

BASEBALL DIGEST

★★ WORLD SERIES EDITION ★★

A Special Publication of Arnall Golden Gregory LLP

* * *
By Abe J. Shear
October 2009

In the course of my interviews, I've not met another individual as renowned for off-the-field baseball activity as John Dowd, the attorney responsible for the "Dowd Report" detailing Pete Rose's gambling issues. Mr. Dowd's report, meticulously prepared, has proven to be water-tight, leading even the most ardent Rose supporters to move their focus from the gambling to the scope of the penalty.

Of course, Mr. Dowd's training as a prosecutor was critical to a well reasoned, thoroughly researched analysis. As you read this interview, you will realize however that John Dowd's passion for baseball was every bit the equal to that of Pete Rose, and that John's love of the game was and remains paramount.

Baseball, like life, is largely a game of rules, discipline and consequences. Although the Pete Rose episode dealt with money, these days it is truly the rare sports story which is not really about dollars but centered instead on what was "best" for baseball. As Mr. Dowd tells us, Commissioner Giamatti passionately believed that baseball was owned by the fans, a sentiment Mr. Dowd shares. As concerned about baseball as anyone I've met, I know you will enjoy Mr. Dowd's insightful views and amazing memories.

* * *
Abe J. Shear is an attorney with Arnall Golden Gregory LLP. He is the co-chairman of the Commercial Real Estate and Leasing Practice Group. Contact Abe at 404.873.8752 or Abe.Shear@agg.com.

I Remember When, a book which includes the first 35 interviews in this series, is available for \$20. A check should be made payable to Abe Shear and mailed to him at Arnall Golden Gregory.

John Dowd "Truth and Consequence"

Abe: I realized when I looked at your biography that we have at least two things in common. One is baseball and the other is Emory. You were there before me, but not by very much. You graduated from the law school in 1965 I believe?

John Dowd: December 65'. Right.

You made it through Emory about as fast as you possibly could, in less than 2½ years?

I got married. I had to speed it up.

I think that I'm a victim of diploma creep. The school was really good when I went. It's great now. I don't think I could get in.

I don't think I could get in either.

What are your first baseball memories?

My first baseball memories are of sitting in the left field bleachers of Fenway Park with my sister Maryann, watching Ted Williams. Williams made an error. It was raining and he dropped the ball. It was a game against the Yankees and he got loudly booed. When he came up late in the game, the seventh or eighth inning, he hit a home run, a rope to centerfield. They still booed him. My sister almost got in a fight with everybody in the crowd. She was crying and I was crying. It was awful. You know, later I ended up representing Ted. I should have retired at that point. I just couldn't believe it. A guy clipped him for a million bucks and I actually turned Ted down three times. I finally took the job and we got about 700 grand back and put the guy in jail for life. He was a seven time loser, but he clipped Ted for about a

million bucks.

This was late in his life?

Yes it was. We got to stay at the house. You know we almost killed ourselves eating Ted Williams' breakfast every morning and we played golf with him. He was a remarkable human being. Remarkable. He was a great marine and a great naturalist, I mean one of the greatest environmentalists I've ever known. He cared so much about the environment and the waters and the outdoors. There was a whole side of him not too many people knew about.

We'd sit at night with a couple of beers and some Chinese food and watch baseball and he would coach both sides. I mean he'd tell you what the guy was throwing and what he shouldn't have done. It was unbelievable. He'd sit there with his beautiful daughter on his lap and he just talked the whole game. He was an incredible human being. I had the honor of taking him to the White House for his Medal of Freedom. That's the story of my first baseball experience.

Let me go backwards and then maybe come forwards a little bit. You grew up where?

I grew up in Massachusetts. Outside of Boston in Holden. I was born in Brockton and raised in Holden. Then we moved to Wooster.

You grew up a baseball fan?

I did. I didn't play very well but I did play. I played Little League ball and grew up a huge Red Sox fan and Williams was my hero.

Did you have any other players on

that team, on the other teams in the late 40's early 50's, that you particularly liked?

On the Red Sox?

Anywhere.

You couldn't help but like Joe DiMaggio and I remember Bobby Doerr and Dom DiMaggio. We loved the great centerfielder and he was so understated, but he was a tremendous center fielder. I remember that crazy guy that played for the Red Sox. Jimmy... he played right field.

Jimmy Piersall?

