

## Major League Baseball's Odd Succession Plan to Replace Bud Selig

Written by Maury Brown  
Friday, 06 September 2013 17:59

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When NBA commissioner David Stern decided that it was time to retire 30 years to the day he took the position, the league and its owners knew clearly who his successor would be. So, when the announcement was made in Oct of last year, the NBA owners had already ratified having Deputy Commissioner Adam Silver replace Stern on Feb. 1, 2014. Silver, who had sat next to Stern repeatedly for years at press conferences had already become a familiar face, and one that was on the front lines, most notably during the lockout leading up to the league's latest CBA.

When NFL commissioner Paul Tagliabue said in March of 2006 that he would retire, he appointed an 8-member search committee to find his replacement. On August 8, 2006, Roger Goodell, who was widely seen as the heir apparent due to being an NFL executive involved in labor matters, was selected to succeed Tagliabue and assumed office on September 1.

For Major League Baseball, the questions as to who will eventually replace Bud Selig are as cloudy as an early April game on the edge of a rain out. Selig has held the position longer than any other with exception of Kenesaw Landis, baseball's first commissioner. He is nearing the end of his 20th season as the highest executive in Major League Baseball. He took the position in an "acting" capacity after the ouster of Fay Vincent on Sept. 9, 1992. After nearly six years of saying he didn't want the position outright, he formally took the position on July 7, 1998.

When this tenure ends, Selig will be age 80. He has said that this is the last term he will accept, although he's said that before. The reason he hasn't left is the owners love what Selig has done under his watch.

Which is why the succession process for MLB is more difficult, and one that has more meaning than the others across the various sports leagues. The changes under Selig's watch—things like interleague, the addition of revenue sharing among the clubs and the Luxury Tax, the

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three-division formats in the American and National Leagues, the start of the Division Series, the Wild Card Games and the Wild Card playoff berths, drug testing, and instant replay—all are part of Selig's legacy.

So, it's with interest that [when Selig was asked](#) if there was a search committee for his replacement, he replied, "Those things don't really take all that long, and I will set up the right procedures at the right time. There's really no need for that right now."

Yes, it's over a year before Selig will step down. Yes, he could, as he did in 2012 accept yet another extension, but at some point, Allan "Bud" Selig will no longer be commissioner of Major League Baseball.

At no point since Landis has baseball been at a leadership crossroads as it is now. If Selig believes that "those things don't really take all that long" then those reading tea leaves has to say that much like Goodell and Silver, the replacement for Selig will be internal. The idea of a Vincent, Giamatti, Ueberroth, or Kuhn seems exceptionally distant. The mark that Selig has left, and the vision that the owners have backed, practically requires someone inside baseball. Whether that's Rob Manfred, John Schuerholz, Joe Torre, or someone else, odds are high that someone already inside the Office of the Commissioner will slide into the spot.

Finally, while it might strike one as odd to have Selig say he's done then accept another extension, all with the possibility that he might actually mean it this time and not have a successor in place, it is a very "baseball" thing to do. Major League Baseball has always done things a bit differently. But, while aspects such as resolving the A's-Giants territorial dispute, or prior the relocation of the Montreal Expos have been done at a glacial pace, when it does come time to replace Selig it will be done at near lightning speed by comparison. Maybe what it really boils down to is this... no owner wants to think about anyone running the sport other than Selig.

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