

Rube Bressler, Reds' Star Outfielder-First Baseman

Raymond B. (Rube) Bressler, 72, whose record as an outfielder-first baseman with the Reds brought him election to the Cincinnati Hall of Fame, died at his home in Mt. Washington, O., a suburb of Cincinnati, November 7.

Originally a pitcher, Bressler was relatively undistinguished as a batter. However, when he gave up the mound, he blossomed out as one of the leading hitters in the National League. In three consecutive seasons, 1924 through '26, he compiled averages of .347, .348 and .357.

He threw lefthanded and batted righthanded, a comparatively rare combination in baseball.

Bressler, a native of Brookville, Pa., was working in a railroad shop and pitching semi-pro ball when, at the age of 17, he beat a major league all-star team managed by Earle Mack, Connie Mack's son.

Ten-Game Winner in '14

Two years later, Rube was a member of Mack's pitching staff at Philadelphia. He broke in with Harrisburg (Tri-State) in 1913 and was brought up to the Athletics in 1914. The A's had such great pitchers as Eddie Plank, Chief Bender, Herb Pennock, Joe Bush, Jack Coombs and Bob Shawkey, but Bressler nevertheless was able to appear in 29 games, winning ten and losing four.

With the breakup of the great team by Mack, Bressler's record plummeted to 4-17 in 1915. He lost an-



Rube Bressler

other game in 1916 before being sent to the minors, apparently washed up at the age of 21. However, in 1917, at Atlanta (Southern), Rube came back to win 25 while losing 15.

The Reds then acquired him and used him as a pitcher-outfielder in 1918. He was in the Army for part of the season. Rejoining the Reds in 1919, Bressler was a bull-pen chucker until pneumonia felled outfielder Sherwood Magee. Rube got a chance to play regularly, but hit only .206 and lost his outfield job before the season ended.

Suffered Ankle Injury

Pitching again in 1919, he singled in a game and, advancing to second, fractured an ankle sliding.

The injury brought his pitching career to an end in 1920 when the Reds converted him into a full-fledged outfielder-first baseman. Faced with the new opportunity, Bressler changed his batting style, choking up on the bat and crouching at the plate. He held the bat like Ty Cobb, with his hands apart. His lifetime major league batting mark was .301.

Some years later, commenting on the lack of .300 hitters, he gave this advice:

"Quit trying to murder the ball with light bats. Get a heavier piece of wood and meet the ball."

Bressler remained with the Reds until the spring of 1928, when he held out for a salary increase. Rather than give him more money, the Reds sold him to the Dodgers. He was in Brooklyn uniform for three years and then ended his major league career with the Phillies and Cardinals in 1932.

In his last connection with the game, he managed Springfield (Middle Atlantic) for the last month of the 1934 season.

Roscoe McGowen

Roscoe E. McGowen, 80, longtime correspondent of THE SPORTING NEWS and one of the most erudite sports writers in America, died at the home of his granddaughter, Mrs. James Danielson, at North Woodstock, Conn., November 5.

McGowen had been a member of the staff of the New York Times from 1929 until he retired in 1959.

Although his formal schooling ended when he was 13 years old, he was a devoted reader of the classics. In writing for THE SPORTING NEWS, often using the term "your agent", he sprinkled his articles with quotations from Shakespeare and other literary masters.

Shortly after his physician informed him that he was suffering from lung cancer, McGowen wrote a letter to Red Smith, sports columnist for the New York World Journal Tribune. In it, he said:

"When you get to the World Series round table this year. I send along the thought in the Rubaiyat's final stanza:

*'And when like her, oh Saki,
you shall pass Among the
Guests*

*Star-scattered on the Grass,
And in your joyous errand
reach the spot,*

*Where I made One — turn
down an empty Glass!*

"Cheerio, kid, and all the best." McGowen was born at Alta, Ia., and got his first taste of the newspaper business at 11 as a reporter and printer's devil for a country weekly. After leaving school, he worked fulltime for the Walnut Grove (Ill.) Banner for \$15 a month. When his request for a \$5 raise was denied, he quit and became a railroad telegrapher. Later he was a wire reporter for the Associated Press and the United Press before joining the Rock Island (Ill.) Argus.

Terry's Famed Reply

His contributions to the Chicago Tribune attracted attention and led to a job with the New York Daily News in 1922. He moved to the Times in 1929.

One day before the 1934 season, a question by McGowen resulted in one of baseball's most-quoted phrases. He was present when Bill Terry, then the manager of the Giants, was discussing his club's chances in the pennant race. McGowen asked Terry: "What about the Dodgers? How will they do?" "Is Brooklyn still in the league?" Terry replied.

The remark came back to haunt Terry when the Dodgers helped ruin the Giants' pennant prospects in the closing days of the 1934 season.

McGowen served as national president of the Baseball Writers' Association of America in 1949. He also was the official scorer at several World Series and All-Star Games.

Survivors include a son, Deane McGowen, also a sports writer for the New York Times, and a daughter, Mrs. Dorothy Farrows.

in the PCL's playoffs, he was named the No. 1 Minor League Player of the Year by THE SPORTING NEWS.

Barrett was the all-time strikeout king of the Coast league, fanning 1,886 batters during his career. He also was fourth in the list of the league's greatest winners with a record of 234-168.

