

Sports

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Pontiac woman says protest draws positive response

By Randy Reinhardt
Pantagraph staff

Already holding a particular affinity for third basemen, Marjorie Follett of Pontiac enjoyed her prime seat in Section 144, Row 10 behind the third base dugout for Tuesday's All-Star Game at U.S. Cellular Field in Chicago.

"We're very close to where he was," said Follett of her uncle, former major league third baseman George "Buck" Weaver.

No matter the outcome of Tuesday's midsummer classic, Follett was thrilled with the response her campaign to have Weaver reinstated to baseball's good graces received.

"Oh my God, you wouldn't believe it," the 89-year-old Follett said via cell phone on her way into the stadium. "It's like Christmas."

Weaver was sanctioned as a result of the 1919 Chicago "Black Sox" scandal. Although Weaver and seven other White Sox players were found innocent of conspiracy by a jury, they were nevertheless banned from baseball by commissioner Kenesaw Landis in 1921.

Weaver's supporters believe he should not be grouped with the other players who were paid by gamblers to throw the 1919 World Series. Weaver batted .324 in the Series, did not commit an error and did not take money. He did, however, know of the scheme and was banned for not sharing that knowledge.

Follett, Patricia Anderson (another niece of Weaver) and Champaign doctor David Fletcher enthusiastically handed out brochures documenting Weaver's case outside U.S. Cellular Field before the All-Star Game.

They were met with a similar enthusiasm, according to Follett.

"People would come up and tell me Buck was so great. And I just want you to know that he was a great man," said Follett. "They shook hands with me when they found out who I am."

The Weaver contingent has enjoyed considerable media attention during its stay in Chicago. Fletcher and Anderson did an extended interview Tuesday afternoon on radio station WGN.

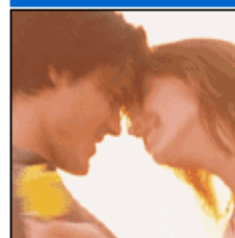
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Fletcher has launched a Web site titled clearbuck.com. The site urges people to sign a petition requesting Weaver's reinstatement.

"It's really been fantastic," said Fletcher, an avid baseball fan who was married at the site of old Comiskey Park's home plate. "The story is really growing."

Weaver played for the White Sox from 1912-20 and finished with a lifetime batting average of .272 with 21 home runs, 420 RBI and 172 stolen bases.

Baseball legend Ty Cobb once called Weaver "one of the greatest third basemen I ever saw."

Weaver died in 1956 in Chicago.

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