

The Professional Era (1890-1892)

Modern fans might think of professional baseball in terms the major leagues, and their affiliated minor league teams. But, by definition, anyone who is compensated for playing ball could technically be considered a professional baseball player, and that certainly was the case in the Black Hills in the early 1890s. Revenue from the gold and silver mines meant a prosperous local economy and thousands of dollars were spent building ball fields, equipping teams, betting on the outcome of games, and securing the best players possible. Professional players, some of them ex-major leaguers, were recruited from other parts of the country with the promise of a “situation” (job) and many of the top players in Leadwood, Lead, and other towns were paid a salary as well.

An event in the world of professional baseball on the east coast had an indirect impact on the Black Hills. Since the creation of organized major and minor leagues in the 1870s, players were contractually bound to the teams they signed with under an informal reserve system. This resulted in restrictions in player movement, kept salaries low, and led to increased dissatisfaction among professional players. In 1885, John Montgomery Ward, a star player with the New York Giants, and a lawyer, helped create the Brotherhood of Professional Base Ball Players, which was the first sports union. In 1890 the Brotherhood established the Player’s National League of Professional Baseball Clubs and in addition to the National League and the American Association, was considered a third major league. The Players League, owned and operated by the players, was under-funded and lasted just the one season, and professional baseball reverted back to the reserve system. Although unsuccessful in making any permanent changes, the Brotherhood and the Players League helped raise awareness among players that they had choices about where they played and under what conditions, and many of them elected to leave organized baseball, at least temporarily, and play for independent teams such as those formed in the Black Hills.

However, in the spring of 1890, there was a pessimistic view of base ball in the Hills for the season. In March, one of the two Deadwood papers wrote, “...base ball will hardly occasion a force in the Hills the coming season inasmuch as the public will doubtless be engrossed with something more substantial and profitable.”¹ In late June, an editorial said, in part, “All over the country, smaller crowds and lessened gate receipts have been the rule; not, because patronage must be divided between rival aggregations of players, but because the people have become tired of their fun. The thirst for novelty is upon them again, and it is reasonably certain that the national game has had its day. It will continue to be played, just as people play croquet, although tennis is the latest favorite, but it [baseball] will be the universal sport no longer.”²

Neither club had formally organized yet, but Deadwood Mets opened their season on Sunday May 18 by defeating a pick-up team from Lead 14-8. Next, they hosted a combined team from Meade, Sturgis, and Whitewood. Both teams played poorly, “In fact the playing was so rank that it was really funny”, and in the sixth inning with the game tied “somewhere in the twenties” the visitors decided to quit over what they felt were poor decisions by umpire Ed Gardener, and the umpire awarded Deadwood a 9-0 forfeit win. The only redeeming feature of the game was

that “the attendance was fair, enough money being taken into defray all the expenses.”³ The Mets went up to Spearfish to play the college nine during the graduation ceremonies at the Normal School, the players staying over for the commencement exercises that evening, and then faced Lead again. Lead turned the tables, winning 13-6, but the most interesting part of the day was a three-inning preliminary game in the morning which saw the “Posies” defeat the “Rosies” 62-13.

Attempts to form a team in Lead City were delayed when early organizational meetings were poorly attended. After a pickup nine from town lost to the Mets in mid-May, another meeting was scheduled and the following plan was suggested: “Let the base ball enthusiasts of Deadwood and Lead get together and form an association, backed with sufficient capital to do business. Get a good battery from abroad in here; help them get situations, thus saving the expense of paying them a salary; select the best players from the two teams and appoint a captain who will make them practice. Call the team say, ‘The Golden Belts’, put Metropolitan Park in good repair and increase the seating capacity, and play only Sunday and holiday games. Appoint a hustling manager, who will bring in good clubs as attractions, and the gate receipts will easily pay all expenses.”⁴

Nothing was heard from Deadwood about the scheme, so the Lead Base Ball Association met again a couple of weeks later to formally organize. An “enthusiastic” group formed a stock company with the goal of selling 2,000 shares at one dollar each, with terms of ¼ down, ¼ in 30 days, and the balance due in 60 days. They formed a committee to canvas the city’s businessmen to solicit subscriptions and were met with “gratifying results.” The subscriptions and the one-dollar dues from each of the club’s members, provided enough capital to secure new grounds, including “comfortable seats for the ladies.” At first, they planned to lay grounds at an old shooting range and erect a new fence and grandstand and bragged that, once completed, “Prospect Park” would be the finest grounds in the west. It was never reported why that site was not used, but a couple of weeks later Lead located a new site on land owned by the Hiawatha Mining Company and were allowed to lease the land for free if they named the grounds “Hiawatha Park”.

A team formed at the army post of Fort Niobrara, Nebraska planned a week-long tour through the Hills. On July 10, the soldiers scored seven runs in the eighth inning to take a 12-10 win over Deadwood. Deadwood’s downfall was mainly due to the wildness of their pitcher Walter Simpson but a key play in the big inning was when fans interfered with a ball in play and, “...it was claimed that if the spectators in the field had let the ball alone, the result would have been different, but the umpire (a Sargent Rierden brought from the fort by the soldiers) let it pass.”⁵ Fort Niobrara was home to the 9th Cavalry, a segregated black regiment, sometimes referred to as the “Buffalo Soldiers” and it is notable that two of their players, second basemen Reynolds and shortstop Beale, were described by the Deadwood paper as “colored privates” and were likely members of the 9th Cavalry.

Rapid City was late in organizing in 1890. First, extensive repair to the grounds were needed because the fence had blown down during a windstorm and the diamond had become all trampled and cut up from the hooves of the stray horses and cattle that had wandered onto the field. When the team from Fort Niobrara made its tour through the Hills that summer, they wanted to

stop for a game in Rapid City, but at first Rapid City had to regretfully decline saying, “there was a time in Rapid City’s history when the request for a game from a visiting nine was not allowed to go unheeded, and whenever a crowd of ball players came here they were not only given a chance to play ball but were defeated on the diamond and pleasantly entertained afterward.”⁶ When Niobrara did pass through town, “The baseball boys, after considerable rustling, gathered together nine players, the most of whom had not touched or handled a ball previous to yesterday’s game last season...”⁷

In what was their first game of the year, Rapid City “sadly out of practice”, lost to Niobrara 18-7. As a result, manager Thomas all of a sudden found himself besieged with offers from other clubs because, “...every cow country base ball organization looks upon the ball club from this city as an easy mark.” One of those offers was an invitation to play in Deadwood, but Thomas reminded Met manager Lowerre that last year Rapid City had played at Deadwood several times but they had never played at Rapid, and that he had no intention of going to Deadwood unless they agreed to come to Rapid City first. Thomas added, “It would seem as though the Deadwood ball tossers take the Rapid City nine for a lot of chumps.”⁸

Although the season was nearly half over, the Deadwood Base Ball Association met on July 15 at the parlors of the fire department to effect, “a permanent and “thorough” organization. Paul Rewman was elected president, Fred Eccles secretary and treasurer, and the directors were Frank Abbott, Clay Lambert, Al Lowerre, and Walter Simpson. The seventy-five members each paid \$1 dues with funds going to repair the grounds at Metropolitan Park, including moving the grandstand to the rear of the backstop and extending the fence nearer the creek. The election of a club treasurer was important because now someone had the authority to field offers from outside clubs and negotiate financial details such as wagers or other inducements. The infusion of capital from dues and other fund-raising efforts also allowed the Base Ball Association to recruit outside players.⁹

With organizations now in place, both Deadwood and Lead began to strengthen their teams, Lead added pitcher Al Garretson who had been in the Hills two years earlier, in 1888, having been employed by the *Deadwood Pioneer-Times* on the “up-gulch” beat. In 1890 he was living in Flat Rock, Michigan and expressed a desire to return to the area “provided employment was guaranteed him” and he was hired on as the local editor of the *Lead City Tribune* and later with the *Lead City Herald*. Many outside players were provided jobs by local businesses during the summer, and Garretson may have been one of the few who secured a position for which he had previous experience. In addition, prior to his return to Lead it was reported that he once pitched against Detroit of the Western League but no record could be found of him pitching professionally in Michigan.¹⁰ With limited information available to verify claims, this may have been an example of a player embellishing his baseball exploits to make him more attractive to new teams.

Deadwood’s new additions were pitcher Thomas Flanagan¹¹ and a catcher named Asa Murphy¹², from a semi-pro club in Omaha. Flanagan, a native of Philadelphia, started his professional career with Kalamazoo, Michigan in 1887, pitched for Wheeling, West Virginia the

next year, and for Sioux City, Iowa in 1889. He spent the early part of 1890 with both Denver and Lincoln of the Western Association before joining the semi-pro Eden-Muses of Omaha before being recruited by Deadwood. According to one report¹³ early in his career he had been signed by both the Cleveland and Detroit clubs of the American League. Patterson pitched in various minor leagues until 1900, but never reached the major leagues.

By mid-July, Deadwood merchants had provided enough financial backing to get Metropolitan Park ready for play and the Mets scheduled a game with Lead for Sunday, July 27, and the club made every possible preparation for the big day. A special train was arranged from Lead, handbills were distributed around town, the Met band was on hand to provide music, scorecards (five cents) and cigars from Lowerre's store were for sale on the grounds. A special invitation was made to the ladies with "utmost decorum" promised.¹⁴

The town marshal and members of the police force were employed to maintain order, including a police presence on the hill to prevent fans from sneaking in. A crowd, said to be the largest ever to see a game in Deadwood, packed the amphitheater. This did not include those watching the game in a dozen or more carriages, others standing by the brick building, or sitting on the hillside under umbrellas under willow trees. Admission was twenty-five cents, but with a crowd estimated at between 400 and 500 people, gross receipts were only between \$60 and \$65, meaning the police, even though they were credited with, "some tall rusting", were not successful in keeping out the deadbeats. "This sort of work will not be tolerated at another contest", said the *Pioneer-Times*, "or there will be trouble."¹⁵

As for the game itself, Lead batters couldn't hit Deadwood's new pitcher Flanagan at all, managing to score just three runs and striking out fourteen times. Garretson, the Grays new pitcher, actually pitched well, most of the Mets runs scoring on errors, (Lead committed sixteen on the day) but the game was still somewhat in doubt until the ninth inning when Deadwood scored ten runs off of a tiring Garretson and won easily 22-3. Another notable aspect of the game was that a double umpire system was tried, implying that this may have been one of the first times this had occurred. Each team got to select one man; the Grays picked Henry Schultz and the Mets Andy Malone, with the two men switching between working home plate and the bases mid-game.

Deadwood scheduled a return game at Niobrara two weeks later, with a stop in Rapid City on the way, on Sunday, August 3. In just their second game after the 18-7 thrashing by Niobrara, Rapid City gave Deadwood a surprisingly close game. Deadwood took an early 10-2 lead but Rapid City scored eight fifth inning runs to tie the score at ten-all and knock Mets starter Walter Simpson out of the game, and the new recruit, Flanagan, had to come in to save the game. Rapid City batters also were able to hit Flanagan's "curves and shoots", tying the game again at fourteen, but the Mets scored three (most on Rapid City errors) in their half of the inning and Deadwood held on to win 17-14.

