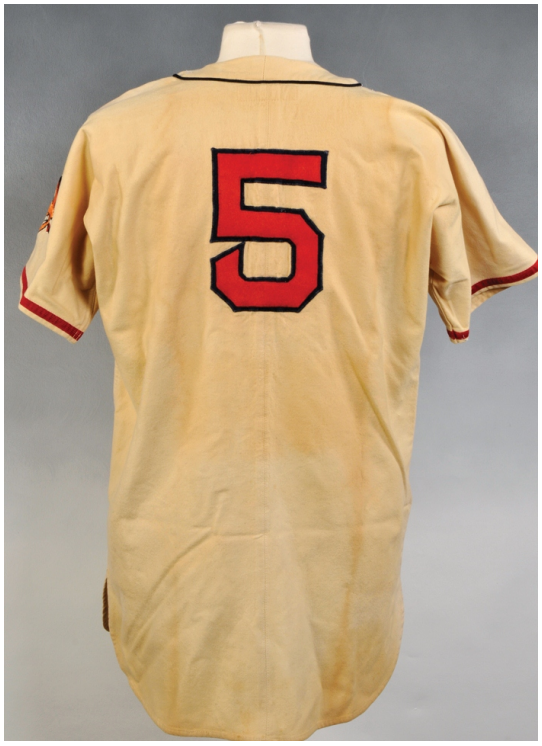
This is one installment in a team effort by The Cleveland Fan, highlighting the top local sports figures by jersey number. Please weigh in with your thoughts on the "Boards" . As David Letterman would say, "For entertainment purposes only; please, no wagering"

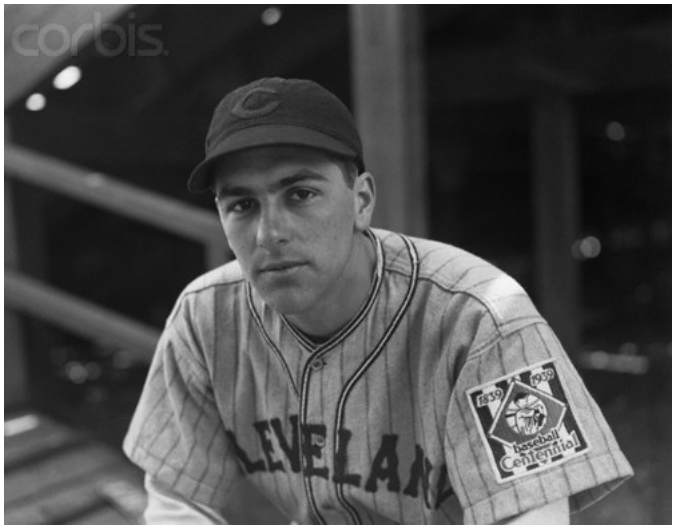


It's a running joke within my circle of Cleveland sports fan friends that we are the only city whose great sports highlight videos are in black and white. That's an exaggeration of course, but a slight one. What is beyond argument is that the glory years of Cleveland sports are increasingly ancient history. With that in mind, it will shock no one that we found ourselves back in the World War II era to select this city's greatest ever #5.

On November 20, 1941...which is to say, about two weeks before Pearl Harbor...the 24-year old shortstop of the Cleveland Indians dropped a letter in a mailbox back in his college town of Champaign, Illinois. It was addressed to Alva Bradley, the President of the Indians. Years later in his memoirs, the Hall-of-Famer admitted that he immediately had second thoughts, and if he could have reached down into the mailbox to retrieve it, he probably would have.

After all, it contained his rather foolish...borderline preposterous suggestion that Bradley name *him*
, Lou Boudreau, a wet-behind-the-ears kid, two years out of college, the
manager
of the Cleveland Indians. "I look back and realize it was a very brash thing for me to do," recalled the man who came to be nicknamed, among other things....

