

## **“Challenging Everyone”**

### **The Capital City Base Ball Club of Madison, Wisconsin, 1865-1870**

A blurb in the *Wisconsin State Journal* of May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1869 noted that the Capitol City Base Ball Club was “challenging everyone” – that is, sending out letters to clubs all over the Northwest – indeed, the whole base ball-playing country, inviting them to play a match game. How successful was it? From year to year, the results varied, but in 1867 and 1868, at height of the post-Civil War baseball boom in Madison, the Capitol City Club kept itself almost as busy with match games as any amateur club in Wisconsin.

In the late 1860s, while the Cap Cities played a whole lot of games, they didn’t play very many close ones. Most of their matches, against local “picked nines” and clubs from nearby towns such as Oshkosh and Appleton, provided no challenge for the Capital Cities. On the other hand, Madison took on the best teams in the West, including the Rockford Forest Cities and the Chicago Excelsiors—and almost always lost by dozens of runs. When a high-class outfit strode through town, it was like New York Philharmonic turning up at a high school “battle of the bands.”

The unique position of the Capital City Club resulted from a variety of geographic and demographic factors and allows historians a fascinating window into the post-Civil War baseball world. Madison was a small town, even by the standards of 1860s America, but its population of University students, businessmen, and politicians from all over the state allowed the Base Ball Club to draw from a larger talent pool—and one with more leisure time—than was available to neighboring amateur nines. The Capital Cities could coax a few top organizations to play in Madison. But if they wanted to play more

than a handful of matches, they needed to take on vastly inferior teams, such as the one that represented tiny Milton College.

My presentation today will focus on the six years bracketed by the rise of the Capital City Club in 1864 and the 1871 formation of the National Association of Professional Base Ball Players. The story of early Madison baseball is largely unknown to historians; most studies of the period focus on major cities and the clubs that toured the country and competed for national championships. This study offers Madison baseball as a useful counterpoint that can help us understand the experience of the national game in the era before the first major league.

In 1865, baseball didn't appear in Madison out of the blue. Alexander Cartwright first formalized many of the new game's rules barely 20 years earlier, and it took time for enthusiastic Easterners to transplant the sport to the newly-settled Northwest, which wasn't nearly as far west as it is today. According to Brian Podoll in his recent book on the minor league Milwaukee Brewers, New Yorker Rufus King, a West Point graduate and newspaper editor, brought baseball to Milwaukee. His efforts led to the city's inaugural game on November 30<sup>th</sup>, 1859. He was probably responsible for the first organized games in Wisconsin, and he was almost certainly responsible for the baseball's first widespread publicity in the state. After all, as editor of the *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*, he rarely passed up a chance to cover a pet topic or use gratuitous capital letters and exclamations to get his point across.

The group of middle-aged men who made up the rosters for Milwaukee's first ballgame met up twice more before the end of the year, including once on December 20<sup>th</sup>,

only hours before a “furious snowstorm” struck the city. When the weather got better in March, Rufus King used his newspaper once again to promote the formation of the Milwaukee Base Ball Club, which was transacting official business by late April of 1860 and sniping at rivals from Janesville soon thereafter. However, the first prominent club in Wisconsin fell apart almost as quickly as it appeared: with political tensions rising and war on the horizon, baseball was virtually forgotten in Milwaukee by November of that year.

It took a group of high school students to organize the first baseball games in Madison. Calling themselves the “Scholars,” these youngsters began playing on a vacant lot just three blocks from the state capitol building in early April of 1860. Every Friday afternoon, they took on whoever turned up, usually some mix of older men, often including some of the shopkeepers whose establishments lined the capitol square. Without an ardent fanatic at the helm of the *Wisconsin State Journal*, Madison’s daily, it’s a little more difficult to track the progress of the game in Madison than it is in Milwaukee.

