWII
- Baseball prevented learned helplessness, gave hope
- YMCA and Red Cross collected and distributed commercial-quality gear to prisoners
- Softball-style game
- Make-shift fields
- Stalag Luft I
- Stalag Luft III- Pinnacle of POW Baseball

UNDERCOVER BASEBALL

- MIS-X division provided escape and evade equipment disguised as baseball equipment
 - Baseball cards with maps
 - Baseballs with radios
 - Buttons with compasses
- Baseball was diversion for digging
- Provided a different form of hope

CONCLUSION

- Germans targeted baseball diamonds with bombs
- Japanese mocked the heroes of baseball
- Private John E. Stevens: “Baseball is a part of the American way of life. Remove it and you remove something from the lives of American citizens, soldiers, and sailors
- Just as Superman embodies the sacrifice, strength and hope that Americans value, baseball did the same during the 1940’ s