

Hal Chase vs. Charles Comiskey: Key Timeline

Pre-1903	Charles Comiskey, a renowned defensive first baseman, formed a key alliance with Ban Johnson. Together, they founded the American League and created the National Agreement, which established the reserve clause—binding players to their teams and giving owners control over player movement.
1903	The American and National Leagues formed Major League Baseball, bringing the rules of the National Agreement and the reserve clause to the new organization. This agreement ended player jumping between leagues and cemented owner control over contracts.
1905	Hal Chase debuts with the New York Highlanders (later Yankees), quickly establishing himself as the top defensive first baseman of his era and the first true star of the franchise. His popularity and leadership led to his appointment as team captain and, later, player-manager.
1907–1912	Chase becomes a star in New York, known for his fielding brilliance and also for frequent contract disputes and holdouts, often testing the limits of the reserve clause.
1914	<p>The newly formed Federal League offered players much-wanted agency and a way to escape the restrictive reserve clause, posing a serious threat to Major League Baseball’s control. Chase jumped to the Federal League’s Buffalo Blues, openly defying the reserve clause while still under contract with the White Sox. Comiskey filed an injunction to stop him, but Chase challenged it in court and won.</p> <p>The case, <i>American League Baseball Club of Chicago v. Chase</i>, 86 Misc. 441, 149 N.Y.S. 6 (N.Y. Sup. Ct. 1914), was decided in the New York Supreme Court.</p> <p>As a result, Comiskey and the American League blacklist Chase.</p>
Post-1914	Chase continues his career in the Federal League. Comiskey ensures Chase is barred from returning to the American League. When Federal League collapses, Chase signs with National League’s Cincy Reds.
1916	Chase wins the National League batting title with the Cincinnati Reds, demonstrating his continued excellence despite the blacklist.
1918	<p>“Hal Chase is barred from American League baseball, has been ever since he left Comiskey’s club. It was decided then that he was wrong in his treatment of Comiskey, and our league agreed never to reinstate him.”</p> <p>American League President Ban Johnson (Cincinnati Times-Star, August 21, 1918)</p>
1920	Chase is implicated in the Black Sox scandal, but only played a minor, peripheral role, and is not a central figure. Nevertheless, Comiskey has him blacklisted, using his influence and power to keep Chase out of the game.
2025	Historian Bill James writes that Chase was never officially banned, but he has become as welcome around baseball “as a mouse in a kitchen.” Meanwhile, Charles Comiskey is inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1939.