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Eight White Sox Are Indicted

Cicotte and Jackson Confess Gamblers Paid Them \$15,000

By New York Tribune
1920

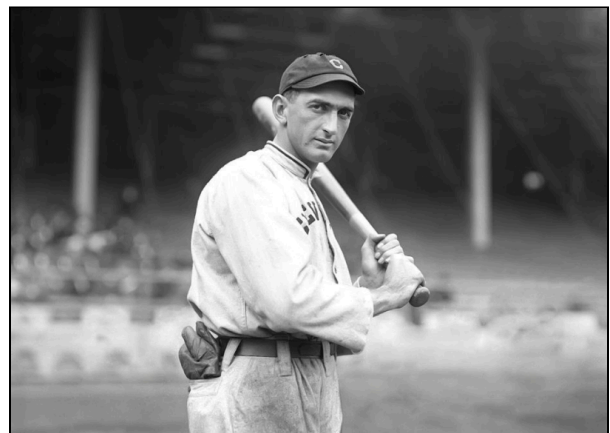
In 1920, a grand jury convened to investigate eight Chicago White Sox baseball players accused of intentionally losing the 1919 World Series against the Cincinnati Reds in exchange for money from gamblers. It was known as "The Black Box Scandal." This story from the New York Tribune reports the Grand Jury's indictments of those players. In a 1921 trial, a jury returned verdicts of not guilty for all players on all charges. However, the players involved were banned from playing baseball for life. As you read, take notes on how the players describe their motivation for taking part in this scandal, and if they feel their actions were justified.

Eight White Sox Are Indicted; Cicotte and Jackson Confess Gamblers Paid Them \$15,000

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***Players Promised \$100,000, Got
\$25,000; Gandil Called Plot Framer;
Accused Men Suspended***

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*"Shoeless" Joe Jackson by Charles M Conlon is
in the public domain.*

Charged Williams Received \$10,000

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Pitcher Weeps as He Tells Grand Jurors How He Lost 1st and 4th Games

- [1] CHICAGO, Sept. 28 (By The Associated Press). — Indictments¹ were voted against eight baseball stars to-day, confessions were obtained from two of them, and Charles A. Comiskey, owner of

1. **Indictment** (*noun*) a formal charge or accusation of a serious crime

the oft-time champion Chicago White Sox, smashed his pennant² chasing machine to clean up baseball. The confessions told how the Sox threw last year's world championship to Cincinnati for money paid by gamblers.

Seven Sox regulars and one former player comprise the players against whom true bills³ were voted by the Cook County grand jury,⁴ and the seven were immediately suspended by Mr. Comiskey. With his team only one game behind the league-leading Cleveland Indians, the White Sox owner served notice on his seven stars that if they were found guilty he would drive them out of organized baseball for the rest of their lives.

Officials of Chief Justice Charles McDonald's court, desirous of giving the national game the benefit of publicity in its purging, lifted the curtain on the grand jury proceedings sufficiently to show a great hitter, Joe Jackson, declaring that he deliberately just tapped the ball; a picture of one of the world's most famous pitchers, Cicotte, in tears, and glimpses of alleged bribes of \$5,000 or \$10,000 discovered under pillows or on beds by famous athletes about to retire.

McGraw Waits to Testify

Around the courtroom at one time or another were some of baseball's greatest leaders, among them John J. McGraw, manager of the New York Giants, awaiting a call to testify tomorrow, and John Heydler, president of the National League, who went before the grand jurors this afternoon.

[5] The exact nature of the information Mr. Comiskey put before the grand jury was not disclosed.⁵ The men whom the jury involved as a result of testimony⁶ uncovered by their owner were:

- Eddie Cicotte, star pitcher, who waived immunity and confessed, according to court attachés, that he took a \$10,000 bribe.
- Arnold Gandil, former first baseman.

