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## Weaver supporters still trying to buck Black Sox ban

By Don Doxsie

IT has been close to 84 years since they were banned from baseball.

But there's a mystique about the 1919 Chicago "Black Sox" that just won't disappear. There remains a core of baseball fans out there that just won't let it go.

There have been repeated efforts through the years by various groups to have the late "Shoeless Joe" Jackson reinstated so that he can be inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame.

At least two Web sites are devoted to Jackson's cause: shoelessjoejackson.com and blackbetsy.com.



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get himself reinstated while he was still alive. He produced a petition with 14,000 signatures in 1921. He unsuccessfully applied for reinstatement five times.

Some of the other players tried to get back into baseball, too, but their efforts were feeble by comparison.

Jackson filed a lawsuit for back pay a few years after being banned, but in the trial he completely contradicted his earlier testimony. A jury ruled in his favor, but the presiding judge reversed the decision and found Jackson guilty of perjury.

Many of the other players gave interviews through the years in which they confessed their sins, occasionally with a glint of disdainful satisfaction.

Not Weaver. He insisted until the end that he was innocent.

Another site — 1919blacksox.com — tells the story of the eight players in great detail. A book and film, "Eight Men Out," has ensured that their legacy of infamy will endure forever.

And there still are people out there trying to clear the name of third baseman Buck Weaver, the one Black Sox member who reportedly didn't accept any money and apparently didn't do anything to contribute to the plot to fix the 1919 World Series.

David J. Fletcher, the medical director of an occupational health services program called SafeWorks Illinois, is in there pitching for Weaver with a Web site called ClearBuck.com.

Fletcher is a doctor and a lawyer with offices in three central Illinois cities. He's clearly a highly intelligent man. But he's probably pursuing a lost cause.

Weaver tried everything imaginable to

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He certainly is depicted with sympathy in "Eight Men Out." Weaver, played by John Cusack, bristles when his teammates start throwing games and tries very hard to clear his name. He asks for a separate trial and begs to take the stand in his own defense. He angrily points out that he batted .324 in the Series.

Shortstop Swede Risberg, who spearheaded the fix, is sitting nearby in the courtroom, sneering.

"Nobody cares about your batting average, Bucky," he says.

But at least one guy in central Illinois still cares.

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Christine Thorburn, a former Pleasant Valley High School athlete, earned a spot on the U.S. Olympic cycling team last week, but she figures her career as an endurance athlete began in a road race sponsored by a newspaper back in her old hometown.

She won the 15-under age group in the QUAD-CITY TIMES Bix 7 in 1985, running the seven miles in 45 minutes, 16 seconds.

She finishing 20th overall in the women's field. She also was seventh in the 16-19 age group the following year.

"I think I was a third-grader the first time I did the Bix," she said. "That was how I started. I ran it seven times, or something ridiculous like that."

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This is how much the Bix 7 has changed since Thorburn won her age group: There wasn't a single Kenyan in the field that year.

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Thorburn isn't the only Quad-City distance runner who went on to make a name for herself in cycling.

"When I was running for Pleasant Valley, the best runner in the area was Julie Hudetz of Bettendorf," Thorburn said. "She got into road cycling, too, and turned pro. She was on the Seiko Timex squad for several years."

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Davenport's D.J. Whalen, a student at Smart Intermediate School, won local and state titles in the 13-14-year-old division of the Pepsi pitch, hit and run competition and finished third in the regional event last week in St. Louis.

Another Eastern Iowa kid — Jacob Edelman of Mechanicsville — was third in the 11-12 division.

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Brodie Houck, our designated fan expert on the Florida Marlins, was saying a few weeks ago that he liked interleague play because it meant his team got to play the Tampa Bay Devil Rays six times.

That was before the Rays reeled off 12 straight wins.

Brodie dropped another note this week: "I'd officially like to retract my statement about playing the Devil Rays six times as being a good thing."

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You've got to love Chip Caray's enthusiasm but maybe not his judgment.

The Cubs were playing the Cardinals on Tuesday night, and Tony Womack hit a smash to the right