

Ruth Suspended, Fined by Landis (1921)

SOURCE: *The Sporting News*, December 15, 1921

In the early twentieth century baseball players often supplemented their meager salaries by forming their own teams and touring, or "barnstorming," the country during the off-season. Top stars could earn several times their annual salary in just a few months. However, due to a rule intended to preserve the integrity of the World Series (now an important consideration), players who appeared in the Series were prohibited from touring. This did not prevent Babe Ruth and several of his Yankee teammates from starting their own tour following their loss to the Giants in the 1921 Series. Ruth publicly declared that the rule was unfair and that he could not be prevented from barnstorming.

Commissioner Landis thought otherwise. He allowed the tour to proceed, and watched it end prematurely due to poor attendance. After receiving Ruth's response to a questionnaire on the tour, Landis acted on December 5. He fined Ruth, Bob Meusel, and Bill Piercy the amount of their World Series winnings, and suspended them for the first month of the 1922 season. Landis demonstrated that he, not Babe Ruth, was the most powerful figure in baseball.

NEW YORK, N.Y., Dec. 12.—The big magnates are drifting into town for the annual meetings of the National and American Leagues, their separate sessions of Tuesday and Wednesday, to be followed by the joint session presided over by Commissioner Landis on Thursday. The minor league moguls will be around, too, waiting to hear what may happen. Baseball fans, meanwhile, are not so much interested in the politics of the game as in the players, which is shown in the columns published regarding the punishment of Babe Ruth and the acquisition of Heinie Groh by the Giants.

Commissioner Landis surely has thrown a monkey wrench into the machinery of the American League. In fining Ruth, Meusel and Piercy of the Yankees their World's Series spoils, and suspending them until May 20, 1922, when they must apply for reinstatement within 10 days thereafter, the Commissioner possibly has wrecked the pennant chances of the New York Americans, and also has deprived the whole American League circuit of a huge sum in gate receipts.

Yet what other course could the eminent Chicago jurist have pursued? Ruth grossly insulted Commissioner Landis in the Yankees' dressing room when told that he could not be granted permission to go barnstorming. Ruth openly violated the rules and then refused to send an apology to the Commissioner. He ignored the wishes of his employers and deliberately jeopardized their interests and welfare.

If Commissioner Landis had fined Ruth \$10,000 with no suspension, would the player have been forced to pay the money out of his own pocket? Probably not, for he would have refused to sign a contract unless the Yankee owners made good the full amount. But in suspending Ruth for 35 or 40 playing days next year, the Commissioner hit him hard, because the big fellow, under those conditions, will lose a \$20,000 bonus for failing to break his home run record.

NO OTHER WAY TO MAKE HIM SMART

So in order to make Ruth realize that he isn't bigger than the national game, the Commissioner has been compelled to inflict a penalty that must necessarily limit the owners of the Yankees, in addition to the Home Run King who struck out eight times in the World's Series.

Deprived of Ruth and Meusel, the Yankees are tremendously handicapped in their battle with the world champion Giants for the patronage of the public. Right now the wise men are counting the Yankees out of next year's American League race, explaining that so much ground will be lost by the Hugmen before Ruth and Meusel are reinstated that the Cleveland Indians, St. Louis Browns and Washingtons cannot be overtaken.

If the Yankees, minus their star hitters, drop among the also rans during the first month of the 1922 campaign, Huggins will be confronted with a tremendous undertaking, to make up for early defeats. Goodness knows that the Yankees were lucky to win the pennant this year by a comparatively narrow margin. The Cleverlands were the better ball team, but accidents beat them out of the World's Series.

It is my impression that the entire American League is burning up over the Ruth-Meusel, Piercy case, but what can be done? The magnates, who didn't want Ban Johnson and Garry Herrmann, practical baseball men, to rule the game, selected Judge Landis, engaged him for seven years at \$42,500 year, and put their names to an iron-clad agreement in which they pledged themselves to accept all rulings, whether right or wrong in their opinion.

THEY MUST EAT THEIR PUDDING

If the American League men, therefore, openly take issue with the Commissioner in the Ruth matter, they will stultify themselves in the estimation of the public and also will offend the chairman of the Advisory Council instead of appealing to the courts, as in the celebrated case of Carl Mays, the American League magnates, therefore, must accept the Landis edict just as it reads.