CRUSADER SPORTS FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2001

**Why the Cleveland Indians Owe Holy Cross**

**By Jim Maloney**

CRUSADER SPORTS STAFF

What comes to mind when you think of the Cleveland Indians? Ask people around campus what they know about the Indians and they will probably give you a hundred different answers. To the average sports fan, the Indians are one of the most competitive teams in the American League despite the fact that an injury-plagued squad finished second behind the surprising Chicago White Sox in 2000. The Indians appeared to be on the verge of reaching the playoffs throughout the season, but injuries to key players and a lack of leadership from the managerial staff saw the team fall out of contention. Nonetheless, the Indians can still claim to have been the dominant force in the AL Central since realignment was instated in 1994.

"Fans of the Indians" will tell you that the Indians were victimized this offseason when perennial all-star Manny Ramirez deserted the only professional team he had played for to become the recipient of a $160 million dollar contract courtesy of the New York Yankees. Losing Ramirez, arguably the game's best hitter, will not be easy for Cleveland, but fans know general manager John Hart will work hard to remain competitive. Hart has done everything possible in recent years in hope of bringing Cleveland its first championship since 1954. Within the past few seasons, Hart has traded away his top prospects at the time such as Jeremy Burnitz, Sean Casey, Brian Giles, and Richie Sexson for players who would have an immediate impact, but still does not have a ring to show for his efforts.

To replace Ramirez, Hart did not sacrifice more of his farm system, but instead gambled on two time MVP Juan Gonzalez. Coming off a sub-par year with the Detroit Tigers where he consistently suffered back problems, Gonzalez signed for a one-year, $10 million contract to play for Cleveland.

(*(Crusader photo by Kevin Hannon)*)

Putting on the field issues aside for a moment, let us consider how exactly the Indians were given their nickname. Fans do not give much thought to the nicknames of professional athletes, all that really matters is the bottom line, winning championships. As members of the Holy Cross community, we should take a closer look at how the Indians got their name. What we find may surprise you.

The 1895 World Series brought national attention to the names that professional sports teams have. The fall classic matched the Indians and the Atlanta Braves, two teams whose nicknames allude to Native American culture. Protestors claimed that these teams disparaged and belittled Native Americans, especially with offensive acts such as the "tomahawk chop" performed by Atlanta fans. Some critics demanded the names be changed, which triggered a debate over how and why these teams were named they way they were.

Believe it or not, the Cleveland Indians were named after a former Holy Cross student. The popular belief is that a Penobscot Indian from Maine named Louis Francis Sockalexis was the reason that the Cleveland franchise settling on the nickname "Indians." Before reaching the professional ranks of baseball, Sockalexis spent time as a student at Holy Cross, where he was the star of the baseball team. He played during the 1895 and 1896 seasons for Holy Cross and dominated his competition both on the mound and at the plate. He tossed three no-hitters in his brief stay in Worcester, in addition to hitting a remarkable .436 in 1895 and .444 in 1896.

In 1897, Sockalexis became a member of the National League Cleveland Spiders. Details of pre-season games in this era are shaky, but legend states in the preseason during the 1897 season the Cleveland franchise Patryk Tebeau split his squad in half to play an intrasquad game. One side was led by starting pitcher John Pappalau and was nick-named the "Poppos." The other team, led by the rightfielder Sockalexis, was called the "Indians." Sockalexis made an immediate impact going 3 for 2 with two doubles, as well as throwing a runner out at home plate. The Indians were victorious, 17-7.

Sockalexis' immediate success was used by management to give the team much needed publicity in an attempt to sell tickets. Sportswriters referred to Cleveland as the "Indian's team," and made Sockalexis the subject of countless cartoons and articles. Intentional or not, the media made a mockery of his Native American background. In one cartoon, Sockalexis was portrayed wearing a headdress and carrying a war club. The treatment from the fans was even worse. His home fans shouted racial slurs at him throughout the course of the game, despite the fact he was their star player. Treatment on the road was even worse, where fans threatened his life and opposing players frequently joined in. In July of 1897 Sockalexis badly injured his leg causing him to miss two months of the season. This injury, in combination with alcohol problems, caused his batting average to fall dramatically upon his return.

In recent years the halftime show has been improved to a show that people actually want to watch. Super Bowl XXXV was no different as it boasted big names and big acts. The halftime show was a huge production that included the acts of NSYNC and Aerosmith, and ended with "Whoomp! There it go's way" performed by the two groups with help from Britney Spears, Mary J Blige, and Nelly. In five minutes a football field turned into a rock concert.

"The halftime show was great," said Megan Daniels ('04). Andy Galagher ('04) felt that the halftime show was unique and different as it was the first halftime show to include hip Hop artists that included the acts of N'SYNC and Aerosmith, and ended with "Whoomp! There it goes way" performed by the two groups with help from Britney Spears, Mary J Blige, and Nelly. In five minutes a football field turned into a rock concert.

"The halftime show was great," said Megan Daniels ('04). Andy Galagher ('04) felt that the halftime show was unique and different as it was the first halftime show to include hip Hop artists that included the acts of N'SYNC and Aerosmith, and ended with "Whoomp! There it goes way" performed by the two groups with help from Britney Spears, Mary J Blige, and Nelly. In five minutes a football field turned into a rock concert.

"The halftime show was great," said Megan Daniels ('04). Andy Galagher ('04) felt that the halftime show was unique and different as it was the first halftime show to include hip Hop artists that included the acts of N'SYNC and Aerosmith, and ended with "Whoomp! There it goes way" performed by the two groups with help from Britney Spears, Mary J Blige, and Nelly. In five minutes a football field turned into a rock concert.