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2. The "pennant-winner" is a term used in baseball to describe the teams that earned a chance to play in the World Series. The White Sox won the American League pennant in both 1917 and 1919 with a similar cast of players.
 3. A true bill is a written decision by a grand jury that says it has heard enough evidence to believe the accused person probably committed a crime and should be indicted.
 4. A grand jury is a group, usually of around twenty-three jurors, chosen to determine whether the accusations against a person are valid enough to go to trial.
 5. **Disclose (verb)** make (secret or new information) known
 6. **Testimony (noun)** a formal written or spoken statement, especially one given in a court of law

- “Shoeless Joe” Jackson, heavy hitting left fielder.
- Oscar “Hap” Felsch, center fielder.
- Charles “Swede” Risberg, shortstop.
- Claude Williams, pitcher.
- George “Buck” Weaver, third baseman.
- Fred McMullin, utility player.

While the grand jurors voted their true bills, Comiskey, seated in the midst of his crumbling empire out at White Sox Park, issued the telegram suspending those involved, paid off Weaver, Cicotte and Jackson on the spot and announced that checks for pay due the others would be sent them at once. With his voice trembling, Mr. Comiskey, who has owned the White Sox since the inception⁷ of the American League,⁸ said this was the first time scandal had ever touched his “family” and that it distressed him too much to talk about it.

“We will play out the schedule if we have to get Chinamen⁹ to replace the suspended player,” Harry Grabner, secretary of the White Sox, announced this afternoon.

Cicotte Weeps for His Children

The rush of players to explain their parts in the affair started to-day, when Cicotte appeared at the Criminal Court Building and asked permission to testify. Cicotte wept, court attachés¹⁰ said, and expressed his sorrow for his two small children as he told how he did his utmost to lose rather than win the 1919 World Series after he had found \$10,000 beneath his pillow where it had been placed by professional gamblers.

He said he lobbed the ball to the plate so slowly “you could read the trade mark on it” in the first game at Cincinnati, when he was taken out of the box after three and two-thirds innings had been played.

[10] “This is just the beginning,” Assistant State’s Attorney Replogle said to-night. “We will have more

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7. **Inception (noun)** the establishment or starting point of an institution or activity
 8. The American League was founded in 1901 and Charles Comiskey owned the White Sox from 1900 until his death in 1931.
 9. This word, used to refer to players of Chinese descent, was common language in this era, but would now be considered racially offensive.
 10. A court attaché is a person who is on the staff of the courthouse.

indictments within a few days and before we get through we will have purged¹¹ organized baseball of everything that is crooked and dishonest.

"We are going after the gamblers now. There will be indictments within a few days against men in Philadelphia, Indianapolis, St. Louis, Des Moines, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati and other cities. More baseball players also will be indicted. We've got the goods on these men and we are going the limit."

The details of Cicotte's confession follow closely the story told in Philadelphia last night by Billy Maharg, former prizefighter, it was said.

Gandil Named as Plot Originator

The first to confess was Cicotte. He charged that First Baseman Gandil was the originator of the plot and induced¹² the gambler to back the scheme and then corrupted his fellow players. The gamblers agreed to pay the crooked players \$100,000. Cicotte believes they gave this amount to Gandil. Somewhere in the deal, however, \$75,000 was lost. Cicotte said he believed Gandil or else Abe Attell, who acted for the gamblers, held out the money.

There was only \$25,000 passed around, according to Cicotte. He said he received \$10,000; Williams received \$10,000 and Jackson received \$5,000. Jackson, who took the stand after Cicotte, admitted that he had received the amount attributed to him. It was then that the grand jury voted the indictments.

- [15] There will be two indictments returned against each of the men, it is said. One will charge them with the operation of a confidence game.¹³ The other will charge them with conspiracy with gamblers to obtain money through the operation of a confidence game.

Conviction of the first charge carries with it a penalty of from one to ten years' imprisonment. The penalty for conviction on the second charge is five years' imprisonment and a fine of \$2,000.

