

# THE GASHOUSE GANG



**COURSE** Pepper Martin and I never did make it to Novus Scofus, and Frankie Frisch never did put a squash on *all* our fun. If there was ever fun to be had, the Gashouse Gang Cardinals of 1934 were having it.

Why, I remember one afternoon, Mr. Frisch was just standing outside of our hotel on the sidewalk, shooting the breeze when BAM! A whole bag of water—musta been a big, old laundry bag—exploded right at his feet. Frankie looked up, and who could it be, but Pepper Martin grinning in the window right above him.

“That was a slip,” Pepper says. “Honest it was. Now if you’ll just forgive me this once, I’ll go out tomorrow and hit a home run for you and win a ball game.”

And don’t ya know, that’s exactly what that crazy boy did.

Yes siree Pepper Martin and me sure got into a good load of fun. Martin was a different sorta fella. Not only was he a wiz on the ball field, but he also had a mild interest in **midget racers**.

Martin went and bought himself his own racecar, and he named that thing “The Martin Special.” When we was out on the road, Pepper was gettin’ bugged day and night with telegrams about that darn car! But Ol’ Diz likes to stand by his friends, so I was *real* supportive of my buddy’s unusual ambitions. I’ll tell ya, Mr. Frisch was none too happy when he found out that Pepper and I ended up having to push a busted up “Martin Special” around a Chicago racetrack before going out to play a doubleheader the next day!

Pepper and I got up to quite a few high jinks in our time. We had a knack for discovering the source of the loudspeaker in any small town stadium. Pepper and I, we’d climb up there to that microphone and entertain the crowds with our own colorful commentary on the game, introducing our Gashouse buddies and inviting them to come on out of the dugout and give the folks a wave!

Why, I remember one game in the dead heat of summer. One of them 110-degree days when a fella might be just be one pitch away from melting into a giant puddle on the mound. Well, Pepper and I decided just to mess with the fans a little bit. We collected sticks and scraps of paper and built ourselves a small fire, right there in front of the dugout. We found ourselves some blankets and wrapped them ‘round our shoulders and sat there, squatting, warming our hands by the fireside, I must admit, much to the crowd’s delight.




Yep, my buddy, Pepper, he sure did love music. But it had to be hillbilly music. In fact, one fine day, Martin stumbled upon a father and his five children, a whole family of hillbillies, wandering the streets with all them hillbilly instruments not far from the Cardinal’s own home, Sportsman’s Park. Pepper was so excited, he escorted this lot through the press gate and into the player’s clubhouse so that when Mr. Frisch arrived to go over the lineup, there was a mandolin man perched on a bench and a fiddler on top of the big bag of uniforms. The guitarist was strumming in the corner


and a fella on a washboard was jamming near the rubbing room. Frankie declared it might be a tad easier to discuss the game strategy without all that hillbilly racket, but in the end our good manager conceded and allowed Pepper Martin to enjoy one more song.

Frankie Frisch sure did put up with the Gashouse’s own breed of crazy. At the end of the day, some things he was better off not knowing at all. One day, a rodeo came to St. Louis. Pepper and I showed up to entertain the crowd! We had to play a big ball game the next day, but that didn’t stop us go-getters from mounting a few lively steeds and jumping right into a calf roping competition. But I’ll tell ya, them horses were not quite fast enough for Ol’ Diz here, so what really happened was I just jumped right off my mount and pursued that little cow on foot! Caught up to him and wrestled the thing right to the ground!

No, I don’t think Mr. Frisch ever found out about that one. I’d say probably best kept between those rodeo-goers, me, you, Pepper and, ‘course, the cow!

## EXTRA INNINGS!

 Dizzy Dean and Pepper Martin liked to introduce their teammates. Use the newspaper to find an example of an athlete to introduce. How would you introduce him?

 Pepper Martin was a fan of music. Newspapers are a great source of information for music lovers. There are stories about new musical releases, upcoming concerts, reviews of shows, advertisements for musical instruments or lessons. Find three examples of items in your newspaper that would appeal to music fans.

**Learning Standards:** I can identify important information in the news. I can use the newspaper to locate information.



## POP UPS

**MIDGET RACERS:** Midget racers are a class of racing cars. The cars are very small but have very high power. They originated in the 1930s.