Yes Piersall. We got a big kick out of him. Maybe because I was a little crazy myself. I really liked Piersall and I thought Jackie Robinson was something very special.

How often would you go to the games?

My dad worked as an executive at Filene's so he had some tickets in the left field bleachers. You know, 3 or 4 times a year at the most I think. We listened on the radio a lot. I loved hockey and I loved the Celtics and I loved the Bruins and I loved the Red Sox. We used to listen to Curt Gowdy. We would listen to baseball on the radio a lot.

Did you prefer to listen to the games or watch the games on TV?

You know it's funny you ask. I preferred to listen because the announcers were terrific. They were so good.

Who were your favorite announcers?

Well, you could never forget Mel Allen. I can't remember the guy at the Red Sox. I don't know one of those guys but even the Bruins and the Celtics had great announcers. Of course, Mel Allen's "How about that". That's about it.

Today, would you rather listen to the game or watch it?

I'm trying to think of the guy who was the great announcer for the Orioles. I think he's now on ESPN.

Oh, John Miller?

Yes. I could listen to him all day, radio or television. I think he's just wonderful. Jack Buck and Buck's son is very good I think. They just tell you what happened, period. To me that's the real beauty of a good announcer.

Did your father teach you to play baseball?

I think my older brothers and sisters. I was one of 8 children. My dad was always working. He worked 6½ days a week as a retail executive. I remember my sister Maryann and my brother Joe teaching me how to play ball. We always had a big yard so there was always a ball game going. A lot of fights too. You know, we'd duke it out. None of this parents getting involved. My mother was five feet even, a red headed Irish woman and she didn't want to hear about it. No whining, no bitching, no ratting anybody out. You just go finish it. Someone hit you, go finish it. So we did, you know. We'd finish it and go back to playing ball. There were always arguments about who was safe and so forth. I'm glad and it was all a good experience. We kind of learned how to manage ourselves. We didn't need someone. I will say this when I look back. I think Little League kind of turned me off. You know, all the parents fighting. We had much better games ourselves, I think.

You did play a little bit of organized baseball I guess?

I played organized baseball in high school. I think I was a second string catcher. I enjoyed being a catcher. I pitched a little bit but not much, I wasn't very good. The only thing I was ever good at was playing golf, but you know I liked the game and liked playing and I like watching the Cape Cod League up here. It's a lot of fun.

Do you still remember the teams that you played on?

I played on the Red Sox. I also played on the Yankees.

What teams do you follow today?

I follow the Nationals because I have season tickets and I enjoyed the Orioles for a while until they got the new owners. I always follow the Red Sox. I enjoy the Red Sox. Larry Lucino is a good friend and he is just one of the best people in baseball. I just sort of watched him.

Now when you grew up, in 1948 when you were I guess about 7, baseball cards started to come back. Did you collect cards?

We did. Topps cards. We had a lot of them. We had shoe boxes full. We traded them.

What happened to the cards?

I don't know. I can't remember.

Did you put the baseball cards on the wheels of your bike so they made a lot of noise?

Oh yeah. I forgot all about that. Yes. It was like a bad muffler on a motorcycle.

Exactly. Did you collect magazines or autographs?

No. No I didn't.

Today, as an adult have you collected any baseball memorabilia?

You know I have a terrible confession. I have some, but I never got a ball signed by Bart Giamatti, the commissioner; and you know I worked for him for about 6 months. Everybody else got a ball. I still have the ball he signed for my mother and it was just before she died. I lost my mother, my best friend, Dan Kavanaugh, and then I lost Giamatti. All within 30 days.

Oh my God.

It was one of the roughest 30 days I ever had. These were three people who I could say anything to, I could confide in. Bart and I were very close. He treated me like his son. It was a remarkable relationship. I don't know why, I guess the chemistry was great. I must have talked to him 12, 15 times a day if I wasn't with him and he was just an incredible human being and a great commissioner. Had a lot of guts. He had more guts than people give him credit for.

I used to get everybody's All Star autograph. I mean I went to World Series Games and All Star games and so I got balls autographed, but I don't have a lot of them. I've spent the last years, since 1989, doing autographs myself. I sign a lot of balls.

If I might ask, how did you get to be such good friends with Commissioner Giamatti?