The *Pioneer-Times* of Deadwood, in their report of the game, said, "...the demeanor of the Rapid crowd was characterized by much ill-feeling and discourtesy." The *Times* went on to add, "The Mets received no consideration whatever. They [the Mets] were neither received upon arrival

or shown any hospitality during their sojourn. They were compelled to hire a farmer to take them to the grounds, and throughout the game were treated to insults and almost to violence.”¹⁶ The *Rapid City Journal* acknowledged that the crowd may have been a little rough but said, “...none of their players were assaulted and the club was treated fairly in everything, and good-natured chafing of the players was all that the spectators indulged in. They did, it is admitted, guy (tease) Flanagan, Simpson, and Murphy unmercifully, but that was all.”¹⁷

Things got off to a poor start when the team arrived in Chadron and found no one from the host club to meet them at the train depot and escort them to their hotel (as was customary), and the bad feelings only got worse during the game that afternoon. Deadwood held a 6-5 lead with two outs in the ninth inning, but Chadron put runners on first and third. Ralph Bettinger, Chadron’s catcher, was on first base and attempted to steal second. The *Black Hills Times* described what happened next: “[Bettinger] was caught and then the dirty loafer deliberately knocked the ball from [Deadwood second baseman John] Apfield’s hands, and then struck him with a violent blow with his clenched fist. Apfield started to retaliate and all of Chadron’s players gathered around him, but a gentleman from Rapid City rushed out and drawing a revolver told Bettinger he would shoot him full of holes. The Marshall interfered, however, and saved the white-livered cur’s life.”¹⁸

During the melee the other Chadron base runner came home from third, and although the inning should have ended when Bettinger was put out, home plate umpire Gus Hanlon allowed the tying run to count, sending the game into extra innings. The *Times*, in their game story, had some choice words for umpire Hanlon. First, they said he was employed as a receiver “or something of the sort” in the Chadron Land office, and cautioned that, “...the government should have an eye on him.” The *Times* further described Hanlon as, “...the traitor whom they dignified by the name of umpire”, and “a dirty rounder who had been employed by the gamblers to umpire the game.” Once order was restored, the teams played a scoreless tenth but in the eleventh, Flanagan of Deadwood reached second and apparently scored the winning run on Garretson’s hit. Bettinger tagged him long after he crossed the plate, but Hanlon called him out, keeping the game tied. Neither team scored in the twelfth, and in the thirteenth inning Chadron scored the winning run when the Met’s Apfield and Simpson collided and let an easy pop fly drop.

Several of the Rapid City fans who attended the game provided an interpretation of the events when they returned home that were printed in the *Rapid City Journal* a few days later. As to the disputed play in the ninth inning, Deadwood pitcher Flanagan attempted to pick the runner off third, and the Met third baseman relayed the ball to second baseman Apfield to try to put out Bettinger. John Applegate, a resident of Deadwood, was umpiring the bases, and it was he who ruled Bettinger out, while the home plate umpire, Hanlon, erroneously allowed the tying run to score from third. The *Journal* made no mention of the display of firearms, but did say that a Rapid City gentleman, “...about Bettinger’s size stepped between them.” The accounts in the Deadwood and Rapid City papers did agree that Bettinger was a “cur”, and a “cowardly bully.”¹⁹

The *Pioneer-Times* of Deadwood ran a report of the game, reprinted from the *Chadron Journal*, which, predictably, had a different view of the events. First, they contradicted Deadwood’s claim of poor treatment upon arrival in town saying, ‘They [the Deadwood team]

were met at the depot by the Chadron management, extended the hospitality of the city, and every effort was made to entertain them pleasantly.” Next, they claimed to have covered \$1,000 in bets and accused the Deadwood backers (fans who had accompanied the team) of being cocky, saying that they arrived in Chadron, “loaded to the guards with boodle”, and singing ‘We wouldn’t go to Chadron if we didn’t think ‘twould pay”, and that Deadwood intended to win and double their money “by fair means of foul.” The *Journal* billed the game as a contest between the “hired professionals” of Deadwood against the amateur “hayseeds” of Chadron and suggested that once Chadron had taken a lead (and bets on Deadwood were in danger of being lost) Hanlon and certain Chadron players were approach by Deadwood backers about throwing the game in the Mets favor.

The *Journal* reprint in the *Pioneer-Times* also claimed that all the trouble started in the first inning when umpire Hanlon called a balk on Flanagan, allowing the aforementioned Bettinger to take second base. Flanagan objected and after an argument the *Journal* said that lasted three-quarters of an hour, Hanlon, for some reason, left the decision up to the base runner, Bettinger, and, “...that gentleman promptly voiced the decision of all fair-minded spectators in declaring himself entitled to the base.”²⁰ The article also said that it was the second umpire, Applegate, who was the cause of the trouble, not Hanlon, who the *Journal* said was, “well known as a fair umpire and one of the best posted base ball experts west of Omaha.” The *Journal* even took exception to the reporting of the Deadwood press saying, “As to the frothy mouthings (sic), the dastardly personal abuse and the fishmonger billingsgate of the daily press of Deadwood, it only deserves the contempt of honest people who can play a game of ball and lose a dollar without sneaking home to cry about it.”²¹ The *Journal* added, The way the Hills people jumped the town in the night, after public announcement had been made for two games, and after managers Rewson and Zerby had agreed Sunday evening to play the second game next day as advertised, makes them appears as small boys in a marble game. Great babies of Deadwood!”²²

For some reason, Met manager Al Lowerre did not accompany the team, so Paul Rewman, a director with the Deadwood Base Ball Association, substituted in his place. The two teams were scheduled to play again the next day, but Deadwood would only agree if a new umpire worked the game. Chadron refused, so the Mets packed up and came home. Rewson said, “We were umpired out of the game, treated discourteously, robbed on the highway, and I refused to let the men play a second game. We had the Chadron team beat three times but they declare we had lost and without having a riot, there was nothing for us to do but to quietly get away from the robbers before they attempted to swipe our clothing or baggage.”²³ When Rewson telegraphed Lowerre with a report of the game, it was said. “Al [Lowerre] fairly lit a cigar with his wrath.” An apology from the mayor of Chadron did little to ease the hard feelings but there was one consolation for the Deadwood club; the players won enough money in the gambling houses in Chadron to cover the losses on the bets they had made on the game.

Lowerre made the following statement, “The game was a disgraceful affair on the part of the Chardonites, insofar as I can learn from the Deadwood citizens who were there. Out boys were robbed, rubbed, rolled, and skinned. Guns were drawn and would have been used had it not been for cooler heads. I am satisfied with the playing of my men, but the umpiring was so rotten that

there is no use going into details. Flanagan pitched a terrific game (he struck out twenty-one Chadron batters) and all the men played well, but it was no use; the pot-gutted umpire had evidently been fixed and was bound the Chads should win. I am told the more respectable class of citizens left the grandstand before the game was over, and the mayor even apologized. Applegate was fair but was helpless. It isn't the money that changed hands that I care anything about. I was not interested that way. But I have a good team of ball players, boys who play for the amusement there is in it, and naturally proud of their good playing and are winners when a fair contest is allowed. How those men [Chardon], seven out of the nine, who were here one year ago and treated so courteously, could transpose themselves into a band of stinkers is more than I can account for. One of the players in the Chadron club made the quiet remark that if he was captain, he would give the game to Deadwood. When the Chadron club were here, they were treated as gentlemen. We even banqueted them, paid all of their expenses, and this is the treatment we get."²⁴

With tempers still hot, a few days later Lowerre fired off a telegram to Chadron manger D. W. Zerby challenging them to another game and suggested that if they failed to accept, Chadron were "cowards and robbers." Terms offered by Lowerre were for stakes of \$500 to \$2,000 (the Mets had already deposited \$250 in the First national Bank of Deadwood) for a game on neutral ground (Lowerre suggested Rapid City) with the winner to pay the expenses of a league umpire. Lowerre suggested both clubs play with the same nine that took the field in Chadron, including Bettinger, "who will be given every opportunity to display his prowess as a ball player but who will not be permitted to caper over the diamond as a slugger and foul-mouthed loafer." Chadron accepted the challenge for a game on Monday, August 11 in Deadwood and, perhaps sarcastically, the Chadron manager signed his communication, "P. S. Kind Regards to All The Boys."²⁵

Renovations to Hiawatha Park in Lead were finally complete, so with the Chadron team already in the Hills and watching from the stands, the Grays hosted the Mets on Sunday August 10 to formerly open the park. The grandstand seating 300 was moved to directly behind the backstop, and bleaching boards (bleachers) were erected along the first and third base lines. The grounds sloped upward from home to center, offering spectators who stood beyond center field, a "birds-eye view" of the action. The Mets edged the Grays 9-7 in a close and exciting game before 400 fans, including a "liberal sprinkling of the fair sex", but, due to the "deadbeats watching from the hillside" only \$83 was taken in.

The Mets then faced Chadron in a re-match the next day at their home grounds in Deadwood. In contrast to the game in Chadron the previous week, this game was a well-played (three combined errors) pitcher's duel between Flanagan and Williams of the visitors. The *Pioneer-Times* said, "...a more orderly and friendly game was never played", and of the Chadron nine commented, "...they are a bully lot of boys compared to the horny-handed lot of desperados they were painted a few days ago."²⁶ The Mets catcher Asa Murphy hit a two run homer in the first and shortstop Fred Eccles put the game away with another homer, this one into the creek, to give Deadwood a 4-2 win. The *Pioneer-Times* writer used extreme hyperbole into his game accounts, adding that that Eccles "hit the ball so hard that he dashed around the entire diamond and had a cigarette before the twirler had it in his fist."

While in the Hills, Chadron stopped off in Lead, defeating the Grays 14-13, and then returned to Deadwood for one more game before returning home. The Mets won a sloppily played game 20-16, the *Pioneer-Times* writer describing the playing, "...like a lot of deranged hoodlums", and, "It was fumble and muff from start to finish."²⁷ Figuring his club had now fairly won the season series with Chadron, two games to one, Lowerre declined an offer for a return game in Nebraska. Despite the poor playing, after the game Lowerre received a handsome bouquet with a card that read, "Presented to the Metropolitan base ball club by the ladies of Deadwood". The club was also presented with a handsome red silk banner ... The game summary also noted, "Frank Smith showed his appreciation for the club by giving them a keg of beer."²⁸

The next club to make a tour through the Black Hills was from Stanton, Nebraska, said to be the top amateur nine in the state. Rapid City, who despite their late start, still had a number of talented players in town including, Johnny McElroy, Cash Leady, Charley Howe, and Ed Carroll, and they edged Stanton 13-12. Stanton went on and beat both Lead and Deadwood before stopping off again in Rapid City on their way home. The two clubs played another tight game, with Stanton taking a 9-5 lead into the ninth inning. The home club scored three runs but their rally fell short as Stanton held on to beat Rapid City 9-8. The trip was something of an audition for the members of the Nebraska club as two of their best players, Dick Purcell and Jimmy Hart, later joined the Lead Grays.

On August 23 the *Lead Herald* reported that Deadwood's imported battery, Flanagan and Murphy had "resigned", but the *Pioneer-Times* clarified the circumstances, saying that the two players had been fired for "habitual drunkenness". Lowerre was quoted as saying that he would, "play with his home battery and take his chances on winning with sober amateurs, rather than drunken professionals."²⁹ Flanagan tried to hook on with a club in Omaha, and interestingly, just a few days after his departure from Deadwood, Lowerre provided glowing letter of recommendation. He wrote, "The boys, Flanagan and Murphy, leave here today for home, and I feel duty bound to write you regarding their work here. They certainly played magnificently; were gentlemen all through, and I regret very much to see them go. If they ever want a recommend let them refer to me. I thank you very much for the interest you have taken in our team". A. A. Lowerre, Manager. Around the same time, it was reported that Lowerre was negotiating for the sale of two other members of the Mets, "due to indebtedness of the club"³⁰, so his praise of Flanagan may have been a tactic to increase the player's selling price.

