

★ ARIZONA 2020
GAINING A COMPETITIVE EDGE

5 WAYS TO LEVERAGE THE CACTUS LEAGUE

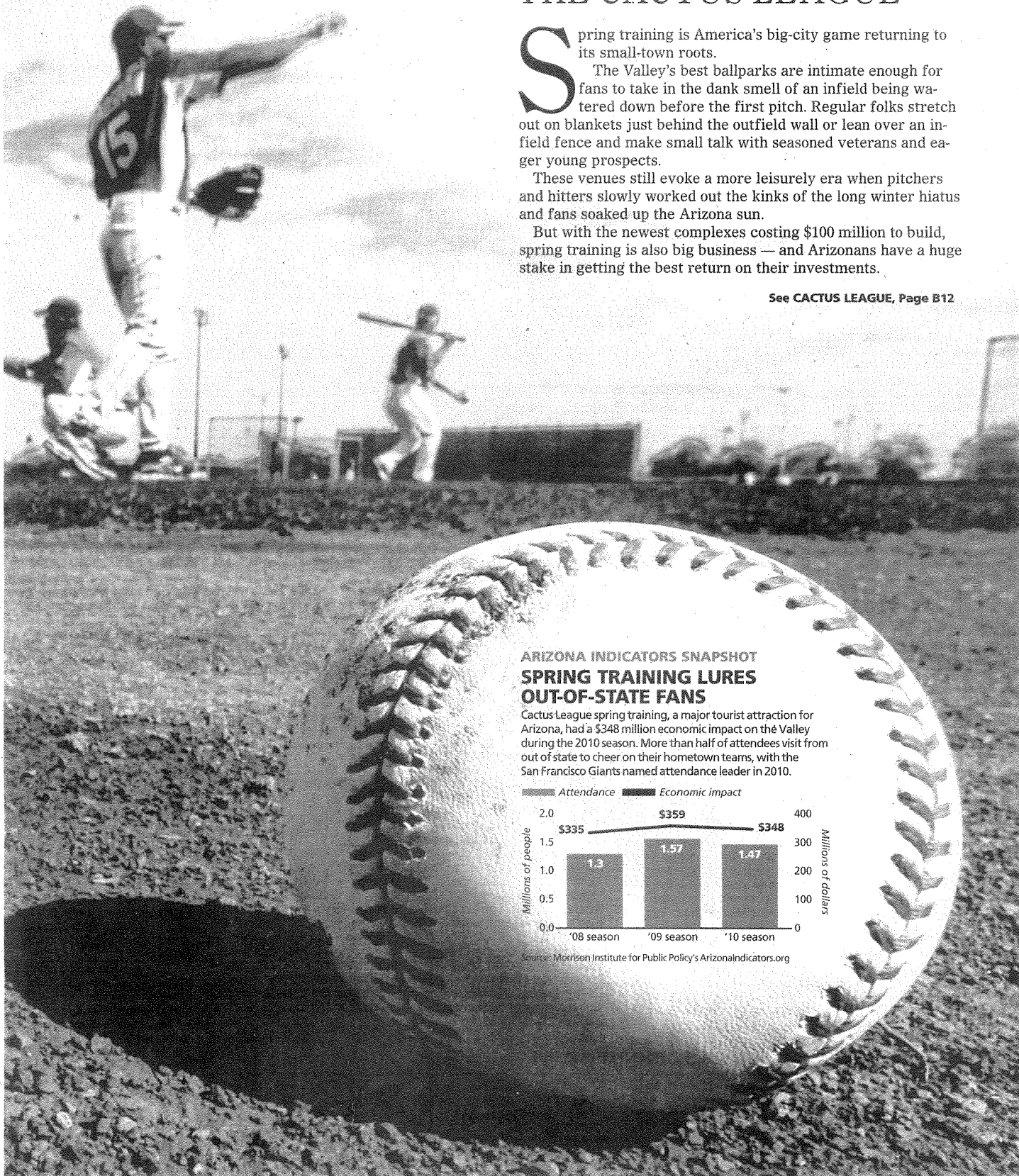
Spring training is America's big-city game returning to its small-town roots.

