

# REAL BASEBALL PROVIDED BY THE EAST COAST LEAGUE

## Career is Checkered\*

by Harold Martin

**F**ew baseball leagues have had the checkered career that the East Coast League has enjoyed during its eventful season. Although the league was first organized in 1914, the 1925 season will be but the sixth one to be started by the season. With the exception of 1922, the league has finished each year started, although the season was abbreviated on three different occasions.

From a three-club circuit back in 1914, the East Coast League has grown until it has eight members for the pennant chase of 1925, which opens tomorrow with games as follows:

Miami at Coconut Grove,  
Homestead at Fort Lauderdale,  
West Palm Beach at Lake Worth,  
Vero at Stuart.

This year, the East Coast League will operate as probably the only twin circuit in the entire country, the loop having been divided into two divisions, the northern and southern divisions, with four teams in each section. Members of each section will play an independent schedule, and the winners of each division will clash in a post season series for the championship, the winning team receiving a pennant offered by The Miami Herald.

In spite of disastrous seasons in the past, the league this year is on a firmer basis than ever and, unless the teams violate the salary and class player restrictions, every team

in the league should finish the season in good financial condition.

The league will operate this year as a semi-pro organization, playing two games a week, on Thursdays and Sundays. The schedule does not provide for a split season; all clubs will play through without a break.

Dr. W.E. Van Landingham of West Palm Beach enters upon his third year of the presidency of the league and, under his guidance, the loop finished a very successful season a year ago, and there is no reason why he cannot successfully pilot his charges through another good year.



**B**aseball has always been played on the lower East Coast since the first settlements were made. Intercity games were played in the early days, but it was not until 1914 that a regular league was organized, with Miami, West Palm Beach and Fort Lauderdale as members. Each club played two games a week in that year, one team always remaining idle. This season saw probably the fastest baseball played as ever offered in

Florida, all towns being represented by professional clubs before the season ended.

The cost of operating the clubs, however, proved too expensive and the league was not in existence in 1915. Attempts to revive the circuit in 1916 failed, and thoughts of baseball were driven out by the war during 1917 and 1918.

Independent baseball was revived in 1919, and much interest was taken, with the result that the league was reorganized in 1920, with Miami, Fort Lauderdale, West Palm Beach and Fort Pierce as members. The writer was elected president of the league and served until late in the season, when he was succeeded by the late Quince Bryan of Dania.

The 1920 season was a success, the teams playing two games a week and later three games per week.

The same four cities made the race in 1921, when the league was turned into a professional circuit under the leadership of A.D. Sample of Pompano, games being played six days a week. The cost, however, proved greater than the patronage, and the league cut its season short by a month.



\*See "Behind the Scenes," inside front cover.

As heavy deficits faced all four clubs at the end of the 1921 race, it was found impossible to revive the league in 1922, but in 1923, a start was made, with Dr. Van Landingham as president. The teams were composed of amateurs, but due to lack of interest, the league disbanded after only a few games were played. Independent baseball was played, however, by several members of the league.

Last year, the East Coast League was revived as a semi-pro organization, playing two games a week, with six cities as members; Miami,