We do know, however, that baseball was one of the more acceptable diversions for the thousands of soldiers trained at Camp Randall. The Camp was the main training site for soldiers in all of Wisconsin and the tremendous influx of people—mostly, of course, young men—created a considerable amount of social strain. While townsfolk wrote scathing letters to the editor about rowdy, drunk, aggressive soldiers and their coarse language, baseball stood out as an acceptable, non-threatening activity that some soldiers embraced. It seems reasonable to speculate that this contrast contributed to the positive image that most Madisonians held of baseball for several years after the war. It

is equally reasonable to assume that the presence of baseball at the Camp—where young men from all over the state congregated for weeks at a time—was a major factor in the rapid spread of the new sport throughout the state of Wisconsin.

Throughout the second half of the 1860s, the Capital City Base Ball Club kept things interesting for Madisonians with a combination of novelties and rivalries. Immediately after the Civil War, however, there weren't yet any rivalries. Those would develop naturally—just not right away. But in the rapidly growing Old Northwest in 1865, most everything having to do with baseball was a novelty of some sort.

Of course, baseball itself was something of a novelty everywhere it was played at the end of the Civil War. With the rules changing annually, only the savviest players could keep up; often a visit from a more up-to-date team served an educational purpose not just for the spectators, but for the players as well! After a lopsided contest in 1868 against the powerful Rockford Forest Cities, a Madison newspaper noted with appreciation that, while the Rockford boys knew the rules better than the umpire that day, they nonetheless acted in a gentlemanly fashion. To make things still worse, while most of the major teams in Wisconsin adopted the “New York Rules” as codified and updated by Henry Chadwick, a handful of outlying communities first learned the rules of the Boston game. Disputes on this point—and just about everything else—persisted well into the 1860s.

While it would be the single organization at the center of Madison baseball for nearly five years, it's unclear exactly when the Capital City Base Ball Club was formed. Regardless of its origins, they were active as early as 1864, but like most clubs outside of

the major cities of the eastern seaboard, they kept their activities to a minimum during the Civil War. When peace was finally established, they wasted little time getting the ball rolling: in late May of 1865, the *Wisconsin State Journal* announced that the club had new grounds on the shore of Lake Mendota near the University and were already practicing. It was another month before the paper ran a notice of a “friendly game” between the Capitol Cities and the Madison Base Ball Club. I’ll talk more about the demographic makeup of the clubs later, but it’s interesting to note that most of the members of the Madison Club appear to have been masons and carpenters, while the Capitol Cities, throughout the 1860s, would consist of shopowners, government-employed clerks, and a fair share of well-heeled youngsters.

In 1865, Madison hosted exactly four official “match” games—all between the Capitol Cities and the Madison Base Ball Club. In the first game of the year, on July 13<sup>th</sup>, it was clear that many of the participants were rusty or just plain inexperienced: the paper noted that “the playing was rather wild on both sides and there is considerable chance for improvement.” One can imagine just how wild it was: the Capitol City Club won 58 to 33. The Cap Cities won the remaining three games as well, though by increasingly close scores, and must have improved a good bit before the match of August 7<sup>th</sup>, when they held their opponents to only five runs. The previously critical *Wisconsin State Journal* even called this game a “good one.”

For the time being, anyway, the Madison incarnation of baseball lived up to it’s inventors’ billing as a gentleman’s game. The Capitol City Club had formal evening meetings at least once a month during the playing season—sometimes meeting in the winter as well. Whenever a pressing issue came up—often when the organization had an

unexpected need for funds—club president D.P. Marshall, a clerk in the capitol building, simply placed a notice in the *Wisconsin State Journal* and some members turned up that evening at William Wyman’s office on the capitol square. Wyman, who represented Aetna insurance in Madison, never served as president or secretary for the club, nor did he make an appearance in a box score as a part of a “first nine” for the Cap Cities. But his rooms were the group’s headquarters for years, and one suspects he also contributed to their financial well-being.

The formal organization of the club wasn’t the only sign of the polite nature of the game. While David Atwood, a future mayor of Madison and the editor of the *Wisconsin State Journal*, never hesitated to rail against improprieties of any kind in the city of four lakes, baseball, though prominent enough to draw his attention, drew none of his ire. Nary a letter to the editor was printed to critique the nature of the game or its spectators. Even the umpires were first-class folk: the arbiter of the July 13<sup>th</sup> match was James Richardson, a respected (and wealthy) real estate salesman.

