
Girly Baseball In The Professional Sport

On December 7th, 1941, Pearl Harbor was attacked by Japan, and many lives were lost that day. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the U.S joined the war, and men throughout the United States joined the military. As a result, many jobs were left open back home. With all these job openings, women were able to take over and perform jobs that they were never able to do before. One of these jobs was professional baseball.

When there weren't enough men to play ball in the United States, President Franklin Roosevelt turned over to the women to keep on playing in order to entertain the US citizens. After hearing that President Roosevelt wanted baseball to keep going, Phillip Wrigley, the owner of the Chicago Cubs, created America's first women's baseball league in 1943 called the "All-American Girls Professional Baseball League". More than 200 players were recruited from the women's softball league to try out for the baseball league. In the beginning, only 4 teams existed with a total of 60 players. Also, the league first started out with softball rules, but switched to baseball rules later on.

As with anything, however, there was a dark side to the women's baseball league. First off, even if you were good at baseball, if you were not "feminine" enough, you probably couldn't join the league. Those women who joined the league had to take classes on how to behave and dress, and they also had to learn personal hygiene, not for themselves but for the watchers. Also, women didn't wear traditional baseball uniforms. Instead, they wore an one-piece dress that had a skirt that was way too short to play baseball. On the bright side, women players' salary was above average. They were paid anywhere from \$45 to \$85 per week; and their salary increased to about \$125 per week eventually.

The league first started with 4 teams that were all Chicago based. The teams were Kenosha Comets, Racine Belles, Rockford Peaches, and South Blend Blue Soxs. All of these teams had 15 players, a coach, a business manager, and a chaperone. When the softball league noticed that more and more players were leaving to join the AAGPBL, they decided to form their own all women baseball league. The league was started by Emery Parichy, Charles Bidwill, and Ed Kolski, and they called their new league the National Women's baseball league. It consisted of 6 teams: the Milwaukee Chicks, Minneapolis Millerettes, Fort Wayne Daises, Grand Rapids Chicks, Peoria Redwings, Muskegon Lassies, Chicago Colleens, Springfield Sallies, and the Kalamazoo Lassies. The two leagues were rivals, and many players appeared in both leagues.

During the 12 years of the league there were many outstanding players such as Jean Fraud, Doris Sams, Dorothy Kamenshek, and Dorothy Schroeder. Jean Fraud joined the league in 1946 and played pitcher for the Blue Soxs. She is considered the best player in the league because her lifetime ERA was 1.23, had 2 perfect games, and was a 4- time All-Star team player. Doris Sams played outfielder and pitcher and also joined the league in 1946. She was 5'9 and was an all around athlete; she was also the only player to play both outfielder and pitcher for the All-Star team. Dorothy Kamenshek is considered one of the best athletes during her time. She joined the Rockford Peaches in 1943 as an outfielder but also played first base. Dorothy Kamenshek was a 7-time All Star, the leagues top batter, and only struck out 81 times out of 3,736 at-bat appearances. Dorothy Schroeder was the youngest player at 15 and played

shortstop. She was a top 10 player for multiple offensive categories, and she was also a 3 time All star player.

When the league first started there were about 176,000 fans, and about 450,000 people were following the league toward the end of the war, peaking at 910,000 fans in 1948. When the men came back home after the war, they all wanted their jobs back, which caused many women to lose their jobs. The league continued on even after the war ended, but it only lasted until 1954. The women's baseball league ended because their games were not televised while the men's major league baseball was on. Also, the women's baseball league was not being promoted which resulted in loss of attention from people.

The AAGPBL still might have existed today if the games were televised or if the league was promoted more actively. It is also possible that the AAGPBL was left out on purpose. When the men came back from the war, they wanted their old jobs back, including the professional baseball players. Therefore, there was a competition between men and women's baseball leagues, which most people probably didn't approve since during this time women still didn't have their equal rights. As stated before, the women baseball players were treated unfairly while playing too. For example, they were forced to learn how to look and act while practicing baseball, and they were punished if they did not wear lipstick while playing. Women's sports are still not promoted as much as men's sports, and they are not televised enough today. Hopefully, in the near future, female athletes will get more attention and be in the spotlight like the male athletes.