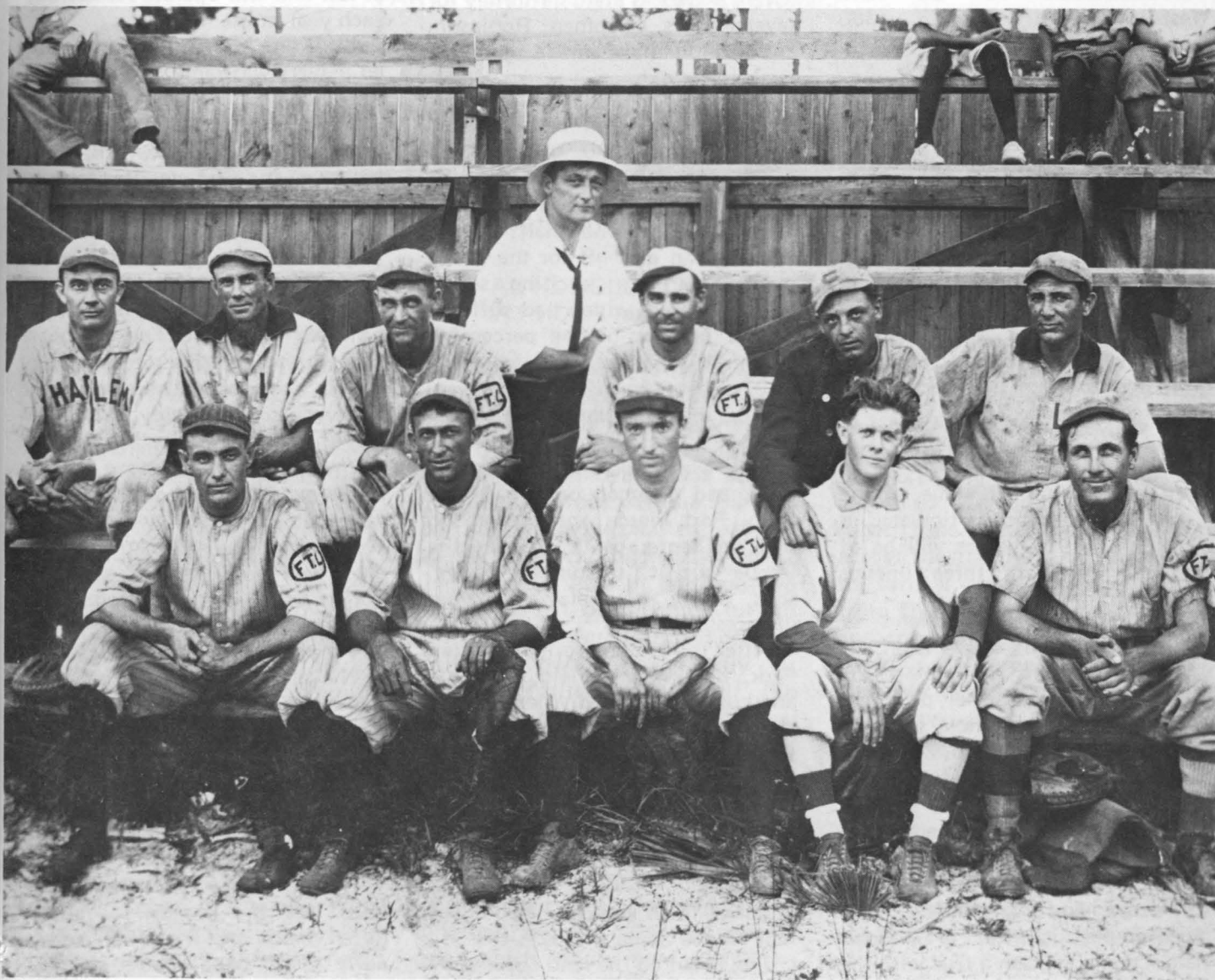
West Palm Beach, and Fort Lauderdale returning to the fold, and with Little River, Coconut Grove and Lake Worth as added starters. The race was a close one throughout, and the full schedule was played.

The plan of the present season to divide the circuit, with Miami, Coconut Grove, Fort Lauderdale and Homestead in the southern division, and West Palm Beach, Lake Worth, Vero and Stuart in the north end, was determined upon to cut traveling expenses and to save time in traveling. It

is thought that the plan will work out well.

No city in the league has ever won the pennant twice. The list of pennant winners is as follows:

- 1914: West Palm Beach (won post season series from Miami)
- 1915-1919: No League
- 1920: Miami (won post season series from West Palm Beach)
- 1921: Fort Pierce (won both halves, no post season series being necessary)
- 1923: League did not finish season
- 1924: Fort Lauderdale (won post series from Coconut Grove)



1915 Fort Lauderdale semi-professional baseball team. Front row: Tillmar, Williams, R. Horton, C. Berry, H. Lewis. Back row: J. Atchison, Forbes, Chappel, (unidentified man in shirt and tie), Read, O. Collins, Williams. Upper Left: George Hall, Dr. Stanford. [Historical Commission, Edith Lewis Collection]

All of the old-timers in Miami, Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach will remember the 1914 season, the year of the three-club circuit. Managers of the three clubs were: Miami, W.B. Burdine; Fort Lauderdale, W.J. Reed and Karl Horton; West Palm Beach, W.C. Groves. Miami won the first half race and West Palm Beach the second half. The standing at the end of each half was as follows:

	First Half		
	W.	L.	Pct.
Miami	14	9	.609
Fort Lauderdale	13	11	.541
West Palm Beach	8	13	.380

	Second Half		
	W.	L.	Pct.
West Palm Beach	12	10	.545
Fort Lauderdale	11	12	.473
Miami	10	11	.476

Three days before the season was scheduled to close, Fort Lauderdale disbanded, and Miami and West Palm Beach arranged a series of nine games for the championship. West Palm Beach, however, won five out of six games and captured the laurels.