Born at Montoursville, Pa., he was christened Tracy Souter Barrett. However, while attending the University of Illinois, where he won letters in baseball, football and basketball, he started playing professional baseball under the assumed name of Richard Oliver. Later, he called himself Richard Oliver Barrett.

Was Roly-Poly Pitcher

The five-foot, nine-inch righthander gained his "Kewpie" nickname when he weighed a roly-poly 190 pounds while pitching for Seattle.

Pitching again for a Philadelphia semipro team, Barrett was signed by the A's in June, 1933. He had a 4-4 record for the A's. Connie Mack then sold him to the Braves, who shipped him to Seattle.

In eight seasons with the Rainiers from 1935 through '42, Barrett won 20 or more games seven times. He came back to the major leagues with the Cubs in 1943, but was sold to the Phillies that July. The righthander had a 10-13 record in 1943 and followed with 12-18 in '44, but hit the bottom in 1945, when he won only eight games and lost 20.

Sent back to the Coast league, he pitched for Portland, Seattle once more, San Diego and Hollywood. In 1948, at the age of 40, he pitched a perfect no-hit, no-run game for Seattle, defeating Sacramento, 3-0.

Rex R. Cecil, pitcher with the Red Sox in 1944 and '45, died at the age of 50 at Veterans Hospital in Long Beach, Calif., October 30.

Cecil was born in Lindsay, Okla., but grew up in Long Beach. Rex started his professional career with Vancouver (Western International) in 1937.

A pulled shoulder muscle at Bartlesville (Western Association) in 1938 forced the righthander out of the game for three years, but he was able to make a comeback with Bakersfield (California) in 1942.

Two seasons with San Diego (Coast) followed. A record of 19-11 for the Padres in 1944 led to his acquisition by the Red Sox. He won four games and lost five for the Red Sox to finish the '44 campaign and then won two and lost five in 1945.

Ray Andrew Hill, 62, former Philadelphia sports writer, died at Bryn Mawr (Pa.) Hospital, November 3, the day after suffering a stroke at his home in Wayne, Pa. He was the executive vice-president of the Home Builders Association of Philadelphia.

Hill began his newspaper career with the old Philadelphia Public Ledger and then, with the Evening Bulletin, was a sports writer for 19 years.

He was a founder of the Maxwell Memorial Football Club and served as commissioner of the Middle Atlantic Intercollegiate Football Conference from 1940 to 1945. He also officiated in the National Football League for 15 years.

Bill Smyth, an assistant coach for the Ottawa Rough Riders of the Canadian Football League for the past ten years, died in an Ottawa hospital after a brief illness, November 6.

Smyth, 45, was a lineman on the University of Cincinnati's 1946 Sun Bowl champions and played end for the Los Angeles Rams of the National Football League.

Survivors include his wife and four sons, the oldest a freshman football player at Xavier.

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Astroturf

(Continued From Page 48)

infields. Astroturf was tested at Busch Stadium, but a spokesman for the football Cardinals said it did not produce the desired results.

A small piece of the grass was installed in the dugout area after the conversion of the movable stands for the football season. The Big Red trooped over the turf to and from their dressing room.

Whether Astroturf achieves a major role outside remains to be seen, but it has been a hit indoors at the Astrodome.

Cougars Like Surface

Houston U., in its second season under the dome (the playing surface last year was real grass), is undefeated. The Cougars whipped Washington State (21-7) and Oklahoma State (35-9) on a field that still had the skinned infield. A few weeks ago, the full conversion to Astroturf was completed and Houston crushed Miss. State, 28-0, on the 3/4 solid green acres.

Ted Nance, Houston U. sports publicist, said of the turf: "Our players like it, but I can't say what the opponents thought. Whether you won or lost makes a difference."

"Last year, for instance, on regular grass, Mississippi State beat us 36-0, and thought the surface was great. Then Ole Miss lost to us, 17-3, and thought it was terrible.

"If there's any difference, it's probably psychological."

Nance said there had been no problems with the use of Astroturf. "We expected some skin burns, but they didn't develop. The surface has been hard, because the air-conditioning in the Astrodome takes the moisture out of the soil beneath the turf, but this will be corrected."

Next Came Bull Fights

After a couple of games, the turf was taken up and the ground was plowed in preparation for bullfights. Then the turf was relaid for Houston's next football game.

For traction on the Astroturf, Houston has been using shoes with soccer cleats. The shoes are furnished for opponents. The soccer shoe has 13 to 21 shallow cleats on each sole, compared with the standard seven cleats on a football shoe.

Houston players have been satisfied with the turf. Speedy flanker Warren McVea, a 9.5-second sprinter, said after a workout on the surface, "I don't remember slipping. I think I'm faster on the turf."

Tackle Charley Fowler said he had received no more jars than on regular grass.

The Astroturf has been engineered so that the response of a ball and player performance are essentially the same as on ordinary surfaces.

The turf is durable. Monsanto says that even the biggest of pro football players couldn't tear up the turf, and, even if they could, repair would be easy. A dropped cigarette would not flame on the turf, but would create a black spot that could be repaired by plugging with more Astroturf and heat-sealing.

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Dick (Kewpie) Barrett

Dick (Kewpie) Barrett, one of the greatest pitchers in the history of the Pacific Coast League, died at Seattle, Wash., November 7, after a long illness. He was 60 years old. In 1942, after he won 27 games for Seattle and added two more victories

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