



LEIGH TAYLOR PHOTO

Great American Ball Park is the home stadium of the Cincinnati Reds. The team is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year.

Celebrate 150 years of baseball

Expanded Reds Hall of Fame and Museum and tours honor the national pastime's long, sometimes scandalous history in Cincinnati

BY KATHERINE RODEGHIER
Chicago Tribune

CINCINNATI — When the Cubs play the Reds at Great American Ball Park the last weekend in June, they will face a club commemorating a history longer than their own. The longest, in fact.

Cincinnati lays claim to the first all-pro baseball team, founded in 1869, and tells the story of its 150 years in a newly expanded museum and in tours of its ballpark next door.

In downtown Cincinnati, a walking tour marks another anniversary — a scandal with Chicago ties. After losing the 1919 World Series to the Reds, the White Sox became known as the Black Sox when eight players were banished from baseball for cheating. The plot hatched right here along the Ohio River.

Reds museum triples artifacts

For the record, Major League Baseball assigns the Cincinnati Reds an official 1882 birth date, the year the team became a charter member of what was known as the American Association. No matter. The Reds proudly stick to their story as the first baseball club to pay its team a salary. In 1869, the payroll for the 10 Red Stockings was about \$10,000 total, and the team remained undefeated in that first season playing amateur clubs. Fans paid a quarter to see a game.

That and other Reds lore unfold in the Reds Hall of Fame and Museum, reopened in March with more than 7,000 artifacts, roughly triple the number in its former facility. Reds baseball trivia sprawls across nine galleries with 100 display cases. Watch highlight videos and sit at a broadcast desk to deliver a play-by-play. Check out a baseball card archive, an exhibit devoted to the Negro Leagues, a 360-degree interactive theater in the Hall of Fame gallery and trophies from the Reds' five World Series wins. Find a three-story wall lined with baseballs, one for each of Pete Rose's 4,256 hits.

Displays pay homage to "The Big Red Machine" of the 1970s, when star players Rose and future Hall of Famers Johnny Bench, Tony Perez and Joe Morgan dominated sports pages.

Kids stand in awe before life-size figures of their baseball heroes and learn about Reds "firsts" in an interactive display:



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Star players for the Cincinnati Reds are depicted in statues on Crosley Terrace at Great American Ball Park.

first team to hold a night game, first to use synthetic grass, first in a televised broadcast, first team to fly in a plane (to Chicago).

The hall of fame and museum is just off the entrance to Great American Ball Park, built in 2003 to replace Riverfront Stadium, aka Cinergy Field, next door. Hall of Fame ambassadors lead tours of the ballpark, spicing their commentary with baseball trivia. At a mural depicting past Reds teams, guide Mark Harlow said the name of the 1869 team, Red Stockings, probably was shortened to Reds in newspaper headlines and stuck. In the 1950s, though, the team changed its name to the Redlegs for a few years to avoid association with communism.

Ballpark tours begin at the Kroger Fan Zone, a plaza and fan gathering spot on game days. Inside the seating bowl, Harlow points above the outfield where a replica steamboat shoots fireworks from its smokestacks when the Reds hit a home run. Though it seats 42,271, the dimensions of the ballpark rank among the smallest in the major leagues, so home runs happen more often here, Harlow said.

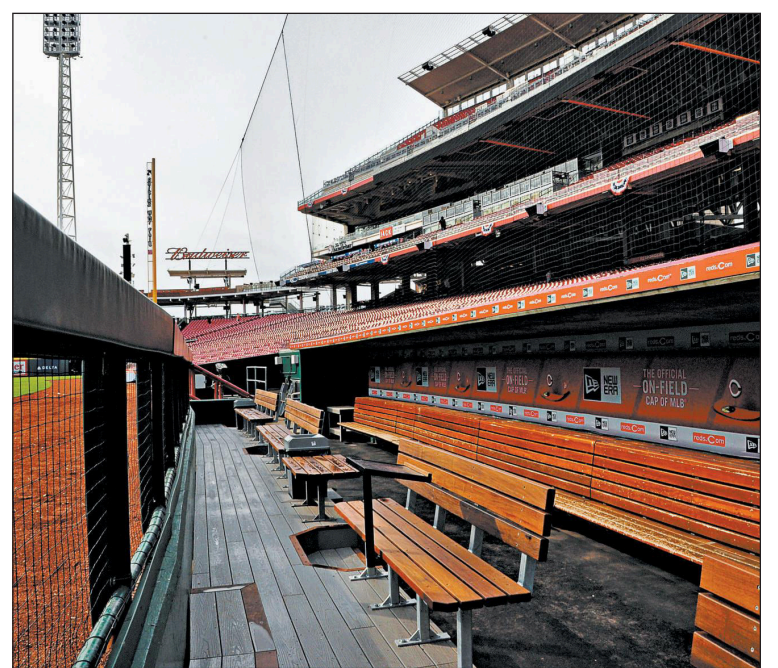
Tours enter the private Lexus Diamond Club before heading out to the warning track behind home plate. Visitors are strictly forbidden from walking on the grass. This year, white lettering stands out on the green to commemorate the Reds' 150th anniversary.