1866 marked the arrival of two events that would shape the experience of baseball in Madison for the rest of the decade: awareness of the national—or at least regional—scope of the sport, and the addition of a junior squad to the Capitol City Club. Throughout 1866 and 1867, the “Cap Juniors,” as the youngsters were called, made as much news as the adult club, earning approbation from Governor Fairchild and defeating rival junior clubs across Wisconsin and Illinois.

As would often be the case, baseball got a late start in Madison in 1866. By early August, the season was finally in full swing as the Cap Juniors squad played a match

game in Columbus, Wisconsin with the Badger Club, an adult assemblage from that town. The Madison Base Ball Club of 1865 didn't return for another campaign, and their role as local adversary to the Cap Cities fell to a new organization, the Mononas. Named after one of Madison's four lakes, the new club wasn't even a match for the second nine of the Cap Cities. While such a contest never took place, a comparison of game scores suggests that the Mononas were not even equal to the Cap Juniors.

The historical event of the 1866 season, however, was the first major out-of-town game for the Capitol City Base Ball Club. On two consecutive afternoons in August, the Milwaukee Cream City club played host first to the Rockford Forest Cities and then to the Cap Cities of Madison. The Forest City club wasn't yet as strong as they would become later in the decade, when they added players such as Bob Addy and future magnate Al Spalding, but even this early in their development, they handled the Cream Cities easily. For the first time on record, a group of "base ballers" from Madison traveled beyond the borders of Dane County to see a match.

If they went to the Milwaukee-Rockford game with the intent of scouting their next opponent, they didn't do a good enough job. On August 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Cream Cities handed their Madison rivals a 44-18 loss. Journalist Atwood, along for the ride to keep score and report back to his townspeople, suggested that the Madison club wasn't as well prepared as it might have been, writing, "the position of some of the players, as well as the order of batting, might have been changed to advantage." True, roles on a baseball club—especially an amateur one—were not as well-defined as they would become only five years later. And no one had yet analyzed the optimal lineup placement for high-OPS batters. Even George Wright inexplicably chose his most experienced batter for the

leadoff slot. And Atwood may have been one of the earliest exemplars of the blowhard tradition of baseball writing. But it remains obvious that Madison was far from having a top-ranked club. The biggest baseball-enthusiasts in town—and the most vocal defenders of Madison’s place among first-class cities—would agonize over this off and on for years.

But for the time being, baseball was on the ascendance in this little town. With a population of just over 9,000, Madison supported at least two active clubs, including one with a competitive second nine and a busy junior squad. The opportunity to play a quality team like the Cream Cities and witness even better baseball as played by the Rockford club sent interest in the game soaring. The booming economy—both on a national and local scale—didn’t hurt, either. The Capitol Cities immediately held a special meeting at the end of August and elected a new president—James L. Hill, a cashier at the Bank of Madison. Even more telling, baseball activity continued well into October, and the various Madison clubs hosted at least six match games and as many more practice contests that merited a mention in the press. For the first time, baseball earned more *Wisconsin State Journal* column inches than did hunting reports.

In my experience researching 19<sup>th</sup>-century small-town baseball in the Midwest, I’ve found that just about every baseball-crazy town is able to sustain its extreme fervor for little more than a year. Every town varies in the length of time it takes from baseball’s initial introduction to baseball fever, and level of interest retained differs as well. Madison is no exception, and as early as the spring of 1868, sportsmen in the capitol city recognized the waning of the latest fad. The *Wisconsin State Journal* noted in

May of 1868, “there does not seem to be as much of a *furor* on the subject as last year,” while observing that on the national level, it was as hot as ever. But before rushing to the dying days of early baseball in Madison, let’s spend a few moments on Madison’s year of baseball *furor*: 1867.