The names of some of the players who participated in the 1914 games will be of interest. Here are three lineups selected at random:

West Palm Beach: Williams, ss; Benedict, lf; Hill, cf; McLean, lb; Utter, c; Barnett, rf; Emmert, 2b; Almegord, 3b, and Sevier, p.

Fort Lauderdale: Dion, ss; Starr, 2b; Purcell, lf; Horton, p; Zielinsky, 3b; Williams, cf; Atkinson, lb; Blanchard, c, and Lewis rf.

Miami: Chapman, c; Snedigar, ss; R. Taylor, lf; Swink, lb; Robinson, rf; Davis, 3b; Dillon, cf; P. Taylor, 2b; Price, p and Lanford, p.

After playing with Fort Lauderdale, Dion was given a trial with the Brooklyn Nationals. He later enlisted in the regular army, and has played here many times since on service teams from Key West. He

moved to Miami with his family only a few days ago.

In the Miami lineup are names of men that have since made themselves well-known in business and professional circles. Shortstop Snedigar is now Mayor of Miami Beach and one of Miami's leading attorneys. Four other members of the team have also made good in the legal profession in Miami. Robert Taylor is the new county solicitor. His brother, Paul Taylor, has a large practice. Price, better known as "Tubby," served for a time as municipal judge of Miami. Herman Swink served as state's attorney for several years. Chapman, Robinson, and Dillon have made good in business here.

In the 1920 season, West Palm Beach captured the honors for the first half and Miami the second half; Miami winning the play-off for the championship in an exciting series.

Fort Pierce, which had suffered at the bottom of the percentage column during the entire season in 1920, came to life with a vengeance in 1921 and, in the last week of the first half, overtook Miami, which took the lead at the start, and emerged on top of the heap. Fort Pierce won the second half on September 1, the day the league cut its season short and, thus, made any play-off games unnecessary.

After the 1921 season, old Tatum Park, now Miami Field, was sold and cut up as a subdivision, leaving Miami without any diamond except Royal Palm Park, which was not suited for supporting a paid team, as no admission could be charged. This was one of the chief reasons the league did not operate in 1922 and 1923.

Miami Field was dedicated at the first league game in 1924, the city having acquired the land covered by old Tatum Park, and the finest baseball plant in the state was built at a cost of more than \$125,000 for land and buildings.

Miami is not the only club in the league to play on excellent municipal diamonds this year. West Palm Beach and Lake Worth have both built elaborate municipal baseball parks and Fort Lauderdale is to have a new city-owned diamond before long. These city-owned parks insure East Coast League baseball in the future, as they will always be available for baseball.

Although the past in the East Coast League has been a stormy one, the writer is confident that the league is on a firm foundation at last and will operate successfully each year in the future.

"Loading" of teams with imported players was rampant even in the early days of East Coast baseball. The following from the Miami News Record of August 18, 1910, telling of the first of a three games series between Miami and Fort Pierce at Fort Pierce, illustrates this point.

*McDonough and Hadley did the battery work for Miami and Wyndham and Vadem for Fort Pierce. A wire from Secretary Crossland received here last night stated that Fort Pierce had only one local player in her lineup, the balance of the team being all league players. It was reported here last night that Jack Lee, the crack twirler of the Jacksonville South Atlantic League team, will pitch today's game for Fort Pierce. If these reports are true, it looks like Miami had butted into a proposition good and plenty.*

The attendance in the old days was very good, and if newspaper reporters are to be credited, there were larger crowds at some of the games than attend the contests today. The game on Labor Day, September 5, 1910, was described as follows:

*The best of the Labor Day attractions was the baseball game between Miami and West Palm Beach. Fully 2,500 people were gathered in the grandstand and grounds, and the game was one of the best ever played here, the score at the end of 10 innings being 1 and 1.*