The Valley's best ballparks are intimate enough for fans to take in the dank smell of an infield being watered down before the first pitch. Regular folks stretch out on blankets just behind the outfield wall or lean over an infield fence and make small talk with seasoned veterans and eager young prospects.

These venues still evoke a more leisurely era when pitchers and hitters slowly worked out the kinks of the long winter hiatus and fans soaked up the Arizona sun.

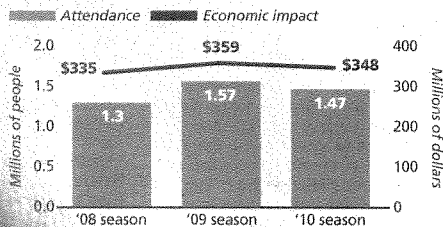
But with the newest complexes costing \$100 million to build, spring training is also big business — and Arizonans have a huge stake in getting the best return on their investments.

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ARIZONA INDICATORS SNAPSHOT SPRING TRAINING LURES OUT-OF-STATE FANS

Cactus League spring training, a major tourist attraction for Arizona, had a \$348 million economic impact on the Valley during the 2010 season. More than half of attendees visit from out of state to cheer on their hometown teams, with the San Francisco Giants named attendance leader in 2010.



Source: Morrison Institute for Public Policy's Arizonalndicators.org

THOUGHTS FROM THE PANELISTS

ROBERT BRINTON
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SHERRY HENRY
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ROBERT JOHNSON
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IOANNA MORFESSIS
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5 ways to leverage the Cactus League

CACTUS LEAGUE
Continued from B11

Last spring, as part of *The Arizona Republic's* ongoing Arizona 2020 project, Viewpoints invited four experts on tourism and spring training to talk about tapping the Cactus League's vast economic potential.

We followed up a few weeks ago with the four:

» **Robert Brinton:** President and CEO of the Mesa Convention and Visitors Bureau and former president of the Cactus League Baseball Association.

» **Sherry Henry:** Director of the Arizona Office of Tourism.

» **Robert Johnson:** Vice president of public affairs at Highground Public Affairs Consultants and project leader of the Play Ball Cactus League history project.

» **Ioanna Morfessis:** President of IO.INC, a consulting firm, and founding president/CEO of the Greater Phoenix Economic Council.

Here, distilled, are their thoughts on five ways to leverage the Cactus League as a major economic asset.

1 Create a greater appreciation of the Cactus League

Only Arizona and Florida can boast that they play host to spring training. That is a big, big deal.

Robert Johnson: It's been said the economic impact of spring training in Arizona (\$348 million in 2010) is like having a Super Bowl come to our area every year. Perhaps we should start treating the Cactus League like the economic and entertainment force that it has become, the same way we pull together to win football's season-ending spectacle every decade.

Pull together big-business interests and cities to stage events, market baseball's return, push ticket sales and create fun family opportunities at games across the Valley. Imagine an annual Cactus League festival over several days that marked the start of the season and involved all 15 teams and 10 host communities. Think All-Star Game Fan Fest but bigger.

Sherry Henry: Tell the story and brag, brag, brag (in a nice and proud way)...think social media! It would be powerful if we could get chambers of commerce, businesses, etc. — all those with memberships or employees — to join in telling the story of what a tremendous gift the Cactus League is to the state's image and economic vitality.

2 Generate more tourism dollars

Nearly six out of 10 Cactus League fans are from out of state. If they stayed an extra day or two, the economic impact would add up.

Ioanna Morfessis: Get the Cactus League and teams to partner with Arizona's natural and cultural attractions and the hospitality industry to offer discounts on lodging, car rentals and admission fees.