The “firsts” came fast and furious early in the 1867 season. Three major Madison clubs—the Capitol Cities, the Mononas, and the Cap Juniors—had their initial meetings by the beginning of May—a record by at least a month or two. The Cap Juniors took on their elders in an unusually early game on May 31<sup>st</sup> and gave notice of the unusually strong youth organization they would soon become, losing by a respectable score of 49-28. On June 13<sup>th</sup>, a team of University of Wisconsin students took on the Cap Juniors, marking the first time a club played under the University’s name. (Even then, they were the “Badgers.”) On June 17<sup>th</sup>, the Cap Cities and about thirty of their fans took the train to Beloit, Wisconsin, where the Madison club first showed off their new uniforms. They decked themselves out in white shirts with blue trim, blue pants with white trim, white caps, and white shoes. It must have been quite a patriotic sight on the field, as the Beloit squad was clad in red shirts, white pants with red trim, and red caps with white trim.

More importantly was another first that day—or, more accurately, the next day when the game wrap-up appeared in the newspapers. The *State Journal* reported the attendance for the first time—in this case, they claimed the match was seen by 1,000 spectators. Since the previous year, the papers had provided astonishingly detailed play-by-play summaries worthy—almost—of Retrosheet, but not until this game did attendance figures become a regular addition to the other statistics given. Beloit beat the

Cap Cities that day, 23-12, but Nichols, the left fielder for Madison, began to earn his reputation as “one of the best, if not the best left fielder in the state.”

The second half of June, July and August were slow for baseball compared to the historic opening month, but all of the clubs—including a new addition to the local scene, the Athletics—kept up regular practices, held frequent meetings, and occasionally assembled for friendly matches against rival teams. One of those friendly games, played between the Cap Juniors and the first nine of the Capitol City Club, revealed an interesting characteristic of summers in Madison that the town’s baseball community appears never to have taken advantage of. On July 18<sup>th</sup>, when the Juniors beat the adult club 55-43, many fans weren’t primarily interested in the hometown players. Instead, they watched umpire J.C. Cabanne, a representative of the Union Club of St. Louis. Throughout the 1860s, Madison constantly pleaded its case as a prime northern destination for tourists from warmer climes—and until the financial Panic of 1873 kept many at home, it did quite well, especially attracting vacationers from St. Louis and southern Illinois. Cabanne likely made his visit with such a group, but his appearance as an arbiter was the only time in the decade that adult baseball and the southern tourists were mentioned together in print. Not everyone was ignorant of the financial rewards resulting from advertising baseball games: often railroads advertised more heavily for out-of-town games than the teams did themselves, as they offered half-fare rides for baseball players and those traveling to watch the game. A group of teenagers from St. Louis eventually organized to practice with the Cap Juniors, but aside from Cabanne, the adult tourists were left to their traditional northern vacation activities: riding on pleasure boats and taking restorative rest.

On August 29<sup>th</sup> of 1867, the Cap Cities and Cap Juniors took part in yet another first: they played for money. After battering their elders 86-35, the youngsters won a “citizen’s purse” of 25 dollars. Not surprisingly, the game “attracted the most attention of any game played in the city this year,” according to the *State Journal*. But the stakes were about to go up. From the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> of September, Beloit hosted what was, to my knowledge, the first baseball tournament in the Northwest outside of Chicago. At least 26 clubs, including junior clubs, entered the tournament, including several from Madison, Janesville, and Beloit. Other entrants included the Cream Cities of Milwaukee and a variety of organizations that would never again register on Madison’s radar, such as the Star Club of Rockton, Illinois and the Continental Club of Delavan, Wisconsin.

The prize was much greater than anything most of these rural teams had ever played for—perhaps more than they had conceived could be possible for playing baseball. The purse for the tournament was a whopping \$1,300 in addition to a variety of other rewards. The winning junior team would receive a silver-mounted rosewood bat and forty dollars, and even the champion “pony division” club would take home a prize for their efforts. Taking advantage of some free publicity, a local dry goods store offered a box of soap to the team with the most “whitewashes”—shutout innings. In the 1860s, with single-game scores often passing the half-century mark, whitewashes of three outs in duration were remarkable enough. It would be more than a decade before full-game shutouts passed out of the realm of extreme novelty.

