

“Coming Home: Celebrating Bart Kaufman Field”

Dedication of Bart Kaufman Field

Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie

President, Indiana University

Kaufman Field

4:00 Reception

5:00 Ceremony

6:00 Game: IU vs. Michigan

1. FROM CRUDE BEGINNINGS

The history of Indiana University baseball goes back to the years following the Civil War. Union Army veterans, who had played the game recreationally during the war, came to IU as students, bringing with them an enthusiasm for what was then a relatively new sport.

Malcolm A. McDonald, who was the captain of IU’s first baseball team and the university’s first “I-Man,” came to Bloomington from Williamsport, Indiana in 1866.¹

Historian Thomas Clark writes that when McDonald arrived here, everything pertaining to the sport was crude.

“There were no regulation bats, no gloves, no masks, and no pads or shields of any kind (were) used. ...Home base was a piece of flat iron thrown on the ground, and the bases were bags stuffed with straw. The batter took his stance over or near the plate in

¹ Indiana State Museum, details from a record of a hand-tinted photograph of McDonald, Accessed April 21, 2013, URL:
http://www.indianamuseum.org/museumcollections/detail.php?t=objects&type=browse&f=place_made&s=Indiana%2C+Bloomington&record=1

any position he chose and without admonition from the referee. Bats of varying sizes and shapes were supplied by the individual players.”²

Clark goes on to note that the following year, 1867, “interest in the game had increased and a team was organized under rules and players were assigned specific positions. A lad named McIntyre was the barehanded catcher, and Homer Bothwell was the ‘clean clothes’ dandy. This was the beginning of organized athletics at Indiana University.”³

Today, as we celebrate this magnificent new facility for IU baseball, we celebrate the rich history of a program that has come very far from those very humble beginnings.

2. SPECIAL THANKS

On behalf of the entire university, I extend our deepest gratitude to Bart Kaufman for his generosity toward the development of this splendid new facility.

His generosity has already had a transformative impact on this campus and it will continue to have an impact on IU’s student-athletes for many years to come. This impressive new field further strengthens our thriving and increasingly successful baseball program, it gives our student-athletes the resources they need to compete at the very highest level, and it greatly enhances the experience at the ballpark for IU fans, as I know personally from having come to the first game. It is truly spectacular.

Every project like this requires a great team that collaborates on the many details that ultimately come together. Would you please join me in thanking IU Vice President and Athletics Director Fred Glass for his leadership on this project? Fred has worked closely with Vice President Tom Morrison as well as the IU Architect’s Office and members of the baseball coaching staff to refine the vision for this project as it has neared

² Thomas D. Clark, *Indiana University: Midwestern Pioneer, Volume I, The Early Years*, (Indiana University Press, 1970) 117.

³ *Ibid.*, 117-118.

completion. Let me extend my thanks to all of you for your efforts to make this vision a reality.

And, finally, let me extend my congratulations and thanks to head coach Tracy Smith and his staff and his superb team. The team is nationally ranked for the first time in school history and they have an 11-2 record on this new field. We look forward to continued success in the new stadium.

3. "COMING HOME"

Bart Kaufman Field certainly represents the future for IU's outstanding baseball program, but it is also a reminder of the many players and coaches whose contributions made the program what it is today.

It reminds us of players like M.A. McDonald and Homer Bothwell, both of whom were pioneers in the sport.

It brings to mind hundreds of other players who went on to success in professional baseball and in many other fields. Those ranks include IU president William Lowe Bryan; U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sherman Minton; Indiana Governor Paul McNutt; and many others.

And it reminds us of the leadership of coaches like Everett Dean, Paul Harrell, Ernie Andres, Larry Smith, and Bob Morgan, who helped build the program.⁴

In the companion book to their acclaimed PBS documentary on baseball, Ken Burns and Geoffrey Ward write that baseball, "most of all, ... is about time and timelessness, speed and grace, failure and loss, imperishable hope—and coming home."

⁴ Pete DiPrimio, *Hoosier Hitmen: Indiana University Baseball*, (Arcadia Publishing, 2003)

In Bart Kaufman Field, the IU baseball program and its supporters now have a home worthy of its rich history and one that represents the promise of a bright future.