I was his special counsel on the Rose case. I was introduced to him by Fay Vincent. I had known Vincent since 1974, 1975, when I was a prosecutor putting together a huge corruption case in Richmond. Vincent's firm had represented a wiseguy, an organized crime guy, named Sam Calabrese who was the final defendant convicted in that series of cases. I needed information from the law firm and in those days we didn't yank law firms around the way they do today. I got the information I needed from Fay Vincent. We worked out the privilege, etc. and then

it was always my habit to put everyone in the Grand Jury. I did not use the Grand Jury the way a lot of prosecutors do. I let the Grand Jury hear everything. Even documents, custodians etc. I let them hear everything. I put Fay on and he never forgave me. He said that was the most horrifying experience he ever had. I said, no we'll just ask you a few questions. In any event we became good friends and we ended up vacationing in Brewster, Mass., just on the other side of the Cape here.

In 1978, I was in my last year in the organized crime section and Fay called me and asked me to have lunch at the Dubliner in an Irish neighborhood. Fay had left his firm because he wanted to get some courtroom experience. He told me that Herbert Allen of Allen & Company had asked him to take over as president of Columbia Pictures and he wanted my view. Fay never even went to the movies. He didn't like to go to the movies, he liked to read, so we kind of laughed and spent 4 hours downing a couple of beers and it turns out, he told me later, I was one of only 3 people who told him to take the job. About 70 others told him not to take the job. He took the job and he did a terrific job and then he made a fortune, you know, when they sold it to Coca Cola.

In any event, I had just finished trying a case in Atlanta as a matter of fact. I went in the house at 10:30, put down my bag and the phone rang and it was Fay. He said "You have any conflicts with the Cincinnati Reds?" I said "No I don't think so". Now I had been so not reading the papers, because I was trying a case, and I had not seen that Rose had been summoned to New York and questioned by the commissioner elect. He said "Well, we're down in Washington. We're staying at The Hay-Adams Hotel. We're going to Arnold & Porter tomorrow to hire a special counsel, but I recommended that Bart talk to you based on all the experience you had in the department". So Bart came on the phone and my head was spinning, I was going (who is he?) where in the hell have I seen his name? It must be at Yale. He was actually President of the National League and I had forgotten it. He came on and it was one of the greatest conversations I ever had in my life. He questioned me for 40 minutes. It was really just like a wonderful conversation

you have with a judge. He asked me if I could be on a plane to Cincinnati at 8 the next morning. I said I could and he said "Well, you're hired". He said "Now listen these are the rules: everything you do the world will see, so make it perfect." I said, "Yes sir" and he said, "Wherever the chips fall, that's it" and "Whatever you need, you've got it. You've got the full authority of the commissioner. When you get a chance, go see Peter Ueberroth," who was the commissioner. So I did and that was just one of the great adventures and experiences of my life, to spend six months working for him. We were very close. It was just amazing how close we became and he was just a marvelous, marvelous human being. Brilliant man and he had it right. He understood what the fans understood about the game.

He seemed like he had great passion for both the truth and for baseball.

He did, exactly. As far as he was concerned, the game belonged to the fans. It did not belong to the owners. It did not belong to management. It belonged to the fans. He told us, if the court ruled against us, he said "John we will take it all the way to the Supreme Court and if they rule against me I'm going to put it to the fans. They can decide whether they want this bastard in the game." That's how tough he was. He was a lot tougher than people thought. I tell you the Rose people really underestimated him.

I know the people that will read this interview won't like this, but the last thing I want to do is to have this interview sound "newsworthy," because it gets me a little off track from why people love baseball.

I'm sure you've been to lots of ballparks. Which ballparks are your favorites and why?

Well, I think Dodgers Stadium. I just like the feel of it. I remember going there with some friends of mine years ago and I'll never forget the best foot long hot dog I ever had, but I just enjoyed it and I liked the atmosphere of it. It was very pleasant. Fenway Park, obviously, because it's so intimate and special and you feel like you are sitting on the field. I think Camden Yards I like very, very much. I think those are the top three.

You sort of took my next question. I was going to ask you about what your

favorite food is at the ballpark, but I'm guessing it must be hot dogs and beer?

That's right. Good old American hot dogs. That's what I love.

And good old American beer?

That's right. Cold.

What is your favorite characteristic about baseball.

Well, I think that it teaches patience. I think that the most patient ballplayers are the best ballplayers. I just think patience. You know to me, when you watch the game as a fan, I mean the rest of life is going so fast, in the ballpark you can slow down, sort of enjoy it, let it work its way. If you play the games, you've got to be patient. You've got to be smart and be patient. That's the thing that always stood out to me.

