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Rene Torres

University of Texas at Brownsville

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Recommended Citation

Torres, R., & Knoch, K. (2017). McAllen Nine Invade Mexico City. *Journal of South Texas*, 31(1), 123–125.

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McALLEN NINE INVADE MEXICO CITY

by Rene Torres and Kevin Knoch

The United States was struggling to recuperate from a near economic collapse sparked by the stock market crash nearly five years earlier. An uneasy feeling was over taking political observers in Europe as they watched Germany's new chancellor preside over the funeral of national hero Paul Von Hindenburg. Accounts of violence were splashed across the front pages of the nation's newspapers. A name that had come to symbolize "Gangland USA", Al Capone was awaiting transfer to a new federal penitentiary on an island in San Francisco Bay.

The Texas summer was at its hottest; James V. Alfred and Tom Hunter were left standing for a runoff for the Democratic Party's nomination for Governor, with the winner cruising to victory in November. In the Rio Grande Valley, farmers were desperate for cotton pickers as the crop matured. Many pickers had been recruited by upstate farms. In Brownsville, the Gateway Bridge was sold for \$100,000 just six years after it had opened.

Despite hard economic times and drought plaguing some parts of the country in the late summer of 1934 on common thread seemed to unite the country. Baseball was king when it came to entertainment. Cities, towns, and villages fielded teams in professional, semi-professional and amateur leagues which could be found throughout the land. The Detroit Tigers and New York Giants held onto slim leads in the American and National Leagues. Fans would follow the major leagues and their local teams with equal enthusiasm.

Baseball fans were saddened that the games biggest name was calling it a day. Babe Ruth announced in August 1934 that that would be his last as a regular player. The "Sultan of Swat" did state his desire to remain in the game as a manager or coach. The perennial home run king was being eclipsed by the Philadelphia Athletic Jimmy Foxx, the Tigers Hank Greenberg and New York Yankee teammate Lou Gehrig as the games top round trip producer.

Sunday's was baseball's day as town teams crisscrossed the Rio Grande Valley meeting rivals on a weekly basis. Port Isabel's Dr. James A. Hockaday was promoting the first annual Tarpon Rodeo fishing tournament on a nation wide basis. Participants were expected from across the country. Part of the entertainment would be a doubleheader baseball game between the Port Isabel Pelicans and team from San Juan to entertain the out of town visitors. In Valley baseball circles though, attention was turned south to a match-up of international rivals.

As late July approached on of the Rio Grande Valley's best semi-pro baseball teams was on the road. The McAllen Lions were traveling to Mexico City to take on the Aztecas billed as the championships of the republic. Mexico's national champs had earned their reputation as a premier ball club. Earlier in the year they had defeated American professional teams including Dallas and Fort Worth of the Texas League and Little Rock and Chattanooga from the Southern Association. They also held a victory over Portland, a member of the Pacific Coast League which was considered by many the third major league.

The Lions were set to take on the Aztecas in a seven game series at Delta Park in the Mexican capitol.



Poster courtesy-Rene Torres Collection

included manager H.E. Kyler, pitchers Raukin, Stroger, Young and Rozell while McGlothin took care of the shortstop position.

The Lions arrived on July 27th and met the Aztecas on Sunday, July 29th. The Lions stunned the Aztecas and crowd of three thousand spectators downing the home team 4-3. Ogden threw a seven-hitter striking out eight while walking one. The game was delayed by rain for thirty minutes in the fifth inning.

Ogden put on a how by trying to chase down a chicken in the rain, to no avail, when play resumed he promptly hurled four shutout innings for the complete game victory. Centerfielder Malcolm Sellers running catch of a deep fly ball preserved the victory, ending he inning affair took only one hour and fifty minutes, it's not known if the playing time included the rain delay.

The victory made the visiting McAllen club an overnight sensation in Mexico City. The Next game was scheduled for Monday, July 30th ad surely the Aztecas would be taking their opponents from north of the border a little more seriously. But that wasn't the case as Walsh hurled a 6-0 shutout allowing six hits, all singled, as the Lion's took a two game to none leas in the series.

Mexico's national champions did get serious in the next three contests.

They outscored McAllen 10-7 then evened the series with a 4-2 victory. The Lions lead the fourth game

A poster promoting the games declared the Lions were the Border and South Texas Champions and an affiliate of the Chicago Cubs. They were also billed as the white Americans on the poster.

The McAllen team had two pairs of brothers on their squad; Bill and Nick Yoder and Malcolm and George Sellers. Joe Ogden led the team's pitchers, also known for his crowd pleasing clowning antics; Bill Walsh also shared mound duties. Dan Sietz handled the catching duties. Third baseman and Captain Art Schacht and left fielder Kenny Brown were considered reliable hitters. Other members of the team

1-0 until the eighth when the Aztecas scored four runs on three hits, a walk, and an error. Walsh took the loss for the visitors.

The fifth game was moved to Monday, August 6th and was marked by a major controversy. McAllen led 4-0 on the fourth when the Aztecas loaded the bases. Mexico City's Centerfielder, Cuco Alfonso, drilled a ball down the third base line, clearing the bases and reaching third. According to the Brownsville Herald game report the umpire initially called foul. With the centerfielder standing on third the umpire changed his mind and ruled Alfonso's ball fair. Later in the inning, catcher Seitz and first baseman George Sellers collided on a pop up, Seitz was knocked unconscious and revived, Sellers was cut on the forehead. Both finished the game hurting. Mexico City took the game and the series lead three games to two with a 7-6 victory.

The series winner was decided in the next contest when the Aztecas downed the Lions 8-6 on Friday, August 10th. Two additional games were played and split by the two teams McAllen 8-7 on Saturday and lost 6-0 on Sunday, finishing the road trip with three wins and five losses against Mexico's best ball club.

Returning to McAllen on August 14th manager Kyler stated the club was considering an offer from the Aztecas to visit McAllen for a rematch. The Mexico City team wanted a guarantee of \$700 to visit the visit the City of Palms.

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