Robert Brinton: In general, the average Cactus League fan spends more time here than the average visitor. Fans travel throughout the state, with Sedona and Grand Canyon being the main destinations. The most common activities locally are sightseeing, golf, shopping and dining. To get the word out, Major League Baseball prints 150,000 pocket schedules, the Cactus League does an annual 20-plus page insert each January in USAirways' in-flight magazine and 1 million newspaper inserts are placed in home cities for each spring-training team.

Henry: Get potential visitors to our websites and communicate with them via social media outlets. With the opening of Salt River Fields at Talking Stick, there is a world of opportunities and it is a natural to combine promotions and cross promotions between AOT and convention & visitor bureaus around the Valley. In today's digital world the key is to drive potential visitors to our websites to view all of the great travel packages and itineraries and entice them to visit. Our office is currently promoting several Cactus

CACTUS LEAGUE: THEN AND NOW

» The Detroit Tigers were the first team to hold spring-training camp in Arizona in 1929. They trained at old Riverside Park at Central Avenue and the Salt River.

» The original Scottsdale Stadium was built in 1956 for \$72,000.

» On March 8, 1964, Willie Mays christened the new Phoenix Municipal Stadium with its first home run in a 6-2 win over the Cleveland Indians.

» There have been four all-Cactus League World Series (1954, 1989, 2002 and 2010). The Giants have been involved in all four facing a different opponent each time. They have won twice and lost twice.

» With the election of Roberto Alomar and Bert Blyleven to the Hall of Fame this year, the number of enshrined Cactus League players and managers is now 70.

» Nine franchises spent their inaugural spring-training seasons in the Cactus League: Baltimore Orioles (1954); Los Angeles Angels (1961); Houston Colt 45s (1962); San Diego Padres (1969); Seattle Pilots (1969);



Cactus League fans on March 31 watch the final spring-training game at Hi Corbett Field in Tucson. It was between the Arizona Diamondbacks and the Colorado Rockies. MICHAEL CHOW/THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC



Bert Blyleven and managers is now 70.

Milwaukee Brewers (1971); Seattle Mariners (1977); Colorado Rockies (1993); and the Arizona Diamondbacks (1998).

» Scottsdale has hosted more teams (five) for spring training than any other Cactus League city: Baltimore Orioles (1956-58); Boston Red Sox (1959-65); Chicago Cubs (1967-78); Oakland A's (1979-81); San Francisco Giants (1982-present).

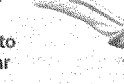
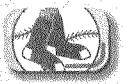
» Apache Junction's Geronimo Park hosted the Houston Colt 45s for two seasons in 1962-63. The park was named following a contest held by the team. The winning

entry was submitted by Victoria Vala of Riverside, Ill.

» In 1954, the St. Louis Browns became the Baltimore Orioles and trained in a converted horse-racing park in Yuma. They only played four games there and moved to Florida the next spring.

» The original Phoenix Municipal Stadium at Central Avenue and Mohave Street was built in 1937 as a WPA project.

» Hi Corbett Field (originally Randolph Park) hosted Cactus League baseball continually from 1947 to 2010. The ballpark's 64-year run ended last March.



Source: Rodney Johnson, the Society for American Baseball Research

League sweepstakes and recently awarded a very special Cactus League experience to the winner of our Cactus League video contest on Facebook.

3 Spin off more business around the ballparks

Look for opportunities to develop retail, hospitality and other businesses around the stadiums.

Morfessis: Target the attraction of sports medicine, fitness and wellness centers, health-care services and products and cluster them around the ballparks. Hospitality-related facilities are a natural.

Johnson: The business community created spring training in the late 1940s as a way to drive tourism and business growth to a handful of sleepy desert communities. Today, government runs the show. The giants of our business community must make spring training a priority once again and maintain a leadership posture that has been painfully absent for many years.