Deadwood's addition of Flanagan and Murphy, and, to a certain extent, Lead's acquisition of Garretson earlier in the summer, marked the beginning of the practice of Black Hills teams seeking outside players to strengthen their teams. One of the reasons for the animosity in the early Deadwood/Chadron game was that Chadron's accused Deadwood of "loading up" with a professional battery from the Western League. While both Deadwood and Lead were open in their efforts to strengthen their teams, Rapid City was more subtle. Late in the season they announced that a star catcher named Ned Barnes, from nearby Custer, South Dakota, had been engaged for balance of the season."³¹ Later he was joined by his brother, pitcher Bud Barnes, and it was

reported that, "The Barnes boys have expressed their intention of becoming permanent residents of this city [Rapid] ...having obtained positions here."³²

Rapid City and the Grays then scheduled a game for Sunday September 7 at Hiawatha Park in Lead. A rockslide blocked the Piedmont train track at Elk Creek canyon, delaying the Rapid City team's arrival in Lead until Monday morning. They went straight to the grounds and two clubs played a back-and-forth game until Grays scored five runs in the ninth inning to tie the score at twelve. However, umpire Romeo Marshall decided to end the game so that Rapid City could catch the last train of the day home. The clubs departed on good terms with "...three ringing cheers for the gentlemanly and skillful ball players of the Gate City..."³³

A return game at Rapid City was planned for Thursday, September 8 but Lead cancelled at the last minute, citing the inability of their manager, Doctor Dickinson, to leave town as the reason. The game was rescheduled for the following Thursday, September 25, but Lead cancelled again, claiming that they were unable to secure a special train on the Piedmont line, meaning that they would have had to spend the night in Rapid City instead of going up and coming back on the same day. The cancellations miffed the Rapid City club as they had gone to considerable trouble and expense (\$45) to fix up the grounds and promote the game by printing and distributing handbills and notices in the paper.

The two clubs apparently ironed out their differences and agreed to two games on the first weekend of October, the Saturday game in Rapid, and Sunday (if it didn't snow) in Lead. Rapid City's new pitcher Bud Barnes, whom the local paper said was the "best pitcher that has ever been in the Black Hills", held Lead to one hit, and his teammates, including his brother and battery-mate Fred Barnes, hit Garretson freely in a 17-2 win for Rapid. Nonetheless, when the Lead club took the freight for home, "they were a jolly, good-natured, pleasant, gentlemanly crowd, who won the hearts of the Rapid City boys." In fact, one Rapid City player remarked, "They are such good fellows that I wish they had won the game."³⁴ The return trip was made even more pleasant by Romeo's Marshall's guitar and the fact that, reportedly, manager Dickinson refused to allow the boys to talk of politics on the trip.³⁵

Rapid City boarded the Black Hills and Fort Pierre railroad freight the next morning for Lead and were met at the depot and entertained by the Grays until game time. The two clubs battled to a scoreless tie through eight innings, with the most notable event umpire Harry Marshall being knocked unconscious by a foul ball. After recovering, he finished the game "in a fair and impartial" manner and "gave complete satisfaction to both nines." Lead put runners on first and second with no outs in their half of the ninth and both runners moved up a base when Bud Barnes balked. But he struck out the next two Gray batters and a ground out ended the threat. In the bottom of the ninth, Rapid City finally pushed across a run when Carroll singled, stole second, and scored on a run-scoring single to left by Faulkner. The 1-0 Rapid City win was called, "best game ever played in the Hills."³⁶

After the hard feelings of a couple of weeks earlier, the *Rapid City Journal* wrote, "The Rapid City boys are under many obligations to the Lead ball players for the many courtesies showered upon them while in Lead City. Nothing was too good for them and everything free and

without cost. The visitors who accompanied the ball nine were treated splendidly and made to feel that they were among friends.”³⁷ When the train started for home it was discovered they [the Grays] had provided for their visitors “comfort in several ways” (most likely alluding to some alcoholic spirits) and “during their homeward journey the Rapid city boys did not lack good cheer.” The Rapid City paper added that the team and their followers, “. . . had a most enjoyable trip home. . . the boys and their friends found amusement in music, vocal and instrumental. It was a jolly, good-natured crowd and everyone in it arrived home safe and sound and pleased with their visit to Lead City and glad that they had visited there.”³⁸

Little had been heard from the Deadwood Mets over the past month. In late August the Grays defeated the Mets 16-12 with the Mets playing a miserable game, “all through muffling, fumbling, and poor throwing.” The brief game story said, “. . . there is no use going into the details of the game, as it would tire the reader.”³⁹ A few weeks later the *Rapid City Journal*, reprinting an article from the *Lead Tribune*, wrote, “The glory of the Deadwood baseball nine is a thing of the past, and it is doubtful if the club will ever again gather enough energy to go on the diamond for almost certain defeat. Since the imported battery [Flanagan and Murphy] resigned, or was discharged and went away, the club has steadily refused to play.”

However, immediately after the Rapid City/Lead series, Deadwood challenged Lead to a game for \$50 a side, half the gate receipts, and the “championship of the Black Hills.” When the Rapid City players caught wind of this, they angrily asked, “By what right can either club that wins tomorrow’s game claim the championship of the Black Hills?”, pointing out that they had just defeated Lead twice and beaten Deadwood earlier in the season. Rapid City issued their own challenge to Deadwood, daring them to put up \$1,000 and promised that the amount would be covered by Rapid City backers, “so quick that it will make the Deadwood fellow’s head swim.” Their challenge stipulated the following conditions: that Deadwood choose the location of the game (Sturgis, Meade, or Rapid City), the umpire would be from Lead City, and Deadwood play with the same nine they used in the previous two games against Rapid City. They closed their challenge by saying, “This is business, Mr. Deadwood. Get up your snuff.”⁴⁰

Apparently, the Mets ignored the challenge from Rapid City and went ahead with their planned game with Lead for the championship of the Hills. Deadwood announced that they had acquired Kid Mohler, and his catcher, along with two other professionals from Nebraska, but the game was cancelled due to snow. The two clubs finally got together on Sunday October 19 at Hiawatha Park in Lead, and the Grays had an easy time of it winning 17-3. Neither of the Deadwood papers said much about the game, the *Black Hills Times* only saying that much money changed hands, including the Grays taking the \$100 purse, and the *Pioneer-Times* reporter said that he, “. . . tried to keep track of the errors made by the Mets, but gave up in disgust in the second inning.”⁴¹

Rapid City took note of the Lead/Deadwood game with interest, and after seeing the Mets get beaten so badly by the Grays, the *Journal* couldn’t resist taking a shot at Deadwood saying, “. . . the Grays fairly mopped the earth with what was once known as the Mets of Deadwood for the championship of the Hills. They are past and forgotten, never to be on earth again, unless they can

import several professional players. The Deadwood contingent...showed their ignorance by betting on their sure winners, and their good old money was gladly taken in by Lead supporters”⁴² Rapid City acknowledged how well Lead played but emphasized that the game only decided the championship of two “up-gulch” teams, not that of the entire Black Hills.

The Barnes Brothers

Although many teams secured professional pitchers, and sometimes catchers and other position players, from outside the Hills, the best battery in the area during the early 1890s were local men, pitcher Ross “Bud” Barnes, and his brother A. G. “Ned”, a catcher. Originally from the nearby town of Custer, the brothers started out with the Rapid City club at the end of the 1890 season, where Bud was called, “...as good a pitcher as has ever been in the Black Hills, and the speediest.”⁴³ and Ned, “the best all-around ball player in the Hills.”⁴⁴ Both Lead and Deadwood were after the brothers for the 1891 season and they used their negotiation skills to secure the best deal for themselves. They insisted on working together, so if one brother was secured, the other needed to be obtained as well. Bud, in particular, claimed to have “numerous offers” using one from the club in Kearney, Nebraska as leverage. In January the Lead club made efforts to secure a “suitable situation” for Bud, but in February he indicated his willingness to come to Deadwood “if suitable inducements are held out”⁴⁵ meaning the provision of a side job and/or salary for playing ball. Both brothers were eventually able to obtain positions as clerks at the Campbell (Boarding) House in Lead and joined the local club.

Bud was one of the few players for whom it was noted that he had actually signed a contract with Lead, a five-month agreement running through October 12.⁴⁶ However, the brothers made it known they would entertain offers to play for other teams on a game-by-game basis for \$10 each assuring potential employers, “They belong to the Lead nine, but will guarantee to do their best in any nine.”⁴⁷ In June it was reported that there was some sort of row in the club and that, “the Barnes brothers have given notice they will not play another game with the Grays. It has been known for some time that the battery was dissatisfied and indeed it was hinted last week that Deadwood could get them if she wanted.”⁴⁸ Lead went so far as to sign another pitcher as insurance, but the Barnes’ denied the rumors and finished the season with Lead.

Catcher Ned left town a few years later and died in 1897 of hemorrhage of the lungs while working in the ticket office of the Union Pacific Railroad in Salt Lake City. He was eulogized as, “...a young man of pleasant and gentlemanly address and was a prime favorite among all who knew him.”⁴⁹ Bud continued to play for Lead for several years, working in the mines in the off-season, and he joined the special police (possibly some type of deputy or member of a posse) in Lead in 1892. Later that year he partnered in the saloon business and opened up Barnes and Sparks on Main Street.

The nucleus of the Lead Grays all wintered in the city and planned to return for the 1891 season. Hamilton, McLaughlin, and the Hoffman brothers all had positions with the Homestake Mining Company, the Corcoran brothers have secured clerical positions, and Garretson worked

for the *Herald*. The Marshall brothers were still in Lead and able to fill in as needs and Stankey, although troubled with rheumatism, promised to be in shape “when warm weather comes.” However, Lead also had to play without two men they had counted on for 1892. Third baseman David Hoffman, and his younger brother James, also called “Kid”, arrived in Lead late in the 1891 and helped the team win the Black Hills pennant. Their departure home to their off-season home in Williamston, Pennsylvania was delayed when James contracted typhoid fever right after the season. He seemed to recover after a few days but on January 16, he died of pneumonia at the Homestake Hospital. His brother David accompanied his remains back to Pennsylvania for burial, and never returned to Lead.

Word must have spread quickly that Deadwood was willing to engage outside players by securing “situations” because in mid-February, Met manager Lowerre received the following letter:

Greene, Iowa, Feb 10, Dear Sir: Hearing that South Dakota was to have a Dakota ball league this coming season, and that your city was one of them, I write you to see what arrangements you have made about players. I have played ball in Iowa the last three years; played with the Greene club when they won the pennant of the Iowa State League. My position is first base but can play the field. I stand five feet nine inches high, weigh 175 pounds, can run 100 yards in 10 ½ seconds when in shape. I have a partner who is a pitcher. He played with Cedar Rapids last season of the Illinois and Iowa League. He has a batting average of .278 and I have an average of 274. We can give you recommendations from our manager. Please let us know what your salary limit is, and what you can do for us. Hoping you will answer this, with the greatest of pleasure I remain, very truly yours, Fred L. Marke⁵⁰

There is no evidence that Mr. Marke came to Deadwood, but when Deadwood met in early May they formed a completely new organization,” ...entirely different from the former one”, that included a structure that called for a “Board of Managers” and a stock company. They reported that their grounds, Metropolitan Park, was in excellent condition, but that they intended to build an eight-foot board fence around the grounds that would serve a dual purpose; keeping the long fly balls in, and the “deadbeat” portion of the public out.⁵¹ The “new” Mets demolished Sturgis 32-6 in their opener but were trounced by their rivals from Lead, 35-9 the following week. They played a little better in a rematch with Lead, losing 14-7, but the *Black Hills Times* called out the team, and their backers writing, “The club’s executive committee must be encouraged in its effort to raise funds necessary to get the players that are needed, and everyone at all interested by the sport or having any pride in keeping Deadwood to the front in base ball, and in all other affairs, should be willing to give the small sum he may be called upon for. Deadwood has not won a game this year, and the regularity with which the club is defeated becomes monotonous. It is time to call a halt.”⁵²

The Mets’ losing streak continued when they lost to the Normal School team at Spearfish (although Spearfish had brought in the Barnes brothers of Lead as their battery for the day) and the *Daily Times* of Deadwood kept up their criticism of the team, calling them “the “we have a

pudding” ball club and saying, “Our team must be strengthened if there is any desire to win a game this year,”⁵³ and, “Our boys now realize that the team must be improved and to that end are casting about for players. They will not go on the diamond again until they feel there is a chance to win...”⁵⁴

Deadwood began to strengthen their team by adding pitchers John Hendricks, who had been playing professionally since 1884, most recently with Ottumwa, Iowa in 1890⁵⁵, and another professional pitcher, Frank Beymer, who had begun his career in organized baseball with Joliet, Illinois the previous season.⁵⁶ They also added a new catcher, their old nemesis, Ralph Bettinger, who had been in the center of the controversy while playing with Chadron last summer. With the new additions, the Mets began to play better dropping a close game 5-0 to the Grays and then only trailing Lead 2-1 in a game called after three innings due to rain.

