

From the upcoming book, **HOLLYWOOD BATTLEGROUND – SO YOU WANNA MAKE IT INNA MOVIES**. This is a tangential look back at things that have changed...

BASEBALL HOW DIFFERENT IT WAS

First off, no one on our team ever weighed over 300 pounds. And while Slats, who played shortstop for us, would cop cigarettes and chew on the same cigar butt all season, no one ever took steroids. Generally speaking, we looked more or less like everyone else. And we didn't spit. I remember our backup catcher spent most of our last baseball summer working on an obstruction in his nose but no one ever spit. Besides, we never figured spitting would help. And it just wasn't done either. There were signs in the subway and out in the stands that warned against "expectorating" and there was a fine if you disobeyed.

We also never wore batting gloves. Today it looks like they're getting ready for a blizzard. And with all the new gizmos, pads, wraps, shields and trusses, it's a miracle they can make it to the plate at all. And I have a theory about that. That's why the game now takes so long. It's because of all the preparations between pitches. First, there's the left batting glove that needs a tug. The bat never moved during the last pitch but the Velcro flew apart. Same with the right glove. Then it's time to spit. That's followed by a look at the bench where everyone else is spitting. Then there's the pitcher who keeps adjusting his cap and squirting through his teeth as he looks in for the sign.

In our day, the pitcher would just shake off one sign to look dramatic for his girl and we, with our bare hands wrapped around that Louisville Slugger, would aim for Canarsie.

We never threw bats at anyone or tossed ash cans out of the dugout either. And if you were a pitcher and conked a guy, you didn't stand mute like a belligerent ape. You apologized. A recent university study confirmed that in my day apologies never interfered with testosterone.

And if it was your day to pitch, you did the whole deal. No one fretted about pitches per inning. You threw until your arm fell off. You were the starter, middleman and closer. The catcher would relieve you only if you were near death. It was that way because our second string backstop couldn't handle the fastball. He couldn't handle the curve or changeup either. But I got to tell you, we always played into the sunset without any gizmos. It was glorious. And the dugout and field were dry when we left.

*-Mike Laurence, former manager-player,
the Robins, a sandlot baseball team, 1947-1949*



*Filmmaker perk,
ML with the White Sox*