



## **“Play Ball!”**

Baseball was becoming popular in the late 19th century as the country was shifting to a more urban culture. The volunteer fire companies were becoming paid departments to regulate the indisciplinary practices of the volunteer fire companies. Young professional youth moved from the volunteer companies to the game of baseball. Many of the baseball teams' uniforms were patterned on the volunteer fire company uniforms. The volunteer fire companies would travel to other cities for celebrations and social gatherings. By 1888, Ernest Thayer published his poem *Casey at the Bat* in a San Francisco newspaper. That same year, a shoemaker began his career in major league baseball after playing in minor league games and being noticed.

William Ellsworth “Dummy” Hoy was the third deaf player in baseball. Two deaf and mute players were already in the major league by 1888. The first was Ed Dundon, and the second was Tom Lynch. At that time, the common label for their condition was “dummy.” All three players were referred to as “Dummy” and their last name. Hoy was to change the game in both social attitudes and rules. He and his team members communicated with sign language. Legend has it that the umpire and other hand signals came into the game so that communication between players and the umpires was visual for Hoy.

Then came the day when Luther Haden “Dummy” Taylor pitched a game against Hoy in 1902. Hoy hit a ball into field for a base hit. He was a good base runner and led the league in stolen bases for a couple of years. However, stolen bases were recorded differently in the early years. The two players met again in 1942 at the Ohio State Deaf Softball game on Labor Day weekend. Taylor pitched—he was in his 60s—and Hoy—he was in his 80s—was his catcher.

Baseball is a sport that has allowed individuals with physical differences to play the game and advance to the highest levels of the game. Jim Abbott was born without a left hand and became a major-league pitcher. In 1993, Abbott pitched a no-hitter against the Cleveland Indians.

As for William Ellsworth Hoy, he was called Bill Hoy, Billy Hoy and ‘William Hoy, and he would correct people and say his name was Dummy Hoy.

If you remove history, you lose the ability to understand history. The term “dummy” for Hoy gave him recognition of his record. His record in baseball is impressive, and there has been a campaign to have him elected to the Cooperstown Baseball Hall of Fame. In 2000, Bid McPhee was entered into the Hall of Fame, and supporters of Dummy Hoy asked what McPhee had over Hoy. Some individuals go through life unnoticed but leave a remarkable change.

Baseball has had its up and downs in recent years, but it is still a game that allows for social assimilation. Studying the names of players, one can see the immigration social patterns of various periods. The game is more than pitching, hitting, running and catching. There are hand signals between pitchers and catchers, dugouts to players in the field, and base coaches to hitters and runners, all thanks to William Ellsworth Hoy.

D.H.Coop is a retired fire/paramedic and retired teacher having taught IB and AP World History 30 years. He continues to substitute, tutor and consult. [www.HistoryDepot.com](http://www.HistoryDepot.com)