

# RICKWOOD TALES

## Rickwood Calendar 3/6/20 to 6/13/20:

- **March 7:** The 17th Annual Southern Association Conference at Rickwood, 9:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. (Details inside)
- **March 7, 11, 18, 20, 21, 24, April 4, 5, 8, 14, 18, 19, 25 & 26:** Miles College baseball games at Rickwood (Day games – see website for times)
- High School Baseball games at Rickwood (see [Rickwood.com](http://Rickwood.com) for dates / times)
- **June 8:** The Rickwood Classic (12:30 P.M.)
- **June 11-13:** Jerry Malloy Negro League Conference (SABR)

## **SAVE THE DATE!**

The 24th Annual Rickwood Classic has been scheduled for:

**Monday, June 8, 2020.** First pitch is at 12:30 P.M. We'll see you at the ballpark!



## ANDRE DAWSON HEADLINES THE 24TH ANNUAL RICKWOOD CLASSIC

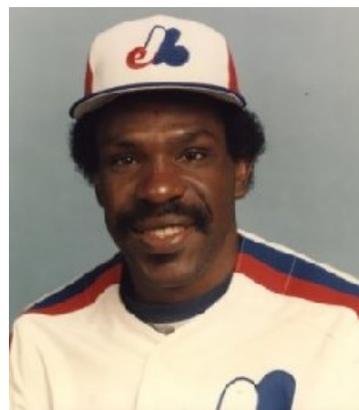
The Friends of Rickwood and the Birmingham Barons are excited to announce that the 24th annual Rickwood Classic will be played on **Monday, June 8, 2020**, with the first pitch scheduled for **12:30 P.M.** This year's Classic sponsors are Levy's Fine Jewelry, Stewart Lubricants and Service Company, and Drummond Company, Inc. The Birmingham Barons will play their Southern League rivals, the Chattanooga Lookouts, who are the Double-A affiliate of the Cincinnati Reds. This year's contest will commemorate the 100th anniversary of the formation of the Negro National League by Rube Foster.

Baseball Hall of Famer Andre Dawson will be the special guest. Dawson played 21 years in the big leagues from 1976-96 with the Montreal Expos, Chicago Cubs, Boston Red Sox, and Florida Marlins, primarily as a right and center fielder.

He won the National League Rookie of the Year award with the Expos in 1977 and claimed NL MVP honors 10 years later with the Cubs. So sharp was his hitting eye that he earned the nickname "The Hawk". An 8-time all-star, Dawson crushed 438 home runs, with 1,509 RBIs, and 2,774 hits during his career.

Dawson, Whitey Herzog, and umpire Doug Harvey were elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 2010. Because he played more than half of his career in Montreal, Dawson proudly wears an Expos cap on his Hall of Fame plaque.

Dawson will be throwing out the ceremonial first pitch of the game and will then sign autographs for fans in Rickwood's conference room, which is located behind the grandstand on the first base side. **NOTE:** In order to accommodate as many fans as possible, Dawson will not personalize any autographs, and will not sign bats or jerseys; one signature per fan only.



## THE 2020 JERRY MALLOY NEGRO LEAGUE CONFERENCE (JUNE 11-13) — UPDATE



The 21st edition of the prestigious Jerry Malloy Negro League Conference will be held on June 11-13, 2020 at the Sheraton Hotel in downtown Birmingham. This year's conference coincides with the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Negro National and Negro Southern Leagues. According to SABR, "NNL founder Rube Foster's mantra of 'We are the ship ... all else the sea' spoke to their exclusion from Major League Baseball."

Researchers and authors from across the country will be visiting the Magic City for the Conference. The Birmingham Sheraton is offering a special group rate. Visits to Rickwood Field, the Negro Southern League Museum, Regions Field, and the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame are planned. For more information, please visit <https://sabr.org/malloy>. The Friends of Rickwood will post updates about the Jerry Malloy Conference at [Rickwood.com](http://Rickwood.com).

