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## The Origins of Baseball

For the past three centuries, researchers have been looking for the origins of baseball with little success. The mystery behind the creation of baseball is still unknown today, but historians have found clues tracing back centuries ago. Baseball is said to have stemmed from “a number of early folk games in the British Isles ” along with other bat and ball games, mainly cricket and rounders. These early games were like cricket, where a batter defends a target with a bat while trying to score points.

An English writer in 1801 named Joseph Strutt claimed that Baseball had stemmed from a game in the 11th century called stoolball. Stoolball was a combination of modern cricket and baseball, where a ball is thrown and the batter must hit the ball to score points all while protecting a stool. In the early 18th century, “a game called base-ball had developed in England ”, although it is uncertain whether it is comparable to modern baseball. During this time, however, forms of modern baseball have been becoming popular. In 1845, a man named Alexander Cartwright published the first written rules of baseball for his “baseball club called the Knickerbockers ” in Manhattan, New York. The 20 rules made by Cartwright were known as the “Knickerbocker Rules ”, which were revised throughout the years.

As baseball continued to grow, there was a debate on whether baseball had originated from the “English game of rounders” or by an American. In 1905, Henry Chadwick from Britain and Albert Spalding had a dispute and decided to make a panel with Abraham G. Mills as the head of it. Mills, a former National League president, concluded that an already deceased man that he once knew named Abner Doubleday invented baseball in Cooperstown, New York (1839). This conclusion was made “almost exclusively on the testimony of 71-year-old Abner Grave”, who claimed to have seen Doubleday drawing a baseball field on dirt. Abner Doubleday was a general for the Union Army during the civil war and had almost nothing to do with baseball at all. However, the “Mills Commission” had over exaggerated Graves’ encounter with Doubleday, leading many people to believe that Abner Doubleday was the inventor of baseball.

Although many historians today have debunked this myth, Doubleday had been honored for many years, even building the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown. Although the origins of baseball remain a mystery to this day, baseball historians such as David Block believe that baseball was an “evolutionary game that emerged without a single father.” As was stated before, Cartwright of the Knickerbockers laid the foundations of modern baseball in 1845. In 1857, a New York organization called the National Association of Baseball Players or the NABBP used Cartwright’s rules and spread them. The Civil War also greatly spread Baseball by uniting troops from all over the country. The NABBP quickly became a competitive sport and

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in 1869, the first all-professional team, The Cincinnati Red Stockings, was created. They continued to be unstoppable, which created conflict between amateur teams and upcoming professional teams. This resulted in the National Association of Professional Baseball Players (NA). However, without a structural leadership, the NA fell short and were replaced by the National League (NL) funded and governed by businessmen such as William Hulbert. The NL had only six of the major professional teams at the time, and the enforcement of punishment to players who cannot follow the rules made it the most prominent and largest baseball league at the time. Many other leagues sprung up to existence but failed to enter the major status of the NL.

In 1894 the Cincinnati Reds helped fund a minor league known as the Western League. The Western League renamed itself to the American League (AL) and in 1901, they declared itself a major league that rivaled the NL. The two leagues accepted each other and together held the first world series. Although they remained separate organizations, they remained respectful of each other and played World Series and All-Star games together. The two leagues continued to expand and gain more teams and in 1969, the League Championship Series was added in-between the Division Series and World Series to combat the addition of extra teams.

In 1973, the American League added a new rule called the designated hitter rule, which allowed a 10th player to bat for the pitchers. This sparked a lot of controversies, as supporters argue that this allowed pitchers to not worry about batting while others argued that this broke away from the traditions of the game and removed player versatility. The National League had not adopted the rule and only allowed it in the hometown games when facing American League teams.

In 1997, interleague games between the two Major League teams were put into play during the regular season and are still played today. This also sparked a lot of controversies since many people saw the All-Star games and World Series as a special time people get to see American League teams and National League teams play together. Although baseball was very successful in the U.S, it was played internationally by many countries around the world. One of the most notorious countries to play baseball is Cuba, where they dominate internationally to this day. Cuba had the earliest baseball league in Latin America and baseball was "... a part of Cuban national identity." Although professional baseball had been abolished in 1959 in Cuba, amateur leagues were still strong, allowing them to dominate the baseball World Cup, winning 25 times. Other international leagues in countries such as South Korea, Venezuela, and Colombia all showed the widespread interest of baseball globally and the competition it brings.

The origins of baseball and the true inventor is yet to be found out, as researchers continue to look for clues. In the last three centuries, baseball has blown up into an internationally played sport that continues to evolve from what it once was. It remains one of America's' favorite past

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time and a way to personally benefit by getting active and having fun.

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