

Proposal: Double Standards in the AAGPBL

The proposed project will discuss the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League (AAGPBL) and the dichotomy between the players' identities as athletes and as women, with a focus on the standards for beauty and behavior that the women were held to. These standards were in conflict with the athletic expectations of women who were expected to play like the male ballplayers who had gone to war. The proposed paper aims to explore the impact of these double standards on the women of the AAGPBL, as well as to expand on the research and works that have been published on the league.

During the second world war, women entered the work force en masse, taking over factory jobs in place of men who had gone off to war. Phillip K. Wrigley, then owner of the Chicago Cubs saw an opportunity in the world of baseball. Because of the war, many ballplayers had gone off to fight, leaving the major leagues without most of its players, and baseball without its biggest money-makers. In 1943, he founded the AAGPBL with a small number of other baseball club owners. The goal was to recruit female softball and baseball players from around the United States and Canada. However, he felt that it was important that the women of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League were not only good players, but that they were each a representation of the quintessential all-American girl as well. Because of this focus, much of the administration's focus for the first few years of the league's existence was on the conduct of its players.

For such an important part of women's sports history, the AAGPBL has gone largely unrecognized, with little acknowledgement from outside of the baseball or women's history spheres. When the film *A League of Their Own*, directed by Penny Marshall, was released in 1992, it sparked a wave of academic interest in the league and its players. A lot of existing

literature on the AAGPBL cover topics such as the significance of the league, or the general experience of its players but do not specifically cover the effects of the charm schools employed by the league or the league's codes of conduct. However, there is a significant amount of literature describing standards of femininity at the time, all of which would apply to the women of the AAGPBL, although not specifically about them. Rules and regulations put in place by the League, such as hair length rules or uniform requirements, were unrealistic when placed in conjunction with standards for professional baseball or softball players, even if those players were women.

According to sources like Margot Fortunato Galt's *Up to the Plate: the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League*, the players disagreed on how necessary or beneficial the league's charm school lessons were to them. Other sources, including *The Origins and History of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League* by Merrie A. Fidler, reference similar findings, while also placing an added emphasis on the AAGPBLs administrators reasonings for such regulations.

There is, however, little research with an exclusive focus on the rules and regulations and the effect they had on the AAGPBL or its players. There exist even fewer sources in which the argument, or even the research itself is formed surrounding the rules and regulations set for the players of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League. References to the influence and effects of the rules and regulations regarding appearance and conduct are scattered throughout interviews with former players, such as those featured in *A League of Their Own – The Documentary* produced by Kelly Candaele, or those brief mentions featured in *We Were the All-American Girls: Interviews with Players of the AAGPBL, 1943-1954* by Jim Sargent. The proposed project will fill in a gap and further expand on existing literature. The project will also

bridge to further discussion of standards of femininity in the mid to late 1940s in America, and possible future effects on women's sport.

HONOR PLEDGE: I hereby declare upon my word of honor that I have neither given nor received unauthorized help on this work.

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Annotated Bibliography

Primary

----. "A Guide for All American Girls: How to Look Better, Feel Better, be More Popular." In National Baseball Hall of Fame. Accessed January 23, 2025. Available from <https://www.aagpbl.org/history/charm-school>.

This charm school guide was given to the women who played as part of the AAGPBL in the first few years of its existence. The guide provides readers with a list of items included in their "All-American Girls Baseball League Kit", suggested beauty routines, and even stretches "For General Loosening and Circulation".

----. "The Rules of Conduct for Players as Set Up by The All-American Girls Professional Baseball League." In Northern Indiana Historical Society. Accessed January 22, 2025. Available from <https://www.aagpbl.org/history/rules-of-conduct>.

The rules outlined in this source are very specific about what kinds of behavior and appearances were allowed or prohibited. There also very specific consequences provided for breaking the rules provided by the AAGPBL.

Candaele, Kelly "A League of Their Own – The Documentary." Directed by Mary Wilson, March 28, 1987. Documentary video. Accessed January 30, 2025. <https://youtu.be/nO5WARN9RZQ?si=Zg3Em7NEMWfKLiDQ>.

This short documentary provides a short history of the league interspersed with interviews of various members of the league, including players like Pepper Paire Davis,

Marge and Helen Callaghan, and Faye Dancer. The players talk about their experiences playing, their experiences off the field, some even speaking about public perception at the time. There are also interviews with team chaperones and team managers, who talk about their roles and responsibilities.

Sargent, Jim. *We Were the All-American Girls: Interviews with Players of the AAGPBL, 1943-1954*. McFarland & Company Inc., 2013.

Sargent's interviews provide valuable insight into the experiences of many of the women of the league. Not every interview mentions the charm school or the codes of conduct, or even the uniforms, but the ones that do give greater context to the effects they had on player's time in the league. The other interviews provide useful background and the more general experiences of the league's ballplayers.

Secondary

Berlage, Gai Ingham. *Women in Baseball: The Forgotten History*. Praeger Publishers, 1994.

In *Women in Baseball: The Forgotten History*, Berlage argues that the history of women in baseball mirrors the rise and fall of women's liberation movements in America. The author also argues that, despite women's long history and involvement with baseball, women have been conditioned to believe that involvement with baseball is a masculine activity, and thus not fit for them. Berlage covers all of women's baseball history, rather than just the AAGPBL, providing further insight into the decisions made by administrators and managers of the teams in the league.

Browne, Lois. *Girls of Summer: The Real Story of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League*. 1st HarperPerennial ed. Harper Collins, 1993

Lois Brown, in this book, argues that the AAGPBL was, in some ways, a social experiment, and the pioneer force for women's sports in America. She does so by drawing on published promotional material, interviews and accounts of Phillip K. Wrigley, and accounts of the women who played for the league throughout its 11-year tenure.

Fidler, Merrie A. *The Origins and History of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League*. McFarland & Company Inc., 2006

Fidler's book is a thorough examination of the AAGPBL, its history, its players, and its administration. By drawing on and providing documents from the collections of the league's owner, several of the league's players, and publicity documents from the league,

the book provides simultaneously several primary sources as well as in depth analysis of the source's effects on the league.

Pierman, Carol J. "Baseball, Conduct, and True Womanhood." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 33, no. 1/2 (2005): 68–85. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40005502>.

In this article, Pierman presents the argument that the AAGPBL and its women challenged gender norms and became role models. They proved it was possible for women to play a "man's game". This source focuses on the standards for femininity at the time and the defiance inherent in the fact that the AAGPBL's players were filling in what were traditionally men's roles.

Pratt, Mary. "The All-American Girl's Professional Baseball League" In *Women in Sport: Issues and Controversies*, ed. Greta L. Cohen. National Association for Girls and Women in Sport, 2001.

Pratt's chapter in this collection argues that the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League marked a milestone for women's sports in America. The chapter presents the AAGPBL players as pioneers and as having played a critical role in proving that women could play a "man's game" and be just as good. A portion of the chapter also focuses in on the social reasons for Phillip K. Wrigley's standards of femininity and womanhood.

The proposed project will build upon the existing literature. Utilizing sources provided by the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League Players Association, and in secondary sources such as Merrie A. Fidler's *the Origins and History of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League*, the project will build up conversation about the effects of beauty and behavior standards on the women of the league.