No arrests have been made yet. The indictments will be formally returned before the latter part of the week, it was announced at the state's attorney's office. Mean time the accused men will not even be under surveillance.¹⁴

11. **Purge (verb)** to remove; get rid of

12. **Induce (verb)** to succeed in persuading or influencing (someone) to do something

13. A "confidence game" is a scam in which the victim is persuaded to trust the swindler. In this case, fans were led to trust that the White Sox were playing to the best of their abilities, when in fact many members were actively trying to lose.

14. **Surveillance (noun)** the careful and continuous watching of a person or group

Cicotte Weeps on Stand

Cicotte's testimony was accompanied by tears. He was on the witness stand for nearly two hours. He cried, "I don't know why I did it. I must have been crazy."

Cicotte said that he found his bribe money under his pillow; that after the first game of the series he had gone to his hotel alone, and the money was half concealed¹⁵ beneath the pillow. "There was no note, he said, but he knew what it was for."

[20] "Before Gandil was a ball player he mixed in with gamblers and low characters in Arizona," said Cicotte. "That's where he got the hunch to fix the World Series. Abe Attell and three Pittsburgh gamblers agreed to back him. Gandil first fixed Williams and McMullin. Then he got me in on the deal, and we fixed the rest. It was easy to throw the game. Just a slight hesitation on a player's part will let a man get a base or a run.

"I did it by giving the Cincinnati batters easy balls and putting them right over the plate. A baby could have hit them."

"Then in one of the games – the second, I think — there was a man on first and the Reds' batter hit a slow grounder to me. I could have made a double play out of it without any trouble at all. But I was slow — slow enough to permit the batter to get to first and the man on first to get to second.

"It did not necessarily look crooked on my part. It is hard to tell when a game is or is not on the square. A player can make a crooked error that will look on the square as easy as he can make a square one. Sometimes the square ones look crooked."

Cicotte said he had been troubled with his conscience ever since the series.

[25] "I've lived a thousand years in the last twelve months," he said. "I would not have done that thing for a million dollars. I didn't need the money. My salary was \$10,000 a year and my job was sure. And now I've lost everything — job, reputation and friends. My friends all bet on the Sox. I knew it, but I couldn't tell them that the Sox would lose. I had to double-cross them. I'm through with baseball. I'm going to lose myself and start life over again."

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15. **Conceal** (*verb*) keep from sight; hide

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: What does the phrase "on the square" mean as it is used in paragraph 23?
 - A. honest; straightforward
 - B. played to the best of one's ability
 - C. geographically close; in proximity
 - D. boring; ineffective

2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "Before Gandil was a ball player he mixed in with gamblers and low characters in Arizona," (Paragraph 20)
 - B. "A baby could have hit them." (Paragraph 21)
 - C. "It did not necessarily look crooked on my part." (Paragraph 23)
 - D. "Sometimes the square ones look crooked." (Paragraph 23)

3. PART A: What is the author's main purpose in writing this article?
 - A. To argue that the White Sox players had been wrongfully accused of a crime they didn't commit.
 - B. To report the findings of the grand jury and illustrate the remorse felt by the White Sox players.
 - C. To illustrate that as long as gambling is legal, there will always be corruption in sports.
 - D. To show how Charles Comiskey was cleaning up baseball.

4. PART B: Which quote from the article best supports the answer in Part A?
 - A. "We will play out the schedule if we have to get Chinamen to replace the suspended player," (Paragraph 7)
 - B. "There was only \$25,000 passed around, according to Cicotte." (Paragraph 14)
 - C. "Then he got me in on the deal, and we fixed the rest. It was easy to throw the game." (Paragraph 20)
 - D. "I'm through with baseball. I'm going to lose myself and start life over again." (Paragraph 25)

5. How does the image of Charles Comiskey, "seated in the midst of his crumbling empire out at White Sox Park" in paragraph 6 contribute to the central idea of the article?

4. Can you think of other scandals in sports or politics that are similar to the White Sox story in any way? How have those been received by fans or supporters? What lasting impact did the scandal have on those involved? In these cases, what was the motivation?