

South Bend Blue Sox

South Bend, St. Joseph County

1943 – 1954

Throughout South Bend's long history of illustrious baseball teams, both amateur and professional, perhaps the most unusual and captivating team was the South Bend Blue Sox. The Blue Sox were charter members (along with the Racine Belles, Kenosha Comets, and Rockford Peaches) of the All-American Girl's Professional Baseball League (AAGPBL), the only professional women's baseball league in the United States. Started in 1943 by P.K. Wrigley of the Chicago Cubs, as a serious alternative to men's professional baseball, the AAGPBL played for 12 seasons through 1954, expanding to 10 teams by 1948.

By 1947, the teams were using an over-size baseball, the sidearm pitch and men's professional rules. By 1946, the Fort Wayne Daisies, Milwaukee Chicks, Peoria Red Wings and Muskegon Lassies had joined the league and were playing a full summer schedule of 110 games. The Blue Sox played in South Bend's Playland Park, where they drew a record-setting season attendance of over 110,000 in 1947, more than any of the 8 Midwest minor league men's team that year. Players such as the never-miss short stop "Shoo-Shoo" Wirth, Libby Mahon, an outfielder who stole 114 bases in 116 attempts in 1947, Jean Faut, a speedball pitcher who pitched 44 games that year, and slugging left fielder Daisy Junor, kept the local fans coming back for more.

The Blue Sox tied with the Rockford Peaches (as portrayed in the movie, *A League of Their Own*) for the league pennant in 1949. However, in 1951, the Blue Sox came from two games behind against Rockford in the playoffs to win the AAGPBL Championship on September 14, for the first time since 1943.

The South Bend Blue Sox profile was provided to ICW by Travis Childs, Director of Education, The History Museum, South Bend, Indiana

For more information about the South Bend Blue Sox, go to:

<http://www.aagpbl.org/index.cfm/teams/1946/south-bend-blue-sox/22>

Additional and more detailed references available at the end of Women's History Month



Photo Courtesy: All-American Girls Professional Baseball League. "1946 South Bend Blue Sox"

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