BASEBALLESE

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> **MOUND** n.5. Baseball. The slightly elevated ground
> on which the pitcher stands when pitching. Cant.

At first glance, this entry, in Webster's Second New International Dictionary, looks as if the editors miraculously foresaw Chinese excellence in baseball -- but this Cant. does not mean Cantonese (although the abbreviation list at the front of the dictionary indicates that it does). It means cant, unabbreviated. Following the entry for the word cant is an exposition meant to clarify the differences between cant, slang, jargon, argot, colloquialism, and others of the same species. Cant is explained as a phraseology of a class, usually a term of depreciation or contempt. Why **MOUND**, then? In a search of baseball terms in Webster's Second, the qualifier cant follows **MOUND, ROUNDHOUSE CURVE** and **TEXAS LEAGUER**; however, the designation Baseball cant attaches to P1NCH HITTER.

Colloquialism, namely an informal non-derogatory term, is found in the definitions for **HOMER** and **SHORT** (short for **SHORTSTOP**). I note that slang, referring to popular but "unauthorized" words in vogue, is a popular modifier: it follows **BUSH LEAGUE, BUSH LEA-GUER, CLOUT, FAN, HURL, HURLER, PILL, SACK, SINKER, SLUGGER, SPITTER, STICK, UMP, WHIFF** and **YANNIGAN. FAN** is a special slang word in Webster's Second, since it has two separate baseball meanings: to strike out, a devotee. Most of the remainder of baseball words, from **FUNGO** to **FLOATER**, and from **INSHOOT** and **OUTSHOOT** to **UPSHOOT**, are just labelled baseball, and not further modified.

These examples have not helped my understanding of the fine distinctions between "ordinary" words and those which are cant, slang and colloquialisms. Editors of Webster's Third Edition appear also not to understand, as they designate all these words simply with the modifier baseball.

Why these dictionaries include **TEXAS LEAGUER** and not **BALTIMORE CHOP** leads to a fresh set of puzzling questions that are best not belabored here. Play ball!