If you could have seen one pitcher or one hitter that was before your time, who would they have been and why?

I guess Lou Gehrig. He was one of my heroes growing up I used to read about. Another hero I had, believe it or not, is Clarence Darrow. At the age of 11 or 12 they just sort of fascinated me for the kind of people they were. I never saw Gehrig play, I mean I've seen films, but it would have been a real treat to see him play and I just never did. I think some of the black ballplayers I would have loved to see. Double Duty and some of the great pitchers. I think I would have loved to see them.

I think that your comment on Gehrig is great. Baseball would do better to polish him up a little bit more and have people talk about him. The older players from the 30's and 40's are certainly worth remembering.

Yes, and I'll tell you another ball player that I did see once was Warren Spahn and I only saw him once when he pitched for the Boston Braves. My dad used to take us to the Braves games too and the Red Sox. I remember one.

I don't know if you ever heard the story about Spahn and Williams. It's a true story and it's on tape now because Fay Vincent interviewed Spahn. The only time Williams faced Spahn, and I don't remember the year of the All Star game, but the first time it was beyond the middle innings, 7th inning. Williams came on and Spahn was on the mound and the count went to 3 and 2 and then Spahn threw one

by him, a high hard one. Williams swung and missed it. He stood at home plate and he looked out and he said "Spahnie that was some f???? pitch, some great God damn pitch" and he walked back to the dugout and he kept yelling.

He had a big voice I mean he would bellow. Spahn told us he kept yelling "That's the best f??? pitch I've ever seen and God damn I missed that thing" on and on and on. Fast forward to spring training and Braves are going to play the Red Sox down in Florida. Spahn is out running sprints in centerfield and who comes out there but number 9. He comes up to Spahn and he said, "Spahnie, I got to tell you that pitch you threw me at the All Star game, That's the best f??? pitch I've ever seen. God damn that thing had some speed." Spahn just laughed. Fast forward to the next All Star game, sure enough 6th inning Spahn's on the mound Williams is up with the count of 3 to 2. Spahn throws him a high hard one and William puts it in the 3rd deck. Williams is running down 1st base yelling "Spahnie I told you that's the best f??? pitch I ever saw. Way to go. What a pitch." And all the way around the bases he's yelling at him. Spahn says who else in baseball than you know who would think about one pitch for

an entire year? Spahn was an incredible pitcher, just incredible.

This has been wonderful. Let me ask you just two more quick questions. The first is tell me how baseball and politics are alike or not alike.

Well, I think in the game you have to have some compromises and so I think that's what happens in politics, in successful politics. It is in the act of managing the game because you know it is full of disputes and you have to manage all those disputes, from the throw to first and various other plays, etc. which occur in the game. There's always some rhubarb or dispute if you can manage that. The same is true in politics. The great politicians manage to achieve good things by getting people to work together even though they disagree. In that respect, I think they are similar.

I always thought that Bobby Cox would be good politician. He realized at the end of the day it doesn't matter if you win, all the games in May. It matters if you win the games in October.

He's quite a human being. I remember meeting him two years back. I guess it was at one of the All Star games or something. He came up to me and grabbed my hand. He said he wanted to thank me. Stan

Kasten was with him. He wanted to thank me for what I did in the Rose case. Not many people come up and say that to you. He appreciated the enforcement of the rules. That said so much about him.

Stan and I have been friends for 20 years. I actually played baseball on a very competitive senior division team with Stan. He's a heck of a baseball player as well as a terrific person. My very last question is would you have made a good commissioner?

I think I'd be a good commissioner, yes. I watched three. I was up close and gave advice to Peter and to Bart and to Fay, all completely different. That's why I'm so worried about the game. There is no cop on the beat and there has to be a cop on the beat, but you've got to be a fair cop and there is a way to do things. Everybody talks about the rules. There are a lot of cases when you achieve a really good result without embarrassing anybody and actually help players and coaches and umpires get themselves squared away in the gambling area. It can be done very effectively. I think I could be a very good commissioner.

Well, again thank you so much for your time.

John Dowd
"Truth and
Consequence"

***48th EDITION

BASEBALL DIGEST

Arnall
Golden
Gregory LLP
171 17th Street NW
Suite 2100
Atlanta, Georgia 30363