## THE 17TH ANNUAL SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE

*“Baseball historians from around the southeast will come to Birmingham to attend the Southern Association Conference.”*

The Southern Association was a professional baseball league that existed from 1901-61 and was preceded by the Southern League (1885-99). Rickwood Field (1910-61), Engel Stadium in Chattanooga, Tennessee (1930-61) and Luther Williams Stadium in Macon, Georgia (1961), are the three remaining ballparks, which regularly hosted league games. The Southern Association Conference is an annual event dedicated to preserving the history of the teams, players, managers, owners, seasons, and ballparks of the league.

This year's Conference will be held at Rickwood Field's conference room on March 7, 2020 from 8:30 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. Baseball historians from around the southeast will come to Birmingham to attend the Southern Association Conference. If you are interested, please contact Clarence Watkins at 205-999-5742 or [cwatkins5@charter.net](mailto:cwatkins5@charter.net).

### Southern Association Conference Schedule (March 7, 2020)

- 8:30 A.M. – Morning coffee and snacks
- 9:00 A.M. – Welcome and introductory remarks
- 9:15 A.M. – Clarence Watkins  
Charles Glock of the Atlanta Crackers
- 10:00 A.M. – Gregory Bennington  
Bobby Durnbaugh of the Nashville Vols
- 10:45 A.M. – Morning break – collector exhibits
- 11:00 A.M. – John Guinozzo  
Nicknames for Teams and Players
- 11:45 A.M. – Lunch
- 1:00 P.M. – Terry Sloope  
1928 Memphis vs Atlanta, The Break Down of Jumbo Barrett
- 1:45 P.M. – Bill Plott  
Fuzzy Woodruff, League Historian
- 2:30 P.M. – Clarence Watkins  
Dusty Rhodes, A Childhood Memory
- 3:00 P.M. – Closing Remarks  
Alternate: Skip Nipper, 1949 Nashville Vols



## “DUSTING ‘EM OFF”: FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*“The ballpark is not just a venue, but also supports our local economy.”*

As the calendar marches towards spring, baseball is in the air. Of course, baseball season never really ends at America's Oldest Ballpark. The Friends of Rickwood have meetings every month and planning has long been underway for all the games to be played here this year, including the Classic.

On February 1, Miles College opened our season with a weekend series against Shorter University. The Hawks' visit to Rickwood included a 2-night hotel stay, as the school rented 17 rooms. Unfortunately for the home team, Shorter swept the 3-game series. However, Miles got its first home win at Rickwood the following weekend, as the Bears defeated

Christian Brothers University of Memphis, 4-3 in 10 innings, as part of another weekend series in Birmingham. More recently, Miles swept double headers at Rickwood as Tougaloo and Morehouse visited Birmingham for weekend games. The ballpark is not just a venue, but also supports our local economy.

The Friends of Rickwood not only preserve the ballpark, but also have a long history of supporting youth baseball teams with equipment donations. We recently met with Coach DeMarco Sparks, who is starting a new league in Pleasant Grove for children who have never played baseball. The Friends donated a large

box of gloves, a bucket of balls, uniform pants, and an aluminum bat. Most of the equipment came from donations by Mickey Newsome.

Mickey is the former CEO of Hibbett Sporting Goods. He has been a tireless patron of the ballpark over the years and has generously donated an incredible amount of sports memorabilia and baseball equipment to the Friends, much of which has been resold or used as part of Rickwood's museum. We are thankful for Mickey and are proud to have paid his generosity forward.

Until next time, we hope to see you at the ballpark!

- Clarence Watkins

## REMEMBERING ALLEN FARR (PART II)

[Part 1 of this story appeared in our December issue]

I'd like to briefly share how I got to know Allen Farr. One Saturday I was in attendance at a wedding in Trussville, several months after becoming a Rickwood board member. The wedding began, and as the bride was walking down the aisle, I looked closely at her escort. I thought to myself, "I know that guy. He is a Rickwood board member. Allen something or other is his name."

Allen Farr was giving his niece away! I knew then I needed to improve in reaching out to people. We should all be more

open and inviting to those we know.

At the reception, I went over to Allen, introduced myself and he did the same. Allen exclaimed, "Who do you know here?" I said, "the bride." We became friends then and could always share a story or a smile. Allen knew we are not just saving an old ballpark; we are saving people's memories.