Brinton: All the new stadiums follow the Peoria plan of sur-

rounding the stadium with retail. However, the economy has slowed the impact for Surprise, Goodyear and Glendale. The new Cubs stadium for Mesa has a planned retail area called Wrigleyville West.

4 Get the word out — far and wide

Introduce influential businesspeople from around the country to the Valley in a bid to bring conventions or relocate businesses here.

Morfessis: Pull together city, regional and state tourism and economic-development materials and make them available to the hotels and stadiums. Have the Cactus League partner with Arizona Commerce Authority and regional and local economic-development organizations to invite executives from firms based in Chicago, etc., to visit Arizona to meet with area business executives and catch a few games.

Johnson: A more engaged business community could follow the trail blazed by early Cactus League visionaries who saw the value of spring training

as a tool for luring people and jobs away from cold-weather climates. For two months, blizzards have been pounding the Midwest and East Coast. Who is positioned and capable of quickly reminding frozen baseball fans of warm weather ahead even as snow is falling?

Lack of coordination and the prominence of parochial barriers hinder cross-town cooperation and dilute funds for full-scale, quick-response campaigns, preventing even the easiest of opportunities from being realized.

5 Make greater use of the stadiums

These are tremendous facilities that offer many uses year-round.

Henry: In a perfect world, having one entity looking at all the opportunities would ultimately benefit all. We know from our hospitality experience that youth sports is basically recession-proof. Acquiring more of that business could be a huge economic benefit.

Brinton: Stadiums are being used more and more during non-

spring-training times. Major League Baseball's Fall League plays in several stadiums. Men's Senior League Baseball and National Adult Baseball play tournaments for three weeks each fall (resulting in 15,000 to 20,000 room nights). WAC baseball playoffs are held each May at HoHoKam in Mesa. The new Salt River Fields at Talking Stick already has several concerts booked. RV- and car-sales events are held at many stadiums. Companies are using stadiums for picnics and softball games.

Johnson: Last year, roughly 1.5 million fans attended spring-training games in Arizona. This year, with all 15 Cactus League teams working out in the Valley, ballparks will have available for sale almost 2.5 million tickets. So, even if we meet or slightly exceed last year's strong attendance mark, we still will have about a million tickets left unsold at the box office. Selling those tickets should be the first priority.

Here again is an argument for better coordination. Is there another metropolitan area in the United States that can offer anywhere near the number of state-of-the-art baseball fields in such close proximity that we feature here? So, why aren't we winning every major baseball event in the country?

Is it because we compete against each other? Is it because we don't offer an easier way for tournament promoters to book more fields faster? Or is it a lack of marketing cooperation across city limits?


Some spring-training facilities managers on their own have lured smaller regional tournaments, but these bookings only scratch the surface of what is possible if there were a way for everyone to work together on bringing bigger baseball events to the Valley.

The bottom line

The Cactus League is one of Arizona's major economic assets. Arizona, communities and private parties have invested heavily in the stadiums and related complexes. With even greater planning, marketing and coordination, we can fill the stadiums, keep visiting fans here longer and utilize the ballparks throughout the year.


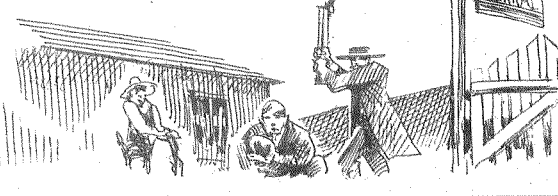
A TRUE WEST MOMENT

By Bob Boze Bell



Baseball at the O.K. Corral

Thanks to the Rev. Endicott Peabody, mere months after the so-called Gunfight at the O.K. Corral in October 1881, Tombstone formed a baseball team and began playing other mining camps in the area. The game caught on, and many baseball rivalries were born, some of them existing to this very day. In 1929, the Detroit Tigers were the first major-league team to come to Arizona for spring training.

Read more Western history at TrueWestMagazine.com.