The next matchup between the Lead and Deadwood nines was on June 18 during the second day of the fourth annual reunion of Black Hills soldier and sailor veterans of the late (Civil) war at Lead. The day’s program featured a parade, that was said to be, “...the most imposing ever seen in the Black Hills”, which included three troops of the United States Cavalry, the fire departments of both Lead and Deadwood, and two fraternal organizations; the Knights of Pythians and the International Order of Odd Fellows. The crowd gathered in Lead was estimated at 4,000 and the *Black Hills Times* said, “Every train over the Deadwood Central (railroad) was packed and jammed with human freight, every hack and omnibus that rolled into the city was filled with people out for a holiday and determined to spend it in Lead. People came on foot and on horseback, and all were repaid for the spirit that prompted them to turn out.”⁵⁷

The two ball clubs and most of the crowd, estimated at between 1,200 and 2,000, then went to the grounds in the afternoon with Bud Barnes of the Grays facing the Mets new pitcher, Frank Beymer, described by the *Pioneer-Times*’ colorful writer as, “...sticks out like a barbed wire fence through a hired man’s overalls. He doesn’t look as if he could pitch a penny against a crap game. He weights almost two ounces lighter than a clip hat and pitches a gentle, sinuous ball that seem to have hardly enough vitality to reach the plate...”⁵⁸ The Mets scored a run in the second but Lead tied it in the sixth which, “...elicited enthusiasm undescrivable (sic). Hats, caps, handkerchiefs, walking canes, and umbrellas went up in the air. There was yelling and clapping of hands and stamping of feet. One enthusiast went so far as to testify his gratification by beating a brand-new silk umbrella to pieces on the first base backstop. Had the sounds been other than joy, hey must have resembled pandemonium.”⁵⁹

The Mets added single runs in the seventh and eighth to take a 3-2, but in the Grays ninth, catcher Ned Barnes led off with a homer, whom the *Pioneer-Times* writer said, “...smashed it with a noise like rolling a ten-pin ball into a case of beer.”⁶⁰ However, Beymer struck out the last three Lead batters, making a dozen strikeouts for the game, preserving the Mets first win of the season. The *Pioneer-Times* called the game, “...unquestionably the best ever played in the Black Hills,” and added, “it is doubtful if any better have ever been played anywhere.”

One of the sub-topics of the game was that of John Brooks. He was one of the earliest outside professionals signed by the Lead ball club back in early May and claimed to have formerly

played with Dallas in the Texas League. The *Black Hills Times* said, “He is the advance guard of professional men who have started toward the Hills.”⁶¹ He took a job as a painter and paper hanger with G. W. Dorrance in Lead and played second base for the Grays. By June Brooks, “...has gained a reputation of being able to make more noise and say less while coaching a runner than any man...”⁶² Right before the big game, he jumped his contract with Lead and signed with Deadwood, only increasing the rivalry between the two clubs and the newspapers in the respective cities.

At first, Lead, who were, “...hot in the collar and their indignation is vented...”, threatened to not play the game if Brooks was in the Mets lineup, and the *Pioneer-Times* responded by saying, “If the Mets feel like it, they will play a Chinaman, and if the fastidious Grays object, they can get up a club to play tiddlewinks.”⁶³ The *Lead Herald*, in an article reprinted in the *Pioneer-Times* the next day said, “We suppose it is a free country and that a laboring man is at liberty to work where he can get the best wages or has the most pleasant surroundings, but we do not believe that honorable people regard it as any man’s privilege to violate faith, break his contracts, and leave others in the lurch with his bills to pay.” The *Herald* went on to accuse Brooks of taking property “souvenirs” belonging to the Grays before he left town. Brooks vehemently denied the charges but, nonetheless was the target of unmerciful “guying” by Lead fans during the game. Ironically, Brooks, playing shortstop for the Mets and clearly rattled by the abuse he was taking, almost cost his new team the game. “He muffed an easy fly, fumbled half a dozen grounders, and dutifully fanned so often as he went to bat.”⁶⁴

The Mets lost two more games to the Grays in late June, one of them a one-hitter by Beymer, and had now lost eight of nine to their rivals. In still another loss to the Grays, the demoralized Mets quietly slipped away, “...with noise resembling that made by your wife going through your pockets in the gray dawn of morn.”⁶⁵ On June 30 the *Pioneer-Times* wrote, “It’s about time the Mets awoke to the fact that the Grays are no slouches, but are first class players, and to cope with them some changes in the team are necessary and the sooner the changes are made the sooner a showing will be made against the Grays. It’s no reason we shouldn’t have a first-class club in this city that would hold their own against all comers, as the club is abundantly able to send east and get players as Lead is, and the sooner it is done the better. It is getting very tiresome for the Deadwood people to sit and see their team defeated time after time and lose their money on them, and unless a change for the better is made they will play to empty benches. We voice the sentiment of the public at large. The above is not what is call a ‘roasting’, but simply the facts of the case, which stick out prominently before everybody.”

The same day, under a heading entitled “The Sad and Weary Mets”, the *Rapid City Journal* added, “And now the celebrated Met base ball club of Deadwood – they who threatened to overturn the records of the greatest leagues and declared in vehement tones that no superior nine could ever be organized in the Black Hills have offered, through the columns of their own independent to enter an agreement with the Grays to discharge all hired players and return to the old basis of ball playing with purely local teams. So, so. The Mets are weary. The salaried club is proving too heavy a load for the great city of Deadwood to carry. It’s too bad that the Lead City Grays cannot satisfy their lately expressed desire. But by the enterprise of Lead City baseball management the national

game has one of absorbing interest and worthy of support by the Black Hills public, and it is too late in the day to consent to the selfish proposition of a disgruntled and disorganized organization that regular and numerous defeats have placed in a very ordinary position among Black Hills clubs.”

After losing their battery, the Barnes brothers, to Lead City, little baseball was played in Rapid City in 1891. However, the community of Hot Springs, in the southeastern corner of the Black Hills, took steps to form a team to compete with Deadwood and Lead. At their organizational meeting in late May, the Hot Springs Baseball Association formed a stock company and a soliciting committee that quickly raised \$1,000. Grounds west of the college were rented and enclosed with an eight-foot board fence, and a pavilion, amphitheater, and bandstand were erected on the site. A local business, C. E. Wilson & Co. provided funding for new suits (uniforms) for the club, “light gray in color and look nobly” with “Hot Springs” written across the breast.⁶⁶ The Association’s executive board was authorized to “employ the best nine in the Hills”, and within a couple of weeks the local paper wrote, “Base ball matters are looking up with a degree of confidence that is surprising.”⁶⁷

The Hot Springs ball club was almost entirely imported from outside of town, and two of the players had previously, or would later, play in the major leagues. Third baseman Lew Camp⁶⁸ began his professional career with Omaha in 1888 and a year after playing for Hot Springs he played three seasons (1892-1894) with the St. Louis Browns and the Chicago Colts in the National League. Pitcher Bobby Black had begun his professional career with Quincy, Illinois in the Northwestern League in 1883 and the following year, 1884, he played with the Kansas City Cowboys of the Union Association, then considered a major league. In addition, another Hot Springs pitcher, Bob Pender, never reached the major leagues but did play professionally for twenty years (1886-1907) in various minor leagues across the country. By early July, Hot Springs felt they had one of the most formidable nines in the Black Hills.

They decided to host a tournament on Sunday July 12 and invited the clubs from Deadwood and Lead to participate for a purse of \$150; \$75 going to the winner, \$50 for the second-place finisher, and \$25 for the team coming in third. According to the *Black Hills Times*, the tournament was, “No longer a topic of conversation confined to baseball circles; it has spread until it is the all absorbing subject among merchants, lawyers, doctors, and other classes of people.” With heavy betting assured, the paper went on to say, “Even the ladies are interested and innumerable pounds bon-bons, pairs of gloves, etc., etc., have been wagered on the result.”⁶⁹

A special B&M excursion train with seven coaches, “the newest, finest, and most comfortable on the road” was scheduled to leave Deadwood at 5:15 am to transport 150 fans to Hot Springs for the a round trip cost of \$5.20. The DC would leave from Lead. The Deadwood players went separately in the Elkhorn train, and made the run in a little over three hours, but the passenger train was delayed in arriving, “owing to sharp curves and heavy grades”, and “on account of the circus train being ahead of it.”⁷⁰ Once everyone arrived, the visitors were met by the Hot Springs band and escorted to the Minnekahata Hotel and then to the grounds for the first game scheduled for 11 a.m.

Being only three teams were entered, traditional tournament brackets could not be drawn, so the teams drew straws, resulting in Lead and Hot Springs playing the first game with Deadwood receiving a bye, and playing the winner in the second game. After all of the anticipation, things got off to a bad start in the first inning. Bob Black, the Hot Springs pitcher, reached third base and after an infield grounder by Stoney, was caught in a run down between third and home. After a couple of relay throws, Black tried to score but Lead's catcher Ned Barnes either dropped the ball, or had it knocked out of his hands, depending on which version of the events to believe. The umpire, a man named Martin said to be, "an insurance man from eastern Dakota" called Black out. The decision, called, "...one of the rankest ever seen on a ball ground, and came very near spoiling the entire day", enraged the home town crowd who began hooting and yelling.

After a half hour of arguing, Miller still refused to change his call so the Hot Springs team refused to continue. Miller then threatened to award Lead a forfeit victory before Hot Springs reconsidered and, after replacing Miller with another umpire named Jackson, resumed the game. Fortunately for Hot Springs, the Grays' Ned Barnes was disabled a short time later (Bettinger, the Hot Springs' catcher, hit him in the knuckles with his bat) and Hot Springs went on to win 8-3. Because of the delays caused by the arguing, the game took more than three hours, meaning the second game between Deadwood and Hot Springs didn't start until 4 p. m with Deadwood winning a comparatively calm game 12-7 to take the purse. Nearly 2,000 visitors descended on Hot Springs for the games, that the *Black Hills Times* called, "the jolliest crowd that ever went to a ball game...and some of them were jolly coming home."⁷¹

Incidentally, the Mets credited their victory to the mascot they had brought along, an 11-year-old black boy named Ralph Walker, described in one newspaper report as a "little copper colored gamin". A couple of weeks later it was reported that Ralph's mother had filed a complaint in county court against her son, accusing him of being, "a disobedient, willful, malicious, incorrigible boy", and asked the court to send him to the state reform school at Plankinton. The complaint did not state whether or not Ralph's trip with the Mets had anything to do with his subsequent behavior, but. "Will Hathaway and Nathan Franklin, however, are inclined to believe it did, and as they were largely responsible for his connection with the club, are feeling some remorse over his fall from grace".⁷²

The Hot Springs paper provided little coverage of the games, because, as it turned out, the sporting editor was denied access to the grounds. In a later issue he offered the following explanation: "The *Star* is unable to give a detailed account of the games on account of excellent judgment of the gate keeper in refusing to admit our reporter. It is not positively necessary that the *Star* should have a good report of the game, but it is supposed that on occasions of this kind the courtesies are cheerfully extended to the press. Under other circumstances a fuller report might have been written of the tournament."⁷³