It appears that the tournament wasn’t a very well-organized affair: on September 5<sup>th</sup> it became apparent that it would run past its scheduled ending date “as not all entered teams have arrived.” Each team would only play a game or two, but with the entrants

split up into divisions based on experience and other considerations lost to history, two games was enough to decide most of the winners. The Capitol Cities didn't make a very good showing: they were eliminated in their first game by the Cream City Club of Milwaukee, the eventual champion. Some of the regular Madison players weren't able to absent themselves from their business concerns, so a couple of the more talented Cap Juniors took their place. Even though most of the participating teams went home without a piece of the prize money, the mood was festive. Despite some rain on September 5<sup>th</sup> that halted a game between the Roscoe Stars and the Mutuals of Chicago, the tournament was back in action two days later with some extracurricular activities: a running match and a throwing match for the best athletes among the competitors.

But the real highlight for Madison was the performance of the Cap Junior club. On the 8<sup>th</sup> they beat the Eagle Club of Beloit by a score of 90-30 in eight innings. It was all the more impressive because the Eagles were thought to be one of the better junior clubs in the state. In the deciding match of the tournament the next day, the Juniors beat the Delavan Continentals 59-27 to take the forty dollar prize and the silver-mounted bat. They returned home on the 10<sup>th</sup> to much fanfare: a reception organized by Mrs. J.G. Thorp, with, the *State Journal* noted, "all her accustomed energy." Mrs. Thorp was a major figure on the Madison social scene: wife of a state senator and mother of the Joseph Thorp, the star center fielder for the Juniors. After the city band led a parade of the young champions and many carriages full of their friends through the capitol square, Governor Lucius Fairchild addressed the Juniors. Sounding positively Chadwickian, he declaimed, "Let them excel in scientific base ball playing and next year bring back more prizes." It's no surprise that Fairchild took part in the celebration; not only were some of

the ballplayers children of his political cronies, but his private secretary, Major J.C. Spooner, was a good friend of the Junior club.

The story of the Thorps is an interesting sidenote to the history of baseball in Madison. Amelia Chapman Thorp, the busybody who organized the reception for the Cap Juniors, had a much greater impact on the game in Madison than the writer in the *State Journal* acknowledges. Her husband, a wealthy lumberman from Eau Claire, was first elected to the state senate in 1866, and it appears to have been Amelia who convinced him to stay after his term expired the following year. By doing so, she gave the Madison baseball talent pool quite a boost: her son not only hit four home runs in a single game in the Beloit tournament of 1867, but went on to play for the adult Capitol City Club. He moved on to Harvard College in 1870, where he played left field for what was at the time among the most powerful amateur teams in the country. But the young man wasn't the most famous Thorp. His sister, Sara, married the internationally-renowned Norwegian violinist Ole Bull, forty years her senior. After Bull's death in 1880, Sara reunited with her brother in Cambridge where she established a salon and mingled with the top intellectual figures of her time, including William James and Gertrude Stein. Even the Thorp's residence is famous: in 1883 it became the state Governor's mansion.

Why do I digress like this, at a conference dedicated to baseball history and biography? Ole Bull may have been a baseball fan...but I doubt it. I've gone into detail about Thorp and his family because, while he's an extreme case, he illustrates some of

the demographic elements that kept Madison baseball teams extremely competitive for a town of its size. This became all the more important in 1868, when major East Coast clubs started touring the country and lesser clubs from Chicago and St. Louis began to search for opportunities to compete farther from home.