I was proud to serve with Allen on the Friends of Rickwood Board, and will always remember him fondly.

- Joe DeLeonard



Joe DeLeonard (R) and Allen Farr (L)

*"Allen knew we are not just saving an old ballpark; we are saving people's memories."*

## BECOME A FRIEND OF RICKWOOD

The Friends of Rickwood's membership committee would like to welcome the first members into its program.

Our first Little Leaguer is Charlsey Trammell, and our first Gold Glover membership goes to Tom and Hana Berres. The Friends of Rickwood would like to thank you all for your mutual love, respect and desire to help preserve America's Oldest Ballpark.

This new program will greatly help the Friends' ongoing restoration projects to keep our park in the best condition possible. We are looking forward to announcing our first Rookie and Veteran memberships.

You too can become a Friend of Rickwood Field, "America's Oldest Baseball Park". Just go to <https://rickwood.com/membership/> and pick your desired membership level, or write us at:

**The Friends of Rickwood  
Rickwood Field  
1137 2nd Ave West  
Birmingham, AL 35204**

We have four levels of membership for individuals and each level will receive a certificate, a window sticker, and 10% off Rickwood merchandise: (1) Level 1 is a "Little Leaguer" for a \$10 donation; (2) Level 2 is a "Rookie" for a \$25 donation; (3) Level 3 is a "Veteran" for a \$50 donation (and also gets a patch); and (4) Level 4 is a "Gold Glover" for a \$100 donation (and also gets a Rickwood shirt).

The Friends of Rickwood is a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit organization, which was formed in 1992, and is dedicated to preserving America's Oldest Ballpark.

- Wayne Trammell



Charlsey Trammell



Tom and Hana Berres

*"Our first Little Leaguer is Charlsey Trammell, and our first Gold Glover membership goes to Tom and Hana Berres."*

## 24TH ANNUAL RICKWOOD CLASSIC SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

- 1. VIP/Hospitality Area Sponsor: \$5,500**  
Includes: (a) food and beverage for 100 guests at 10 tables; (b) Reserved game seating for 100 for the Rickwood Classic; (c) 10 VIP parking passes; (c) Recognition in all advance promotional and game day material, in the radio broadcast of the game, and in P.A. announcements to an anticipated crowd of 8,000; (d) Recognition and prime logo-placement on the Rickwood.com blog; and (e) Banner / Table display opportunity on gameday.
- 2. Vintage Outfield Billboard Sponsor: \$3,500 - \$5,000**  
Includes: (a) Specific cost of board determined by board dimension, ranging from 28' to 44' in length; (b) High visibility location on Rickwood Field's expansive outfield wall; (c) Debut at the Rickwood Classic, with anticipated 7 - 10 year life span for the sign; (d) P.A. system recognition; (e) Logo inclusion in *Rickwood Times* newspaper and game day scorecard; (f) Recognition and prime logo-placement on the Rickwood.com blog; and (g) 25 general admission game tickets to the Classic.
- 3. Individual VIP Table Sponsor: \$600**  
Includes: (a) Food and beverage for 10 guests at a single table of 10; (b) 10 Reserved tickets for the Classic; (c) One V.I.P. parking pass; (c) P.A. recognition; and (d) Logo inclusion in game-day scorecard and on the Rickwood.com blog.
- 4. Reserved Bleacher Section: \$3,000**  
Includes: (a) Negotiable on size — bring the company!; (b) P.A. recognition; and (c) Logo inclusion in game-day scorecard for the Classic and on the Rickwood.com blog.
- 5. Sponsor the Memorabilia Auction: \$1,000**  
Includes: (a) Signage at action tables; (b) Logo inclusion in game-day scorecard for the Classic and on the Rickwood.com blog; (c) P.A. recognition; and (d) 25 general admission game tickets to the Classic.
- 6. Sponsor the Memorabilia Exhibits & Autograph Session: \$1,000**  
Includes: (a) Signage in exhibit space and at autograph table; (b) Logo inclusion in game-day scorecard for the Classic and on the Rickwood.com blog; (c) Public address system recognition; and (d) 25 general admission game tickets to the Classic.
- 7. Scorecard Back Cover \$1,000**  
Includes: (a) Company ad on entirety of back cover of game-day scorecard; (b) 5000 printed for sale on game day and also used as PR piece throughout the year; (c) P.A. system recognition; and (d) 25 general admission game tickets to the Classic.
- 8. Scorecard Logo Ad: \$300**  
Includes: (a) Logo inclusion in game-day scorecard; (b) 5000 printed for sale on game day and also used as PR piece throughout the year
- 9. Group Ticket Package: \$8**  
For general admission tickets (groups of 10 or more) (normally \$10)
- 10. Pre-purchased Food Packages for Groups:**  
A variety of hotdog, chip, and drink combinations are available for pre-purchase for groups of 10 or more, including in-seat delivery, all below \$10 per combo.

