



Researching Miracle Mud

By David A. Kelly

Writing a book can be both fun and hard work, but it all starts with an idea. I came upon the idea to write *Miracle Mud: Lena Blackburne and the Secret Mud That Changed Baseball* after I finished writing my first children's book, *Babe Ruth and the Baseball Curse*. I had enjoyed writing about Babe Ruth and baseball, so I started looking for another interesting baseball story.

I thought about other baseball players I could write about, but none felt right. Then I remembered something I had read a few years earlier about baseball mud. I did a little research and realized that the story of the mud had a lot of fun elements to it. First, few people (even baseball fans) know about baseball mud. Then there were the facts that the mud comes from a secret place and people don't really know what's in it. As I researched the story, it also became clear that Lena was a great character.



Once I got started, I did a number of things to research *Miracle Mud*. As most people do, I started with the Internet and sites like Wikipedia for basic information on baseballs, Lena Blackburne, and even baseball mud. They were helpful for starting to put together the basic pieces of the story. But to write the story, I wanted to find the best sources possible. Here's an overview of the types of sources I used to research and write *Miracle Mud*.

- **Official Baseball Rules.** Rule 3.01C from the Major League Baseball (MLB) rule book describes how baseballs need to be prepared before baseball games. It says specifically that the baseballs must be “rubbed” to remove the gloss.



Miracle Mud: Lena Blackburne and the Secret Mud That Changed Baseball
by David A. Kelly

Illustrated by Oliver Dominguez

LB ISBN: 978-0-7613-8092-4

Copyright © 2013 by Lerner Publishing Group, Inc. Lerner Digital™ and Lerner eSource™ are trademarks of Lerner Publishing Group, Inc. All rights reserved. www.lernerbooks.com



- **Library and Research Center at the National Baseball Hall of Fame.** During the writing process, I was in contact with a researcher at the Baseball Hall of Fame research library. He confirmed details about *Miracle Mud* as I found them and reviewed the final manuscript. He also provided some information on how many baseballs are used in a game, as well as the fact that Lena Blackburne rubbing mud is the only mud used by MLB.
- **Jim Bintliff, owner of Lena Blackburne Baseball Rubbing Mud.** I used the official Lena Blackburne Baseball Rubbing Mud website, <http://baseballrubbingmud.com>, for some general details on the story, as well as e-mailing and talking with Jim Bintliff, the current “mud farmer.” Bintliff also reviewed the final manuscript and approved it.
- **Books.** I read a number of baseball books looking for information on rubbing mud. I ended up finding two books particularly helpful. *The Baseball: Stunts, Scandals, and Secrets Beneath the Stitches* by Zack Hample provides great detail on the history and details of baseballs in the MLB, while *Baseball Field Guide: An In-Depth Illustrated Guide to the Complete Rules of Baseball* by Dan Formosa and Paul Hamburger had good information on how baseballs are prepared before games.
- **Articles.** I came across a number of published articles on baseball rubbing mud, including articles from NPR, the *Boston Globe*, and CNN.
- **Websites.** A lot of the information about baseball rubbing mud online seems to be very similar and repeats much of the basic history. However, I did find one long entry by Zack Hample (author of *The Baseball*), which provided a hands-on description of how to apply rubbing mud and his experience using it with the Philadelphia Phillies equipment manager.
- **Baseball statistics sources.** I consulted baseball statistics websites, like *Sports Illustrated* and *Baseball Almanac*, for specific information on Lena Blackburne’s baseball statistics and history.

I had a wonderful time researching and writing the story of baseball rubbing mud. I’m excited to be able to share both Lena’s story and the history of how and why each baseball used in a Major League Baseball game has to be rubbed with mud.