Sitting in the Reds dugout often marks a high point of the



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The Reds Hall of Fame and Museum displays more than 7,000 artifacts covering the team's 150-year history.



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The home dugout used by Cincinnati Reds players can be accessed during some tours of Great American Ball Park.

tour, said Harlow, as does a walk through the press box with its sweeping view of the field.

Harlow pointed to Crosley Terrace at the ballpark's entrance, where sculptures depict famous Reds players in action. There's "Big Klu" Ted Kluszewski, who cut off the sleeves of his uniform to make room for his massive biceps. National League officials thought Klu's DIY job looked unprofessional, which prompted the Reds to adopt a sleeveless vest in 1956. Joe Nuxhall is there, too. On loan to the Reds from his high school team, the 15-year-old Nuxhall became the youngest player in the major leagues. After leaving the Reds, he launched a second career as a baseball broadcaster, a job he held for 40 seasons. A statue of Rose sliding into base takes pride of place at the front of the terrace.

About those Black Sox

Rose might not have been banned from baseball if it hadn't been for the Chicago White Sox, who were accused of throwing the 1919 World Series against the Reds, said Dean Morgan, our guide on a walking tour of downtown Cincinnati. Banning those eight players, derided as the Black Sox, had repercussions for Rose in 1989, he said.

It's one man's opinion, but Morgan makes his case while leading a tour titled 1919 The Year That Changed Baseball. The tour delves into Cincinnati's role in

shaping baseball and into the century-old sports scandal.

Morgan stops inside Carew Tower, an art deco jewel that housed the office of baseball's second commissioner, the ebullient Happy Chandler. A former Kentucky governor and U.S. senator, Chandler often pointed from the window to his home state across the Ohio River proclaiming, "Yonder, my friend lies the Promised Land."

Chandler helped make baseball history when he approved the contract for Jackie Robinson, the first black player in Major League Baseball. MLB was formed in Cincinnati in 1903 where the St. Nicholas Hotel once stood, said Morgan as he walked us to the spot on Fourth Street. Here the charismatic Reds owner August "Garry" Herrmann persuaded the American and National leagues to put aside differences and merge. MLB was born and with it the first World Series played later that year.

But it's the 1919 World Series that still has baseball fans talking.

The night before Game 1 in Cincinnati, Morgan said sportswriter Hugh Fullerton crossed the river to Newport, Ky., for dinner and overheard a gangster saying Sox players took bribes to lose the game. Lose they did, 9-1. Fullerton told White Sox owner Charles Comiskey, Morgan said while walking the tour group to the site of the former Sinton Hotel. Around 3 a.m., Comiskey and National League President John Heydler went to the Sinton

to wake American League President Byron Bancroft "Ban" Johnson and report the fix. Johnson brushed it off as sour grapes, saying, "That is the yelp of a beaten cur."

But stories of illegal gambling persisted. At one point, former boxing champ Abe Attell, a bagman for New York City racketeer Arnold Rothstein, waved \$1,000 bills in the Sinton's lobby while soliciting bets on the Reds.

After the Sox lost the series, a grand jury convened in Chicago. Eight players were indicted but acquitted. Even so, baseball's new commissioner, Chicago judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis, banned all eight from baseball for life. Seventy years after that 1919 series, Rose, then manager of the Reds, received the same punishment for betting on baseball. Fair or not, the Black Sox scandal "set a precedent," said Morgan, and probably has kept the Reds superstar out of the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

Some baseball historians claim the name "Black Sox" predates 1919. White Sox players fought Comiskey's miserly ways, such as insisting players launder their own uniforms. They refused and with each game the white uniforms became dirtier until Comiskey finally had them cleaned. He deducted the laundry bill from the players' salaries.

That must have had them seeing Red.

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