“The Boy Wonder”



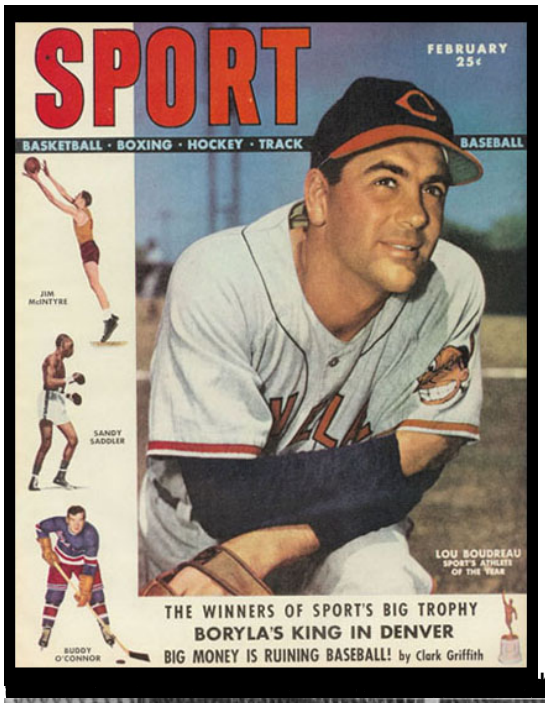
Three days later, Bradley arranged an audience for Boudreau with the Indians Board of Directors. Grilled by the board as to how he felt he could succeeed in the job with so little life experience, Boudreau countered that he had majored in physical education, and had planned to get into coaching someday anyway.

The young man's leadership qualities were unquestioned by the Indians brass. They knew he had led his high school basketball team to three straight Illinois state championship games, and then captained both baseball and basketball teams at the University of Illinois. The board interviewed two other candidates, and awarded the job to Boudreau, making him the youngest manager in major league history, a distinction he still holds today.

The move was not universally accepted by the veterans on the team, a group that had rebelled against Ossie Vitt, Boudreau’s predecessor in the Tribe dugout. The local writers were up in arms as well, suggesting the move could ruin the great young shortstop’s playing career, and mocking the Indians management in print.

Many of the players didn’t take to Handsome Lou’s rah-rah approach to motivation, referring to him as “Joe College” behind his back, and spitting tobacco juice on the inspirational posters he hung in the clubhouse. This despite the fact that Boudreau had already established himself as one of the promising young stars of the game, making the All-Star team in his first two seasons (1940-41) as a starter, and leading the AL in fielding percentage at shortstop both years.

The Best Shortstop in Baseball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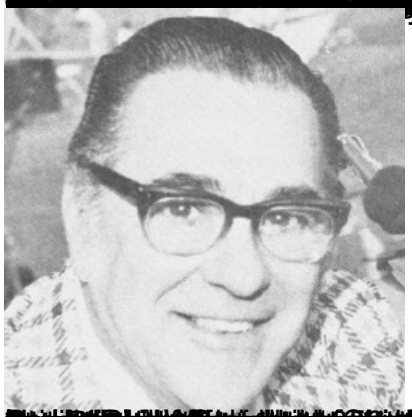
LOU BOUDREAU
SPORT'S ATHLETE OF THE YEAR
THE WINNERS OF SPORT'S BIG TROPHY
BORYLA'S KING IN DENVER
BIG MONEY IS RUINING BASEBALL! by Clark Griffith



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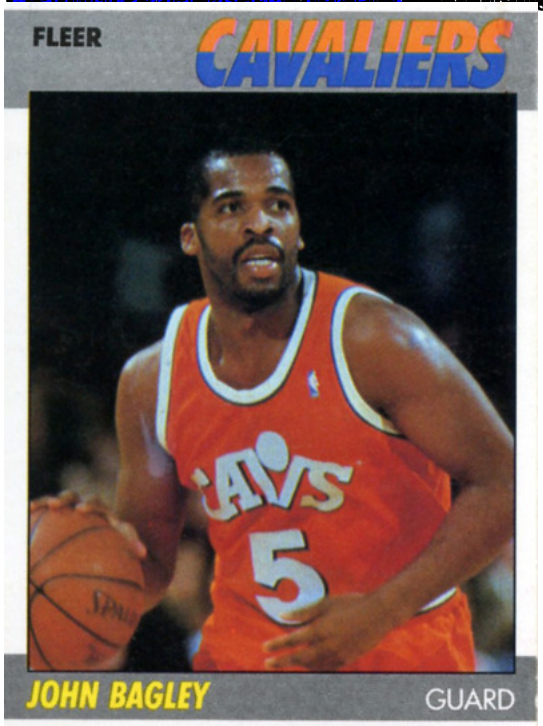
92
CLEVELAND
BROWNS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CAVALIERS
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5
JOHN BAGLEY
GUARD