



### **Let's Play Ball! 1913 Style!**

By Scott Fletcher

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As we head into baseball's 2021 post season, riding the wave of excitement swirling around the San Francisco Giants' amazing year, it's worth noting that the 'national pastime' has been thrilling and disappointing fans for over 150 years. Baseball, unlike any other major sport, has been played by teams representing every conceivable group of sports enthusiasts since the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Marin County, along with every other geographic region, fielded numerous teams at what was then called, and still is today, "the bush leagues." Pictured above is manager Alf Barrow and the players for the 1913 San Rafael Regulars, a semi-pro team that won the 1912 Marin County League Baseball Championship. The team posted another winning season in 1913 ultimately losing to the Mill Valley 'nine' in the championship series. Baseball was truly America's game in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with teams playing for every village, town, and city. Reading old box scores in the San Francisco Call newspaper, baseball teams represented towns (Sebastopol, Santa Rosa, Petaluma), neighborhoods (Visitacion Valley, Twenty Third Avenues, Oakland), companies (Union Street Merchants, Owl Drug Company, Carnation Mush), military units (U.S. Laundry Team, Coast Artillery), and who knows what (Tailenders, Tip-Tops, Yannigans and Barney Frankels).

The semi-pro or 'bush league' circuit was covered that year in a S.F. Call sports column titled, Bush Baseball Bingles by Big Bill; 'bingles' being an antiquated baseball term for a single. Players tended to change teams frequently, even within a season, while a few would play games for multiple teams; notice the player kneeling on the far right who is sporting the name of the rival San Rafael team; the 'Nationals' on his jersey. Star players for the 1913 San Rafael Regulars were pitcher and hitter, Freddie "Lefty" Johnson, along with catcher Brese Breslauer (front row left). A game recap from the Bush Baseball Bingles column provides a sample of the dramatic style of early 20<sup>th</sup> century baseball reporting.

"In the days of old Olympic Games -B.C.- the victors were lionized and hero worshipped. Something of this came to be the lot of Brese Breslauer last Sunday after he won the game against the Panamanians in the tenth by a clean swat over the fence when two were down. Brese's catching, throwing, and hitting have featured practically every game this year for San Rafael."

Everyone has their favorite sport, and for some, baseball is too slow and not as action-packed as football, hockey, or basketball. But for me, and many others, I'll take the game of baseball that comedian George Carlin so articulately described as being a "19<sup>th</sup> century, pastoral sport" that employs "relievers" and has a play called "the sacrifice", while being "played on a diamond at the park", whose main objective is, "to be safe at home."

*(October 11, 2021)*