"Their [the Mets] attempts to catch up resembled a one-legged man trying to climb a ladder."
Deadwood Pioneer-Times, July 18, 1891

It wasn't clear if it was a resumption or continuation of the Sunday tournament, or a completely new tournament, but the three teams faced off again later in the week with a game at Deadwood on Wednesday, Lead on Thursday, and back in Deadwood Friday. The clubs drew lots again resulting in Hot Springs taking on the Mets in Deadwood. Exacting revenge for their loss Sunday, "...the visitors crowded them into a corner and knocked the stuffing out of them"⁷⁴, with Hot Springs easily defeating Deadwood 19-5. The *Pioneer-Times* also kept up their criticism of the team saying, "The Mets need a filtering and need it badly as shown in this game, and until those players that are a detriment to the club are weeded out, the Mets must expect to play losing ball."⁷⁵

The drawing called for Hot Springs to play at Lead on Thursday. The Grays won easily 9-3 which prompted rumors that Hot Springs had sold out the game. The *Daily-Times* said that public opinion was evenly divided; some saying that they had direct knowledge of the sell-out, while others thought that Lead won fair and square, and that Hot Springs merely had an "off day". However, the Deadwood papers did acknowledge a number of "queer looking circumstances". First, although Lead starter Bud Barnes was one of the best pitchers in the Hills, he struck out twenty-one men that day, an extremely high total, especially against the skilled, professional hitters in the Hot Springs lineup. Secondly, it was said members of the Hot Springs team advised their friends not to bet on them, and if they had already bet, to hedge. Third, the *Times* also found it curious that when Lead knocked Hot Springs starter Bobby Black out of the box with six runs in the fourth inning, he was replaced on the mound by an infielder named Green, instead of Hot Springs best pitcher Bob Pender, who had won against Deadwood yesterday.⁷⁶ And finally, Hot Springs recovered their form the next day, easily beating the Mets again 10-4.

At first the *Daily-Times* took a neutral stance saying, "The *Times* repeats that it does not know the game was sold, and therefore declines to make a statement to that effect. It merely publishes what was said by dozens last evening, and what is firmly believed by the scores of people in Lead and Deadwood."⁷⁷ A few days later, however, they said, "The more the facts and circumstances were weighed, the more has a majority of the public become convinced that the game was sold", and "...whether or not its nine [Hot Springs] sold out, the public believes it did". Regardless, the whole affair, "...disgusted some of the most ardent admirers and liberal supporters of the sport."⁷⁸

"The Mets batted him so hard from the start that the sound resembled a skeleton having a fit upon a hardwood floor."
Deadwood Pioneer-Times, July 21, 1891

Over the next couple of weeks, Lead stood pat because, "The Grays already have as strong a nine as they could well secure", but the Mets continued to upgrade their team. Deadwood added catcher Lonnie Sherbocker and a pitcher named Burris from Omaha. Both clubs accepted an invitation from Hot Springs for another tournament for \$300 and the "championship of the Black Hills" to be held the last weekend of July. In the first game on Saturday afternoon, Bob Black held the Deadwood Mets to three hits and Hot Springs won easily 10-1. Sunday morning the home club defeated Lead 12-7 and in the afternoon game, Deadwood faced Lead. The Grays scored one in

the second inning and the Mets tied it with one in the eighth. After a scoreless ninth, the Mets pushed across two runs in the tenth while the Grays could manage just one run in their half of the inning. The Met's Frank Beymer struck out thirteen in the 3-2 win called, "the finest exhibition of the national game ever seen in the Black Hills."⁷⁹

The next event on the schedule for the Deadwood and Lead clubs was a trip to Belle Fourche on Sunday, August 16. In an attempt to fill up the special Freemont, Elkhorn, and Missouri trains running from the two towns (for \$1.40 round-trip), advanced publicity promised, "The ride down and back through Whitewood Canyon and the foothills, and across the prairie from Whitewood to Belle Fourche, teeming with fields of corn, wheat, oats, and other crops, and dotted with herds of cattle and of horses, is a delightful one."⁸⁰ As an added bonus, "the shipment of cattle is at its height right now", and fans might see, "the loading of ten trains of range cattle at Middle Creek Stockyards...which might alone be worth the trip."⁸¹

The game, won by the Grays 10-7, prompted another dramatic comment about the Deadwood baseball situation. "The weight of woe is on the city. Melancholy sits brooding on the surrounding mountain tops, and her dark mantle has swept through our streets, down upon our valleys, yea, unto the very depths of the lowest levels of our mighty mineral producing mines. The solemnity of affliction touches the busy marts of trade, it penetrates into the homes of the wealthy mine owner and hopeful prospector alike, it casts a shadow over our resorts of pleasure, it confuses the crap shooter and causes the poker player to draw a spade to a four-diamond flush. Regret, deep-seeded regret furrows the brow of old and young."⁸²

John Patterson

Earlier in the season, there was a report that Deadwood manager Lowe had corresponded with the Lincoln, Nebraska Giants, an all-back semipro team, about a tour of the Black Hills. That never materialized, but several of the Giant players, including John Patterson⁸³, later joined an independent team in Plattsmouth, Nebraska, and that club visited the Hills in late August. They split two games with Hot Springs on their first stop and then moved on to Deadwood for a series of games. The Mets and Plattsmouth split their first two games but afterward it was announced that Patterson had been signed by the Mets and would be in the lineup the next day for Deadwood playing against his former teammates.⁸⁴

Patterson played third base for the Mets and got three hits in a 23-19 win against Plattsmouth, and the *Pioneer-Times* singled him out for his good play saying, "Patterson, our new third baseman did brilliant and effective service both at his base and with the stick,"⁸⁵ and, "Patterson of the Mets...was the only man who accepted every chance he had."⁸⁶ It was not known how long Patterson stayed with the Mets, but a report later in the year said that he was being considered to manage the Deadwood club in 1892.⁸⁷ Patterson may have been only the second black man to have played for a Black Hills team since Harry and Romeo Marshall suited up for Lead a few years earlier.

The following season, 1892, Marshall was a member of the Plattsmouth club when they were members of the Nebraska State League. Many teams in the league employed black players (Bud Fowler played for Kearney). It wasn't uncommon for black players to play on otherwise white teams in the nineteenth century, but the Nebraska State League was the only league in organized baseball that did so in 1892. The league disbanded mid-season and Marshall embarked on a long career with professional Negro teams in Philadelphia, Chicago, and Brooklyn and the famous Page Fence Giants of Adrian, Michigan. After retiring from baseball in 1907, he worked for thirty years as the first black police officer in Battle Creek, Michigan.

Meanwhile, Mets and Grays decided to play a couple of more games, one at Metropolitan Park on August 29 that was staged as a benefit for the Deadwood club, and the following day in Lead. The Grays won both, and then after the two clubs decided to play once more, an exhibition game in Hill City during a Labor Day picnic at Whitewood, and that afterward the Mets would disband for the season. The *Pioneer-Times* said, "No particular cause is assigned for the disbanding, other than the season is about over. The management disbanded the club by mutual consent of the members. The club is entirely satisfied with their treatment, and a general good feeling exists between them and the manager, whom they leave with regret."⁸⁸

The Mets must have had a change of heart about breaking up because right after the game at Hot Springs manager Lowe announced that the team would embark on a tour through Nebraska, starting in Chadron, with stops in Hay Springs, Ainsworth, Valentine, Freeman, Blair, and ending up as far as Omaha. They even announced that they had picked up Hot Springs' two best players, Camp and Black, for the trip. However, after losing their first game 11-3 to Chadron, the idea was abandoned and the team broke up. As an indication of the makeup of that year's Met team, everybody stayed in Nebraska, with the exception of Beymer, Keim, and Lowe who returned to Deadwood.

The Hot Springs club, now giving themselves the nickname "Browns", continued play through mid-September, thrashing a team from Bakersville 53-6, winning two from Deadwood, and beating Chadron 11-3. However, right before they were scheduled to play a three-game series with Lead, they decided to disband, the reason cited, "The support given to the ball games was inadequate as compared with the necessary expenses – in other words, it has not been a paying investment." First baseman Fitzgerald headed for Rochester, New York, and outfielder Patterson to Sidell, Illinois. Camp returned to Omaha, shortstop A. V. Green to Sioux Falls, and pitchers Black and Pender went to Sioux City Iowa.⁸⁹

That left the Lead City Grays as the last team standing. In early September, the *Hot Springs Star*, in an article reprinted from the *Lead Tribune*, provided, admittedly unofficial, won-loss records of the various Black Hills clubs as follows: Lead City 17-8, Hot Springs 8-5, Custer 5-2, Spearfish 1-1, and Deadwood 10-15.⁹⁰ Having defeated Lead earlier in the season, Hot Springs felt they were entitled to claim the so-called "pennant" of the Black Hills, but after they backed out of the last-season games with Lead, Lead now decided they were the champion team of 1891. As in past years, whichever team claimed the championship of the Black Hills also claimed to be

the champions of all South Dakota. They usually issued challenges to good teams they had heard about in the eastern part of the state, such as Sioux Falls, but the distance made any direct matchup to settle the question unworkable.

“Hot Springs...is having is having a flagpole made long enough and high enough to be seen by the Deadwoodites over the top of Harney Peak, and declares that Lead and Deadwood can stay on their own grounds and see the championship flag wave from its mammoth pole...”
Sporting Life, April 2, 1892

After a disappointing 1891 season, Deadwood began to plan next year's team as early as January 1892 with the desire to form a “first class organization”, and “...secure a team of the most expert players in the national game,”⁹¹ that would be the strongest in the state of South Dakota or western Nebraska. Last year's Met first baseman, and former professional player, Billy Keim. was selected temporary manager and given the task of securing players, due to his reputation as a “competent judge of base ball matters and players and connected with various leading clubs.”⁹² They decided that now was the time to secure players cheaply, and that most would be satisfied to come provided they were assured of a steady position (job) at good wages.

After a March meeting of the Board of Directors, local businessmen said, “while it will be expensive to maintain an organization, and they do not expect to realize there from a pecuniary score, yet their enterprise and pride, which are proverbial, prompt them to the actions, the intention is to procure an aggregation of players who can and will play an honest and strong game, and those who will command the respect of everyone. There will be no bums or rounders on it. The sport is harmless and when conducted properly, worthy the moral and financial support of our best people and all exhibitions will be of a character which even the most fastidious may enjoy”⁹³

Several members of the 1891 team returned to Deadwood. The Harrison brothers, Mart and Garret, were originally from Kalamazoo, Michigan and had been playing semi-pro ball near their home for the past ten years. They first came to play for the Mets in 1891 and secured jobs on the Deadwood Central Railroad. First baseman Billy Keim was from Dayton, Ohio and had played professional and semi-pro ball in the Midwest for ten years before arriving in Deadwood in 1891. It was said of Keim,” He is always cool and self-possessed, whether winning or losing, and plays a steady, even game of ball.”⁹⁴ He eventually partnered in opening a saloon in Deadwood, the Keim and Mills “Gold Dust” Club Rooms. He advertised that “if you smoke the El Rial cigar at Bill Keim's place, you will smoke no other.” Renovations to the business a couple of years later included a bar from the American Fixture Company of Chicago, said to be “the finest ever brought to this city.”⁹⁵

Pitcher/Outfielder Frank Beymer, originally from Iowa, began his professional baseball career with Joliet in the Illinois-Iowa League in 1890. He first arrived in Deadwood to play for the Mets in 1891 and quickly got involved in community activities. He was selected to lead the new B & M band that was organized in town (teammate Ed Charlton played the bass drum), and apparently no horseplay was tolerated under Beymer's leadership, because the band “will be devoted strictly to business and not to play, as was the rehearsals of former bands.” Later, for some

unknown reason, Beymer was elected to the Board of Directors and appointed corresponding secretary of the Deadwood/Lead Typographical Union, an organization devoted to, “the mutual protection of printers and publishers in the cause of their relations, the betterment of the compositors, the practice of benevolence among the members, etc.”⁹⁶

New members of the Mets included pitcher/outfielder Barney Hurley, who, after fielding “three of four flattering offers from eastern clubs”, was secured from a semi-pro team in Omaha. Originally from Illinois, Hurley was employed at Ayers & Wardman, dealers in hardware and mining supplies, on Main Street in Deadwood. New third baseman Fred Cottrell was born in London, England. Ironically, once the roster was mostly set by early May, one of the Deadwood papers stated, “the entire team is composed of home talent and no imported players will tolerated.”⁹⁷ In other words, if the new man found a side-job and declared their intention to remain in town, they were considered a “home” player, and no longer an imported outsider.

