



Friday, September 14, 2001

Detroit Tigers radio legend to speak at OU

By **Jeff Samoray**, *OU Web Writer*

Detroit Tigers radio legend Ernie Harwell is speaking at Oakland University Monday, September 17. The free lecture, "My Life in Baseball," which is part of the Student Life Lecture Series, begins at 3 p.m. in **Meadow Brook Theatre**.

Harwell, 83, has served as the **Detroit Tigers** radio play-by-play announcer since 1960. He first began broadcasting with station WSB/Atlanta in 1940. His big-league announcing career began in 1948 when Earl Mann, president of the minor-league Atlanta Crackers, sent Harwell to the Brooklyn Dodgers in exchange for minor-league catcher Cliff Dapper. Harwell worked with Dodgers broadcaster and Hall of Fame member Red Barber before moving on to broadcast for the New York Giants. He became the first announcer for the Baltimore Orioles in 1954 before coming to Detroit. In 1981, Harwell received the Ford C. Frick Award, dedicated by the **Hall of Fame** to a broadcaster for major contributions to baseball.

Harwell plans to speak lecture about his career and what it's meant to him.

"My earliest recollection of baseball is going to an Atlanta Crackers game with my father on July 4, 1926," he said. "The Crackers had a team in the Southern League, and I got hooked on baseball then and have been connected to it in some way, shape or form, ever since. I don't remember much about the game, but I do know that the Crackers had a first baseman/outfielder named Eddie Morgan who hit a home run."

Besides baseball, Harwell has broadcast bowling, tennis, the Masters golf tournament, college basketball, college football and pro football for the New York Giants and Baltimore Colts. He said the most difficult sport to broadcast, which he has never attempted, is horse racing.

"It's a real challenge. I wouldn't want to try that," he said. "What you have to do is identify each horse during the course of a race. If you're on the PA system at the track, you've got to call the position of each horse, no matter how far back it is, because someone has placed a bet on him. And during the course of eight to twelve races, you've got to memorize the horses for one race, then forget about them for the next race. Sometimes they also get mud all over them which makes them harder to identify."

If Harwell hadn't become a broadcaster, he said he probably would have followed his second love – writing.

"I was a newspaper man before I entered broadcasting, so I probably would've gone into that or become a songwriter," said Harwell, who has authored four books and writes a **weekly column** for the Detroit Free Press.

Regarding his future, Harwell said that after 54 years in the big leagues he takes it "one year at a time," and doesn't commit himself beyond that. "I wait and evaluate things at the end of the season and see how my health and my wife's health is," he said. "We're both feeling fine. And I still like the travel. That's one thing that sends most people in my profession into retirement, but it doesn't bother me."

For more information on the Student Life Lecture Series, contact the **Center for Student Activities** at (248) 370-2400 or **csa@oakland.edu**.

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