*“Call (205-999-5742)  
or email Clarence  
Watkins  
([cwatkins5@charter.net](mailto:cwatkins5@charter.net))  
to sponsor the 24th  
Annual Rickwood  
Classic.”*



[See our website for more details!](#)

## THE RICKWOOD SABR CHAPTER ANNOUNCES RESULTS OF THE BEST-EVER RICKWOOD PLAYERS (1910-87)

The Rickwood SABR Chapter recently conducted a Facebook poll to determine the best players at each position in Rickwood Field history.

Voters considered 5-6 candidates at each position, and 2 pitchers. Barons, A's, and Black Barons who played at least one season at Rickwood, were eligible for consideration. Nominations were based on each player's contributions while playing for a Birmingham-based team from 1910-1987 without considering their statistics for major league clubs. An "outfielder" category was added for players without specific outfield positions.

For more information, please like the [Rickwood Field SABR Chapter](#) on Facebook.

**Catcher:** **Yam Yaryan** [Barons, 1926-30, 357, 60 HRs, 99 2Bs]. Runner up: Pepper Bassett [Black Barons: 1944-50]

**First Base:** **Gus Triandos** [Barons: 1953, .368, 19 HRs]. Runner up: Walt Dropo [Barons: 1948]

**Second Base:** **Piper Davis** [Black Barons, 1942-49, .348, 7-time EW-ASG]. Runner up: Stuffy Stewart [Barons: 1920-25, 28-29]

**Third Base:** **Fred Hatfield** [Barons: 1949-50, .280, 52 HRs, 43 2Bs, 22 3Bs]. Runner up: Mickey Rutner [Barons, 1948].

**Shortstop:** **Artie Wilson** [Black Barons, 1944-48, .369, 5 HRs, 40 2Bs, 18 3B]. Runner up: Pie Traynor [Barons, 1921]

**Left Fielder:** **Stan Palys** [Barons, 1960-61, .352, 41 HRs, 20 3B, 76 2B]. Runner up: Reggie Jackson [A's, 1967]

**Center Fielder:** **Jimmy Piersall** [Barons, 1951-52, .345, 16 HRs, 13 3B, 34 2B]. Runner up: Willie Mays [Black Barons, 1948-50]

**Right Fielder:** **Elliot Bigelow** [Barons, 1927-28, .376, 27 HRs, 28 3B, 59 2B]. Runner up: Claudell Washington [A's, 1974]

**Outfielder:** **Butch Weis** [Barons, 1929-31 & 1934, .337, 51 HRs, 52 3B, 107 2B]. Runner up: George Wilson [Barons, 1948-49]

**Right-Handed Pitcher:** **Satchel Paige** [Black Barons, 1927-30, 426 IP, 35-15 (.700), 2.98 ERA]. Runner up: Burleigh Grimes [Barons, 1914-16]

**Left-Handed Pitcher:** **Eddie Wells** [Barons, 1927-48, 405 IP, 38-8 (.826), 2.60 ERA]. Runner up: Joe Grzenda, [1958, '60-61, '64 Barons, '67 A's]

## DID YOU KNOW?



Birmingham baseball fans know that a record 20,000 fans crammed into Rickwood Field on September 16, 1931 to see the Birmingham Barons defeat the Houston Buffaloes, 1-0, in the first game of the Dixie Series, as Ray Caldwell outdueled Dizzy Dean. But, did you know that the second largest crowd to attend a game at Rickwood happened in 1955 at the Southern Association All-Star Game? 19,830 turned out to see the Barons face a team comprised of the league's all-stars, which set an attendance record for the SA All-Star Game. Jim Lemon of the Chattanooga Lookouts set another record that night hitting 4 home runs and driving in 7 in the All-Stars 10-5 victory over Birmingham.