Some players who were being counted on by Deadwood did not return in 1892. They announced that Sherbocker and Burris, the batter signed last year, were released on account of “certain irregularities that have just come to light”, and catcher Frank James left town suddenly during the winter. None of the local papers made mention of James’ departure, but Al Lowerre, writing as correspondent to the national publication, *Sporting Life*, explained, “As usual there was a woman in the case, and to make the job complete he married this woman of questionable character at Council Bluffs. Such men as this disgrace the base ball profession by disgracing themselves, and the sooner they are got rid of the better.”⁹⁸

This necessitated the signing of new players and one key new member of the 1892 Deadwood Mets was left-handed throwing second baseman Ernest “Kid” Mohler. He started his professional career in 1890 in the Western Association and played twenty-five years, finishing with San Francisco of the Pacific Coast League in 1914. Mohler played in over 1600 minor league games, but just three games in majors with Washington Senators, then in the National League, in 1894.

The most important newcomer may have been veteran professional, and former major league catcher, William “Bill” Traffley. He got into two games with the Chicago White Stockings of the National League as an 18-year-old in 1878 and played with the Cincinnati Red Stockings and the Baltimore Orioles of the American Association, then considered a major league, from 1883 to 1886. Traffley never returned to the big leagues, but after the one season in Deadwood he continued to play professionally over the next decade, mostly in the Western Association with stops in Kansas City, Des Moines, Lincoln, and Omaha.

Traffley was typical of many nineteenth century ball players in that he didn’t make a clear distinction between organized, professional baseball, and independent teams like those in the Black Hills; he would play for whomever offered the best salary. When Deadwood first contacted Traffley that winter, he indicated that he had been offered high-salaried positions with leading [professional] clubs but that, “he would not follow ball playing as a business if he can get employment that will pay him as well here”, and accepted the offer from Deadwood simply because “there was more money in it.”⁹⁹ Black Hills newspapers rarely published any detail about

player compensation, and in Traffley's case they only said that the salary offered was "satisfactory", but that the terms would not be made public.¹⁰⁰

When he arrived in the Black Hills in mid-March, Traffley, in a letter printed in the *Omaha Bee*, said, "I reached Deadwood Thursday last and found a lively place. They are doing everything they can here to make base ball a go here in the Hills. They have a lot of men of push in Deadwood who are willing to put up their money to see good ball, they have good grounds almost in the center of the city with street cars running up to every entrance. They will have one of the finest parks in the west and some of the best players in the country in the Deadwood club."¹⁰¹

Little did Traffley know that a short time later the site of the Deadwood ballpark, which was owned by the Otterbine Brewery, was sold leaving them scrambling for a new location. Before they could find other grounds, several parties went onto the field and started tearing down the grandstand and carting away the lumber because, they claimed, the ball club still owed them money for the original materials. The men also knocked a hole through the outfield fence in which to move the lumber out. They were confronted by representatives of the base ball association and, "some strong words were indulged in by both parties, and it looked for a while as if they would come together."¹⁰² Some sort of compromise was reached where \$10 in damages was paid and the club received permission to use the field until other arrangements could be made.

The Board of Directors of the Deadwood Base Ball Club met the following night and entertained a proposition to use "a large waste flat in the First Ward" owned by the Burlington & Missouri Railroad as baseball grounds but decided it would be too costly to fix up. They finally settled on a location called Peck's Garden and went about getting the grounds in shape. The main road from Deadwood to Lead ran behind the east fence at the ball grounds but they decided to extend the fence another twenty feet past the road to "very near the edge of the creek" meaning the road was now within the confines of the park (an early warning track, maybe?). If vehicles used the road while a game in progress, they technically entered the ballpark and were charged an admission fee. After numerous complaints by travelers, they later reconsidered and a temporary road was built for use during ball games.¹⁰³

In Rapid City, "the ball players do not seem to take as much interest in the game as formerly. So far, nothing has been done to organized a club here..."¹⁰⁴ One explanation put forward was that, "It is just possible that some of the old base ball boys of Rapid City have too many other affairs demanding their attention for them to devote any time to the organization of a base ball club..."¹⁰⁵ Rapid City never pursued outside professionals the way Deadwood and Lead did, partly because they felt confident they could compete with their neighbors using home talent. "Two batteries can be secured from among the young men already residing here...an aggregation that would make professionals rustle to excel can be had."¹⁰⁶

Last year's Hills champion, the Lead City Grays, got off to a later start in organizing, but initial fund-raising efforts "exceeded all expectations", so after paying off debts from last season, and purchasing "new uniforms, gloves, protectors, masks, etc.", manager Tom Sparks began assembling his team. The nucleus of the 1891 team returned including pitcher Bud Barnes, who was "engaged at his own figure"¹⁰⁷, first baseman Jake Thompson, infielder Jimmy Hart, and Al

Garretson. Although outside professionals were recruited, local players were more than likely compensated. Lead set themselves up as underdogs, saying they were playing with “home” players, while Deadwood employed “high-priced hired men.”¹⁰⁸

Although he never actually played for the Grays, in mid-May Lead announced they had signed a professional ball player named Billy Reddy. The name was an alias, because soon after he arrived in town from Streator, Illinois, several men recognized him as middle-weight boxer Reddy Brennan “the Streator Wonder” who reportedly had a record of 36 wins in 38 fights. Brennan had recently lost a tough bout to the Montana Kid and was advised to go to the Black Hills to recover from his injuries until his next fight in New Orleans. Soon he was challenged by a boxer named Widdows from Rapid City and after negotiating whether skin gloves, four-ounce gloves, or bare fists would be used, a bout was scheduled for the Deadwood Opera House. A purse of \$300 was raised, with 75% going to the winner, but there is no record of the fight having taken place.

As late as June 4 it was reported that the Lead team would pay a practice game that day because they hadn’t even practiced yet and were not in shape for a match game. However, just a week later, Lead and Deadwood met for the first time at a Pioneer’s Day Celebration in Belle Fourche. The Grays Barnes pitched well and Lead took an early 5-0 lead before Deadwood came back to win 8-6.

The Black Hills League?

Each of the past couple of springs, several Black Hills newspapers advocated for the formation of a league in which teams would play a regular schedule of games, and by doing so, a legitimate champion could be determined. Endholm and Akin jewelers of Deadwood even donated an elegant silver and gold lined water set “handsomely engraved” and valued at \$100 as a prize to the winner of the Black Hills League pennant. *Sporting Life*, a national publication, reported that a meeting was scheduled for January 25, 1892 in Deadwood to plan a league.¹⁰⁹ In reality, when the Deadwood Base Ball Club met to organize on February 2, a committee was appointed to correspond with Lead, Sturgis, Rapid City, Hot Springs and Chadron, “with a view to arrange a circuit and schedule of games.”¹¹⁰ A couple of weeks later it was reported, “The several towns in and about the Hills are responding favorably to the idea of forming a league and playing a schedule of games, and at present the prospects are very favorable that such will be realized.”¹¹¹

Nothing more was written about the actual creation of a league until June when Deadwood traveled to Hiawatha Park to face Lead on Sunday the 12th, and both Deadwood papers billed the match as the opening championship game of the Black Hills League. Deadwood took a 7-1 lead after two innings but costly errors by right fielder Ed Charlton and shortstop Fred Cottrell allowed Lead to tie the game at seven by the seventh inning. The Mets eventually won 10-9 and two Deadwood players were singled out for their play. Kid Mohler, playing second base for the Mets, “batted terrifically, fielded to perfection, and was admired by all” and first baseman Billy Kiem, “was as lively, despite his age and weight, as a cow’s tail in fly time.”¹¹²

One unfortunate incident marred the contest. Lead pitcher Bud Barnes objected to call made by umpire Will McPheeley and “applied an opprobrious epithet to him which does not look

well in print. Quick as a flash the little fellow [McPheeley] struck Barnes and then grappled with him. The crowd parted the two before any damage was done.” The Deadwood papers condemned Barnes actions and even suggested that their rivals get rid of their star pitcher saying, “Barnes may not know any better, but if he expects to play ball with gentlemen, he will have to learn that such conduct will not be tolerated on the field. If he cannot refrain from behavior like that of Sunday the best thing to do is to release him...”¹¹³

After the game story, the *Pioneer-Times* printed a “Standing of the Clubs” showing a four-team Black Hills League with Deadwood having a record of 2-0, Lead 0-2, and both Hot Springs and Chadron at 0-0. Apparently, the earlier Lead/Deadwood game at Belle Fourche was counted as a league game but no information was provided about how or why Hot Springs and Chadron were included in the league.

“Walters, the new second for Lead, played like a one-armed man washing dishes.”

Deadwood Pioneer-Times, June 21, 1892

Deadwood won the next two games against Lead, making it four straight victories in league play. “All the dead game sporting blood of Lead is at the boiling point. The proud record which was made in last year’s base ball contests has been relentlessly torn down by Deadwood and mud smeared on it. This kind of thing will never do and the Lead boys do not propose to stand for it any longer, even if they don’t lay up a cent”¹¹⁴ In response, the Grays sent Bud Barnes on a recruiting trip to secure players from the recently disbanded Nebraska State League with instructions that, “Only the very highest class men will be selected, no matter what the cost.” Barnes was successful in securing catcher Lou Graver, formerly of the Fremont, Nebraska club, but Graver’s manager claimed he was still under contract so both men were taken off the train in Hastings, Nebraska, arrested for obtaining money under false pretenses, and jailed. A telegraph from Barnes straightened things out and the next day both men resumed their journey to Lead.¹¹⁵

“...Mr. Hurley sent one of his drop curves right over the plate. With this curve, Mr. Moore’s bat collided making a sharp smack like a young fellow meeting his best girl after an absence of a few weeks...”

Hot Springs Star, July 1, 1892

Meanwhile, undefeated Deadwood went down to Hot Springs to play a club they derisively called the “Rheumatics” – “who saw their best days five years ago”¹¹⁶. However, Hot Springs surprised the Mets by adding pitcher Williams and catcher Bettinger from Chadron for the Wednesday game and nearly pulled an upset, but Deadwood held on to win 9-7. Interest was so high that the next day the Mets manager arranged to telephone progress of the game after each inning back to Deadwood where a “cheap boy on a horse” was hired to relay the news to fans. The two clubs were engaged in a back and forth battle that was tied at seven after nine innings and up until that time, “the score came in as regularly as a faro dealer drawing his wages.”¹¹⁷ As the teams went into extra innings, and, “the tension was at the highest and the cranks were wildest”, all communication was cut off between Hot Springs and Deadwood. Frantic calls were made to the

telegraph office, and even railroad officials, but it wasn't until two hours later that fans learned that Hot Springs and scored a run in the eleventh inning and won the game 8-7. "One of the most intensely exciting games ever played on a Black Hills diamond" marked the first loss on the season for the Mets and the first time Hot Springs had ever defeated Deadwood.