Most discussions of the demographics of early baseball focus on the types of occupations held by players. For instance, in Stephen Freedman's 1978 article about Chicago baseball of the late 1860s, he notes, "for the most part, baseball was a game played by young men of greater wealth and standing." He analyzes a sample of 93 Chicago ballplayers and finds that over 70% of them are white-collar workers and a few more are students. Most blue-collar employees worked six day weeks, often ten or more hours a day. These conditions, obviously, weren't conducive to lazy Friday afternoon baseball matches or Tuesday afternoon practices. Thus, it would stand to reason that the higher a population's concentration of blue-collar workers, the lower the demonstrated interest in baseball.

For a town of some regional prominence, Madison had about the lowest concentration of blue-collar workers possible. The economy was centered on the government, the University, and occasionally the tourist trade. It was a constant frustration to Madison boosters that the capitol city could claim virtually no manufacturing concerns, but the lack of inexpensive rail transportation made it impracticable. Even some of the lowest-paying jobs available in Madison, such as farm work and some of the menial service industries associated with tourism, were subject to seasonal variation and allowed workers to pursue their own interests much more than

their counterparts in urban factories. In other words, just about anybody who wanted to could make the time to play baseball.

Unsurprisingly, then, pocket money wasn't scarce, either. Because most Madison baseball players held white-collar positions or had wealthy fathers, there was never a lack of funds for uniforms or for out-of-town travel. In May of 1869, for instance, the Capitol City Club decided to stop levying frequent small assessments on its members and switch to a fee-for-admission system. Two dollars a year—considerably more than a token amount in 1860s dollars—didn't seem to strike anyone as excessive. It appeared so reasonable, in fact, that the optimistic *Wisconsin State Journal* expected 200 people to join on those terms. With wealthy men and their athletic sons moving to the capitol from all over the state, Madison baseball never lacked able athletes. And, of course, the homegrown boys had plenty of time for the game, as well.

As late as September of '67, baseball still appeared to be rapidly growing in popularity. The clubs were still relatively new and players were still learning the finer points of the game. Perhaps more importantly, it was attracting new recruits via the popular approach of the “muffin game,” in which completely inexperienced athletes met for a friendly contest. Actually, “athletes” is a generous term, as spectators gathered to watch muffin games almost entirely for their comedic value. Newspapers provided full play-by-play of these farces, often poking fun at a ballplayer's corpulence in the process. With these popular developments, it's surprising to find that the baseball craze peaked in Madison in 1867. It's especially surprising since Madison's Capitol City Club first

appeared on the national scene in late 1868, and baseball continued to gain popularity nationwide. But peak it did.

Despite all sorts of events that may have otherwise catalyzed the Madison baseball community in 1868, the economy didn't cooperate. In desperate attempts to better connect Madison with major metropolises via rail, the city government went deeply into debt supporting one railroad venture after another. But no matter how much money it sunk into the various rail projects, it was never enough. Relying on heavy and frequent property tax assessments to fund their endeavors, the government sent the city into a recession that would last until the early 1870s.

The economy wasn't the only problem: some people just felt that the new-fangled sport had run its course, and started looking for other novelties to draw their attention. Water sports—a natural pastime in the city of four lakes if there ever was one—rose in popularity, and even croquet gained a foothold. And to make matters worse, some teenage boys preferred croquet, a sport that would be socially appropriate to play with girls.

Negative factors notwithstanding, baseball had its exciting moments in 1868. On June 3<sup>rd</sup> the *Wisconsin State Journal* announced that the Capitol Cities “challenged 24 clubs” in Wisconsin, which included the new and improved Rockford Forest Cities. They also challenged the Cream City Club of Milwaukee for “the gold ball and the championship of Wisconsin.” But the unquestioned highlight of the 1868 season in Madison was not the result of a Capitol City challenge letter. The Union Club of Morrisania—Bronx, New York—decided to include Madison in their tour of the country. The only touring club that deemed the city worthy of a stop, the Unions showed Madison

spectators a brand of baseball—even a brand of athlete—which they had never before seen. The *State Journal* raved: “The Unions showed a bronzed, athletic, lithe, full-statured set of men, with muscles hardened by constant use, and trained in every minutia of the national game.” The New York club, managed by the soon-to-be-legendary George Wright and featuring Steve Bellan, the first professional Cuban player, beat the Capitol Cities soundly and took off for Chicago and Rockford.