*“Nominations were based on each player’s contributions while playing for a Birmingham-based team from 1910-87...”*

The Friends of  
Rickwood

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<https://www.facebook.com/friendsofrickwood/>



## THE RICKWOOD LIBRARY: *Showdown at Rickwood*

In *Showdown at Rickwood: Ray Caldwell, Dizzy Dean, and the Early Years of America's Oldest Ball Park*, Art Black transports the reader to Birmingham, Alabama of the early 1900s, when the city began to grow into an industrial giant and the population soon increased by nearly 100,000 in only a decade. Black tells the complicated story of the rise of the City of Birmingham, and the origins of the Birmingham Barons as a professional baseball club, which became the pride of the Magic City in the old Southern Association. In 1910, the Barons colorful owner, A.H. "Rick" Woodward, had the vision to construct Rickwood Field, which was the first minor league park to have a grandstand constructed with concrete and steel, and which still stands today.

The story of *Showdown* is vividly told through the voices of two imaginary characters, who are employed as a writing device, but the history in the pages of the book is real and is based on years of painstaking research. Throughout the book, Black richly creates three-dimensional context within each chapter, as the stories are told against the backdrop of other events such as World War I, the Spanish Flu Epidemic of 1918, and the transatlantic flight of Charles Lindberg.

*Showdown* recalls the men who managed the Barons during the early years at Rickwood (Carlton Molesworth, Johnny Dobbs, and Clyde Milan), as well as players, who became heroes to the Birmingham faithful. Some players such as Stuff Stewart, Yam Yaryan, and Elliot Bigelow were great hitters for the Barons, but would only have relatively short stints in the major leagues. Another, Billy Bancroft, was a local athletic star before he joined the Barons and had great minor league seasons, but never reached the big leagues. Still another player, Pie Traynor, followed his success in Birmingham with a Hall of Fame career for the Pittsburgh Pirates.

Black also tells the stories of four Barons pitchers. The first is Harry Coveleski, a southpaw who had arguably the greatest single season of any Barons pitcher finishing with 21 wins and a 1.21 ERA in 1910. The second is Clarence "Pop Boy" Smith, a brash young man, who talked Carlton Molesworth into giving him a tryout with the Barons and became a great pitcher, but met with a tragic end. The third is Burleigh Grimes, the famous spitballer, who won 37 games for the Barons over two seasons on his way to the Baseball Hall of Fame. Coveleski, Pop Boy Smith, and Grimes were beginning their baseball careers when we meet them in *Showdown*. The fourth pitcher, Ray Caldwell, was finishing his. He pitched in the major leagues from 1910-21 winning 134 games with an ERA of 3.22.

Caldwell was once struck by lightning during a game; he lived hard and had a reputation as a hard-drinker. The 41-year-old signed with the Barons in 1929. Caldwell, the old man who had lost the zing of his fastball, was the perfect foil to Dizzy Dean. Dean was the 21-year-old ace of the Houston Buffaloes, who enjoyed boasting about himself almost as much as pitching, and would soon become the best pitcher in the National League with the St. Louis Cardinals. Caldwell and Dean met in the first game of the Dixie Series before a record crowd of 20,000 at Rickwood Field. The legendary pitching duel that unfolded between Caldwell and Dean that day became the headline of the greatest baseball game ever played in Birmingham. Even someone who already knows who won the game before reading *Showdown* feels a visceral tension as each inning unfolds in the book. The drama that was the first game, as well as the entire seven-game series, has been captured for all time thanks to Black's great research and writing.

*Showdown at Rickwood* is a treasure trove of history for any fan of baseball or Rickwood Field. Fans will be excited to learn that Black's follow up book, *Fame and Fortune in the Show: Baseball at Rickwood Field and Beyond in the middle 1900s*, will be released this April.

- Jeb Stewart