Deadwood played with mostly the same roster all during the season, but after the close games at Hot Springs and a couple of losses to Lead, the Mets decided they needed to upgrade their roster. Third baseman Fred Cottrell was added in early July and Frank Austin was picked up from Fremont, Nebraska to play shortstop. Pitcher Frank "Bones" Parvin was picked up when Beatrice, Nebraska club folded. Soon after his arrival early July, Deadwood loaned him to Lead for one game and Parvin, "hypnotized the Deadwood hitters with his delusive twirls" and "his delivery is terrific and his curves are new and aggravatingly hard to hit."¹¹⁸ After spending one season in Deadwood, Parvin played professionally in various minor leagues over the next twenty years, but never reached the major leagues.

Over the next couple of weeks Lead auditioned a number of new players in an attempt to strengthen their club. In fact, by mid-July pitcher Bud Barnes, center fielder George Bailey, and infielders Dick Purcell and Jake Thompson were the only players left that had started the season with the Grays. Infielder Leon Collier, who had played professionally in the Illinois-Iowa League in 1890 and 1891 arrived in June. Other new players included pitcher William Strickler, former professional Frank Stratton from Grand Island, Nebraska to play second base, and Charles Sommers,¹¹⁹ said to be a "pitcher of national reputation", also from Grand Island who last played professionally with Omaha of the Western Association in 1890. The final addition was pitcher Ernie Beam who three years later, in 1895, would pitch briefly in the major leagues with the Philadelphia Phillies.

The Mets got back to their winning ways by defeating Lead 16-4 at Sturgis on July 4 but the Gray's new pitcher, Strickler, held Deadwood in check the next day, resulting in an 8-7 win for Lead. The following day the Mets battered Stricker and Barnes for thirty-two hits, and Lead fielders committed eleven errors, in a 30-10 thrashing of Lead. The Grays tried Dick Purcell in the box in their next matchup with Deadwood on July 9 and he beat the Mets 14-9 to give Lead their second league victory. According to the *Pioneer-Times* report Purcell, "...has a knack of throwing a ball that curves and twists like a rheumatic calf going up on pair of stairs", and the Mets hits, "...were scattered like Republican votes in Texas."¹²⁰ After the game, the *Pioneer-Times* printed the following league standings:

Club	Played	Won	Lost	Percent
Deadwood	12	9	3	.750
Lead	8	2	6	.250
Chadron	0	0	0	.000
Hot Springs	2	1	1	.500
Fort Meade	2	0	2	.000

Deadwood Pioneer-Times July 10, 1892

Lead won their second straight over Deadwood 8-7 on Jul 11, only because, according to the *Pioneer-Times*, right fielder Garrett Harrison dropped an easy fly ball, “like a man who carelessly lays hold of a red-hot stove” allowing the winning runs to score, and because of the pitching of Bones Parvin who was loaned by Deadwood to Lead for the day “to even things up and give the audience their money’s worth.”¹²¹ A few days later, on July 14, with Parvin back pitching for Deadwood, the Mets beat Lead 14-19 at Whitewood.

During the heat of the baseball rivalry between Deadwood and Lead, two events occurred that made baseball secondary, at least temporarily. The next scheduled game between the two clubs was postponed due to the death of Deadwood manager Williams Lowe’s nine-year old daughter Gracie, of diphtheria. That same week, Bill Traffley’s five-year old daughter was playing outside when a drunken stranger named John Earley approached the little girl and began fondling her and attempted to sexually assault her before being scared off when a neighbor intervened. When Traffley later found out what had happened he went looking for the man and when he located him Traffley, “knocked him down, hammered his face to a pulp and then raised him above his head and dashed him repeatedly head foremost to the sidewalk and then returned to his home leaving Earley insensible.”¹²²

The next Grays/Mets matchup was to be for \$500 a side and the gate receipts at a neutral site, either Spearfish, Sturgis, or Fort Meade, which ever community offered the best inducement. Apparently, none of the towns satisfied the requirement because the game was held at Hiawatha Park in Lead on July 19 with the Grays sporting new black uniforms, contrasting with the red suits of the Mets. Lead’s new pitcher Sommer’s delivery, somewhat bringing to mind Luis Tiant decades later, was described as an, “. . . “exhibition of spasmodic, curious, contortions in delivering the ball. He would turn his back to the batter, teeter a few seconds on his toes, then turning quickly, make a few rapid motions with his arms and shoulders, and would shoot the ball across the plate with great velocity “¹²³ Nonetheless, Deadwood got to Summers for four first inning runs, but the two clubs were tied seven-all after nine innings. Deadwood pulled the game out in the eleventh on poor fielding by Lead when Kid Mohler reached second on a muff by the Grays left fielder Strickler and came around to score the winning run when Mart Harrison’s fly ball was dropped by Grays’ center fielder George Bailey.

None of the Black Hills papers printed league standings after July 10, so the actual members of the league, and win-loss records of the clubs, are unknown. The *Sporting Life*, in a lengthy article that was mostly biographical sketches of the Deadwood Mets, printed the standings below in their July 23 issue. All that is known for sure is that if an actual league existed, Deadwood won the most games, and could be considered league champion.

	Won	Lost	Percent
Deadwood	9	2	.818
Hot Springs	1	1	.500
Lead City	1	6	.143
Fort Meade	0	2	.000

Sporting Life, July 23, 1892

The Championship Series

After the July 19 Deadwood/Lead game, the two clubs decided to play a seven-game series for the championship of the Black Hills that would be governed by detailed Articles of Agreement. Each team put up \$500 to be held in trust at the First National Bank in Deadwood, with the winner collecting the entire \$1,000 purse. All games were to be played under the rules of the N. L. & A. A. P. B. B. players of 1892 and if any disagreement should arise, a three-man board of arbitration consisting of one man chosen by each manager, and a third man selected by those two team representatives, would settle the matter. It probably didn't make any difference, but the Articles stated that, "The umpire is to have absolute control of all games played."¹²⁴

Both teams had strengthened their teams with new players over the past month, so to avoid the picking up of ringers during the series, rosters were set as follows: Deadwood: Traffley, Keim, Mohler, Austin, Cottrell, Hurley, M. Harrison, B. Harrison, Beymer, and Parvin, and Lead: Graver, Barnes, Barnes, Thompson, Purcell, Strickler, Bailey, Collier, Summers, and Beam. One of the Articles of Agreement also stated that if any of the players should become injured or disabled during the series, they could only be replaced by a man "known as a permanent resident" of the city they were to play for.¹²⁵

It wasn't clear how it was enforced, if at all, but before the opening game in Deadwood on July 21, it was stated, "No objectionable persons will be allowed to enter the stand and no obscene or vulgar language will be tolerated."¹²⁶ The Grays took an early 5-2 lead but the middle inning were a pitcher's battle between Parvin and Beam. Deadwood tied the score 5-5 on a two-run homer by Mart Harrison in the eight but Lead scored two in the bottom of the inning to take a 7-6 win. Umpire Gus Hanlon gave "general satisfaction", so was engaged to officiate the rest of the series.¹²⁷

"Somebody ought to take him out and pump a little sense into him with a baseball bat."

Deadwood Pioneer-Times, July 24, 1892

Spearfish didn't come forward a week earlier when the clubs were looking for a neutral site, but now they came up with a guarantee so the second game of the series was moved to Spearfish. The *Spearfish Bulletin* promised, "Those who attend the game are promised an exhibition of skill and dexterity such as they have never seen outside the National League"¹²⁸ Three-hundred fans from Deadwood and Lead accompanied their teams, swelling the crowd in Spearfish to more than 700. Even so, a large crowd still gathered around the *Lead Times* bulletin board to get an inning by-inning progress via telegraph.

Deadwood scored six runs in the third but the Grays cut the lead to 7-6 in the sixth when the intense heat forced Met starter Frank Beymer out of the game. His replacement, Parvin, held Lead scoreless the rest of the way and Deadwood tacked on insurance runs to take an 11-6 win and square the series. Deadwood backers, with their pockets full of cash from the bets they had won, rode back to town, "like men returning from the funeral of their mother-in-law, and their smiles were as bright as the electric light."¹²⁹

The only controversy noted during the game was when umpire Hanlon ruled against Lead shortstop Purcell on a close play and then Purcell, “talked back, causing no end of trouble”. Hanlon threw him out of the game and, “For a while it looked like the game would bust up in a row, but the matter was fixed up and Purcell was allowed to continue”, but, “After that he kept his mouth shut.”¹³⁰ The Deadwood paper called Purcell, “. . . a chronic kicker and one of the most disagreeable players who ever caused discord.”¹³¹

The committee in charge of sponsoring the game in Spearfish also nearly broke even on the venture. \$149.50 was raised by subscription and they paid out a purse of \$100 to the winning Deadwood club. Other expenses included drayage (\$1.75), work on grounds (\$5.00), carpenter work (\$4.45), lumber (\$10.00), printing (\$2.00), paid boys, for water for players (75 cents), telephone (50 cents), bases and material from hardware store (85 cents), and the board bill at the Spearfish Hotel (\$10.00). Total expenses came to \$152.70 leaving them just \$3.20 in the hole.¹³²

In game three on Sunday July 24 in Lead, the Grays were down 5-1 but scored six runs in the seventh inning, aided by several costly Deadwood errors, and took a 7-5 win. Before game four in Deadwood (the teams decided to alternate sites for the rest of the series) local papers engaged in a little trash talking saying that Ernie Beam, the starting pitcher for Lead, “couldn’t pitch rotten apples into a cider press”, and the Met hitters proceeded to bat him out of the box in the third inning. In a sloppily played “comedy of errors” Deadwood beat the Grays 24-16 to even the series at two games each. With the game still in doubt in the fifth inning, Lead had two runners on with two out and their scorer, Romeo Marshall,¹³³ inexplicably changed the batting order, sending Bud Barnes up to bat, in place of a weaker hitting Stricker, who was due up. Deadwood noticed the error, and after much wrangling nearly resulting in a fight, the Mets lodged a protest, but later withdrew it after they won the game anyway.

“It would make a granger weep to see the high-priced ball tossers hit the ball with a sound like a small boy swatting a base drum with a sock full of sand, and then run around the bases and come across the plate like a string of wiener wursts.”

Deadwood Pioneer-Times, July 27, 1892

Game five as was back in Lead and Deadwood pitcher Beymer was wild, walking seven in the first three innings, and hit hard (allowing 21 hits) and Lead cruised to an easy 15-3 win. Hurley finally replaced Beymer in the seventh, “but the poor boy was hit so hard that we wept like a child and went back to his place in the field with a heavy heart.”¹³⁴ Beymer was back on the mound the next day and his teammates pounded out sixteen runs off of all three pitchers the Greys used, Purcell, Beam, and Summers, in a 16-8 win, tying the series again and setting up a decisive game seven. Confident Deadwood backers advised, “If you want to double your bank roll bet on a sure thing and back the red men.”¹³⁵ However, after being dominated by Deadwood most of the season, Lead prevailed in the championship game, winning 13-3, and a check in the amount of \$1,000 was presented to the club’s treasurer, and one of the team’s chief backers, Henry Schmitz.