One would expect that such a distinguished set of visitors would put the baseball craze back on top, but it did not. This is surprising—not just because it runs contrary to intuition, but also because it differs from reactions elsewhere in the country. In his book *When Johnny Comes Sliding Home*, William Ryczek observes, “There was nothing like a display by one of the top teams to get the local competitive juices flowing. A glimpse of the play of the Athletics or Atlantics was generally sufficient to encourage additional practice and perhaps the acquisition of a key player or two.” The Capitol Cities may not have had the means to start compensating players under the table, but the experience of 1867 proved that there was ample time and athletic skill to muster a decent team. But instead they capped off their season with a disappointing performance in Milwaukee, losing 45-18. Even more disappointing, the Cream Cities of Milwaukee repeatedly refused to stick to a scheduled “return game” in Madison. Whether it was because they were annoyed, outplayed, or simply distracted by non-baseball concerns, the Cap Cities were done for the year.

Despite the fact that in May 1869 the Capitol City Club “challenged everybody,” they didn’t play many matches. The first game of the year took place on June 3<sup>rd</sup> against

a new team from the University. The Cap Cities, sorely in need of practice, lost 25-12. Almost immediately, the papers proclaimed the University squad the better team. The Cap Cities did little to dispel the notion: aside from negotiating a schedule with the Cream Cities, the Madison club did little but stroll to Wyman's insurance office for their monthly meetings. No one seemed to care too much—it wasn't until the end of July that the *State Journal* finally noticed that “we have had no base ball match this season.” Instead, fans kept up their interest by following the out-of-town action, liberally supplied by both Madison newspapers. On July 31<sup>st</sup> Madisonians could read reports of the Cincinnati Red Stockings's 85-7 drubbing of the Milwaukee Cream City Club. As if such a score wasn't insult enough—remember, the Milwaukeees always beat the Cap Cities—a correspondent wrote, “the playing of the Red Stockings is said not to have been up to their usual standard.”

Once again, August and September brought disappointment for the Capitol Cities. They did revive sufficiently to play the Mutual Club of Janesville and win an exciting 19-17 game. Local boosters mustered enough enthusiasm for *State Journal* to claim that “a movement is on foot toward a complete reorganization of the Capitol City Club which ... will make it one of the leading clubs of the Northwest.” And that was the last anybody heard of that! The Chicago Aetnas were scheduled to come to town, but they lost to Janesville *en route*, so they turned around and went home without visiting Madison at all. And once the school year began, the University club organized in time to beat the Cap Cities one last time.

The *Wisconsin State Journal* of May 10, 1870 wrote:

“The Capitol City Base Ball Club, though not disbanded, has virtually given up the game. We are glad to learn, however, that we shall still have a first class base ball club among us. The Mendota Club of the State University has been granted the use of the Capitol City’s grounds and house, are practicing daily and making every effort to become first class players, having already developed a high degree of skill. They have just procured a new white Zouave uniform and present a fine appearance.”

This editorialist, while given to extremely long sentences, was right. Except for an occasional burst of enthusiasm for times gone by, the Capitol City Club would be forgotten. Occasionally some one would suggest effort to revive it, none of which ever resulted in much. The Mendotas were a strong club, but had the problem faced by all competitive college teams: right about when the baseball season got going, they took their finals and were done for the year. Even the powerful Harvard team had to contend with that. After the Mendota Club finished their academic year, fans had to content themselves with poorly played games in rural areas like Stoughton and Token Creek or stick to the news of the professional clubs in Chicago and the East.

Did baseball ever revive in Madison? Sure it did—that’s a subject for another Seymour Conference. But as baseball ascended in national popularity and players met to form the first professional leagues, Madison—briefly a stronghold for interest in the early game—fell dormant. But for a year or two as the new game spread into the farther reaches of rural Wisconsin, the capitol city, and the Capitol City Base Ball Club, was one of the hubs for all of that groundbreaking activity.