

## 1910

President William Howard Taft is remembered today for two things, neither of which, unfortunately for Taft's presidential reputation, has much to do with his skills as chief executive. The only president who also served as chief justice of the United States Supreme Court, he was also the first to preside over "first pitch" ceremonies at the season's opening game in Washington. Taft initiated that tradition -- which was carried on by presidents in Washington as long as a franchise existed there, and at other sites in subsequent years -- on April 14, 1910. For several years, baseball had presented chief executives with a "gold pass" to its games, but Taft made the fullest possible use of his. Unlike some future presidents, Taft did not attend the ballpark for political reasons, but to watch the game. Once, while visiting St. Louis, he dropped in on a Cardinals contest at Robison Field; when that game early on developed into a one-sided affair, he headed for the gate in hopes of reaching Sportsmans Park several blocks away, where the Browns presumably were engaged in a more interesting battle. Taft said that year that "the game of base ball is a clean, straight game and it summons to its presence everybody who enjoys clean, straight athletics." He was a close acquaintance of players like Walter Johnson, and in later years of executives like Clark Griffith. Presidential historians tend to rank William Howard Taft as a utility player. But as a baseball fan, he was Hall of Famematerial.

ELSEWHERE IN BASEBALL A season long battle for the batting title -- and an automobile -- between the popular Napoleon Lajoie and the unpopular Ty Cobb is decided on the final day when Lajoie goes 8 for 8 against a St. Louis Browns infield playing suspiciously deep. The major leagues adopt the 154 game schedule as a permanent fixture. IN THE WORLD The Boy Scouts of America are incorporated Feb. 6.

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