In the *Black Hills Times*, the Mets defeat was written in the form of both a classified ad; “For Sale Or To Rent. A baseball diamond, grand stand, and all other auxiliaries, including 9 men all in good condition,”¹³⁶ and an obituary; “Died, Deadwood B. B. C. - At the office of the manager, Friday July 29, 1892, of “heart failure”, the Deadwood Base Ball Club aged 2 months and 15 days”. The death notice went on to say, “The ignominious defeat of the Deadwood club at the hands of the Lead Grays sounded the death knell of base ball in the Hills – at last this portion of it – and the great national game is buried below the surface, and the defenders (so alleged) of Deadwood’s base ball honors are wandering the face of the earth. The Lead Grays, who won the \$1,000 purse and the everlasting hate of the dead game sports who backed Deadwood, will fold up their tent and make a sneak. The cause of the death of base ball was “heart failure” on the part of Deadwood management, who, because the club lost the most important of all games, thereby enriching the opposing management’s pocketbooks at the expense of theirs, deserted the club and as a result it went to pieces.”¹³⁷

Aftermath

After the conclusion of the series, many of the salaried players left the Hills to hook on with professional teams in other parts of the country. Those players that remained in Deadwood, including Mohler, Traffley, Parvin, Beymer, and Keim added a few local amateurs and reformed a new club to play at Chadron for a purse of \$200. Chadron, expecting to play a team of amateurs, bet heavily on their team and when Deadwood won the first game 6-4, the visitors cleaned up several hundred dollars. Chadron won the second game but fans recouped little of their losses because they were reluctant to bet any more money of the home team. The third scheduled game between the two clubs was called off due to wet grounds, but the trip ended on a positive note, “The boys report that the horse races were the very best they ever witnessed, some of the fastest horses in Nebraska being entered.”¹³⁸

Most of the Lead players stayed in town for a couple more weeks and the team reorganized, even changing their name from the Grays to the Ravens (based on their black uniforms). They considered themselves a strictly amateur team and entered a “non-professional” tournament at Custer. The Ravens beat the host club from Custer in their opening game of the tournament and downed the Hill City Tin Miners 32-8 in their second. In the championship game Lead defeated “...a combination team composed of the best men of the Southern Hills teams...” 10-7 to take the \$200 purse. Harry Marshall telephoned the results back to the *Pioneer-Times* office in Deadwood and reported that the reputation of the Lead team had been sustained, and in what might have been a final backhanded dig at the Deadwood club, said that “the victorious banner still flouts the breeze, with \$1,000 check pinned to it.”¹³⁹

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- ¹ *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times* March 8, 1890.
- ² *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, June 20, 1890.
- ³ “A Bluff At Ball Playing”, *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, May 31, 1890.
- ⁴ *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, June 1, 1890.
- ⁵ “Soldier Boys”, July 11, 1890.
- ⁶ *Rapid City Journal*, July 8, 1890.
- ⁷ “Yesterday’s Ball Game”, *Rapid City Journal*, July 12, 1890.
- ⁸ *Rapid City Journal*, July 25, 1890.
- ⁹ “Base Ball Association”, *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, July 16, 1890.
- ¹⁰ *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, July 11, 1890.
- ¹¹ His last name was spelled alternatively; Flanagan, Flannigan, Flanigan, and Flannagan in different sources.
- ¹² Black Hills papers identified him as Asa Murphy but his real name may have been Arthur Creighton based on a report from the *Omaha Daily Bee*, August 29, 1890 stating, “...young Creighton of the Eden-Muses was with Flanagan in the Hills.” It wasn’t unusual for players who played both semi-pro and professional baseball to play under assumed named to hide their identity.
- ¹³ “Another Pitcher Signed”, *Sioux City (Iowa) Journal*, May 1, 1889.
- ¹⁴ “Base Ball: Mets Vs Grays”, *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, July 27, 1890.
- ¹⁵ “Grays Defeated”, *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, July 29, 1890.
- ¹⁶ “Base Ball”, *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, August 3, 1890.
- ¹⁷ *Rapid City Journal*, August 5, 1890.
- ¹⁸ Base Ball: That Chadron Game”, *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, August 5, 1890.
- ¹⁹ “A Thirteen Inning Game”, *Rapid City Journal*, August 5, 1890.
- ²⁰ “The Other Side”, *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, August 10, 1890.
- ²¹ “The Other Side”.
- ²² “The Other Side”.
- ²³ “Chadron Wolves”, *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, August 15, 1890.
- ²⁴ “Chadron Wolves”
- ²⁵ “Chadron Accepts”, *Rapid City Journal*, August 8, 1890.
- ²⁶ *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, August 12, 1890.
- ²⁷ “Deadwood 20, Chadron 16”, *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, August 14, 1890.
- ²⁸ “Deadwood 20, Chadron 16”.
- ²⁹ “Resigned, Eh?”, *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, August 14, 1890.
- ³⁰ *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, September 2, 1890.
- ³¹ *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, August 12, 1890.
- ³² “The Season Over”, *Rapid City Journal*, October 14, 1890.
- ³³ “A Game Without A Winner”, *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, September 9, 1890.
- ³⁴ “A Great Game”, *Rapid City Journal*, October 4, 1890.
- ³⁵ *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, October 4, 1890.
- ³⁶ “Sunday’s Ball Game”, *Rapid City Journal*, October 7, 1890.
- ³⁷ “Sunday’s Ball Game”.
- ³⁸ *Rapid City Journal*, October 7, 1890.
- ³⁹ *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, August 26, 1890.
- ⁴⁰ “Baseball”, *Rapid City Journal*, October 11, 1890.
- ⁴¹ “Snowed Under”, *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, October 21, 1890.
- ⁴² “Baseball”, *Rapid City Journal*, October 21, 1890.
- ⁴³ *Rapid City Journal*, September 27, 1890.
- ⁴⁴ *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, August 21, 1890.
- ⁴⁵ *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, February, 14, 1891.
- ⁴⁶ *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, May 14, 1891
- ⁴⁷ *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, April 16, 1891.
- ⁴⁸ *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, June 16, 1891.
- ⁴⁹ “Ned Barnes Dead”, *Rapid City Journal*, April 13, 1897
- ⁵⁰ “Base Ball Players”, *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*

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- ⁵¹ “Diamond Dots”, *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, May 13, 1891.
- ⁵² *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, June 2, 1891.
- ⁵³ “The Deadwood Base Ball Club”, *Rapid City Journal*, June 13, 1891.
- ⁵⁴ *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, May 26, 1891.
- ⁵⁵ <https://www.baseball-reference.com/register/player.fcgi?id=hendri006joh>.
- ⁵⁶ <https://www.baseball-reference.com/register/player.fcgi?id=beymer001fra>.
- ⁵⁷ “The Reunion Over”, *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, June 19, 1891.
- ⁵⁸ “The Great Game”, *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, June 19, 1891.
- ⁵⁹ “The Reunion Over”.
- ⁶⁰ “The Reunion Over”.
- ⁶¹ *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, May 5, 1891.
- ⁶² *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, June 10, 1891.
- ⁶³ *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, June 10, 1891.
- ⁶⁴ “The Reunion Over”.
- ⁶⁵ Deadwood Again in the Soup de Base Ball”, *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, July 7, 1891.
- ⁶⁶ *Hot Springs Star*, July 3, 1891.
- ⁶⁷ *Hot Springs Star*, June 19, 1891.
- ⁶⁸ The *Hot Springs Star* referred to him as Lew Van Camp, and his first name alternatively as Lou, or Louis, or Lewis.
- ⁶⁹ “Going to Hot Springs”, *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, July 11, 1891.
- ⁷⁰ “The Ball Tournament”, *Rapid City Journal*, July 14, 1891.
- ⁷¹ *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, July 14, 1891.
- ⁷² “A Spoiled Mascot”, *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, August 27, 1891.
- ⁷³ *Hot Springs Star*, August 14, 1891
- ⁷⁴ “The Mets Not In It, *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, July 16, 1891.
- ⁷⁵ “The Mets Not In It”.
- ⁷⁶ “Was The Game Sold”, *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, July 17, 1891.
- ⁷⁷ “Was The Game Sold”.
- ⁷⁸ “A Black Eye For Baseball”, *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, July 17, 1891.
- ⁷⁹ “Victorious Mets”, *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, August 4, 1891.
- ⁸⁰ “Base Ball Tomorrow”, *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, August 15, 1891.
- ⁸¹ “Excursion to Belle Fourche”, *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, August 13, 1891.
- ⁸² “Very Base Ball”, *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, August 18, 1891.
- ⁸³ The following year, 1892, Plattsmouth joined the Nebraska State League, and Patterson was one of three black players in the league. The others were Bud Fowler, who played for Kearney and George Taylor with Beatrice.
- ⁸⁴ “The Visitors Victorious”, *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, August 27, 1891.
- ⁸⁵ “An Easy Game”, *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, August 28, 1891.
- ⁸⁶ “The Grays Victorious”, *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, August 29, 1891.
- ⁸⁷ *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, December 1, 1891.
- ⁸⁸ “The Mets To Disband”, September 1, 1891.
- ⁸⁹ “Browns Disbanded”, *Hot Springs Star*, September 18, 1891.
- ⁹⁰ “Base Ball Notes”, *Hot Springs Star*, September 4, 1891.
- ⁹¹ *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, March 5, 1892.
- ⁹² “Ball Club Formed”, *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, February 3, 1892.
- ⁹³ “Deadwood Directors Meet”, *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, March 10, 1892.
- ⁹⁴ “The Black Hills League”, *Sporting Life*, July 23, 1891.
- ⁹⁵ *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, April 27, 1893.
- ⁹⁶ “The Printers Organize”, *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, September 22, 1892.
- ⁹⁷ “A Ball Club Secured”, *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, May 8, 1892.
- ⁹⁸ “A Movement To Organize A Little State League”, *Sporting Life*, January 2, 1892
- ⁹⁹ “The Black Hills League”.
- ¹⁰⁰ “Base Ball Maters”. *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, March 10, 1892.
- ¹⁰¹ *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, March 15, 1892
- ¹⁰² *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, May 6, 1892.
- ¹⁰³ “Sporting Notes”, *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, May 24, 1892.
- ¹⁰⁴ “Baseball”, *Rapid City Journal*, April 2, 1892.

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- ¹⁰⁵ *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, March 11, 1892.
- ¹⁰⁶ “Baseball”,
- ¹⁰⁷ *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, May 28, 1892.
- ¹⁰⁸ *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, May 8, 1892.
- ¹⁰⁹ “A Movement To Organize A Little State League”, *Sporting Life*, January 2, 1892
- ¹¹⁰ “Base Ball Organized”, *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, February 3, 1892.
- ¹¹¹ *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, February 13, 1892
- ¹¹² “Won The First Game”, *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, June 14, 1892.
- ¹¹³ “The World Is Ours”, *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, June 14, 1892.
- ¹¹⁴ “Hustling For Players”, *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, June 22, 1892.
- ¹¹⁵ “Taken From The County Jail”, *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, June 29, 1892.
- ¹¹⁶ “Their First Defeat”, *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, July 1, 1892.
- ¹¹⁷ “We Fall Hard”, *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, July 1, 1892.
- ¹¹⁸ “Defeated Again”, *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, July 12, 1892.
- ¹¹⁹ The Deadwood papers spelled his name “Summers”.
- ¹²⁰ “It Was Pretty Tough”, *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, July 10, 1892.
- ¹²¹ “Defeated Again”, *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, July 12, 1892.
- ¹²² “A Dastardly Act”, *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, July 16, 1892.
- ¹²³ *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, July 19, 1892.
- ¹²⁴ Articles of Agreement”, *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, July 20, 1892.
- ¹²⁵ “Base Ball Notes”, *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, July 19, 1892.
- ¹²⁶ *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, July 21, 1892.
- ¹²⁷ “First Blood For Lead”, *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, July 22, 1892.
- ¹²⁸ *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, July 22, 1892.
- ¹²⁹ “Broke Even”, *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, July 24, 1892.
- ¹³⁰ “Broke Even”.
- ¹³¹ A Game A Piece”, *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, July 22, 1892.
- ¹³² “The Committee’s Statement”, *Queen City (Spearfish) Mail*, July 27, 1892.
- ¹³³ Each team usually had their own scorekeeper and both were listed in the box score. Usually their tallies reconciled, but sometimes they did not.
- ¹³⁴ *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, July 27, 1892.
- ¹³⁵ “Caught On The Finish”, *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, July 28, 1892.
- ¹³⁶ “Lost”, *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, July 29, 1892.
- ¹³⁷ “Died”, *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, July 30, 1892.
- ¹³⁸ *Black Hills (Deadwood) Times*, August 13, 1892.
- ¹³⁹ *Deadwood Pioneer-Times*, August 20, 1890.