

Chet Covington, "Chesty the Troublesome One"

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Chester Rogers "Chet" Covington begins his professional athletic career as a teenage boxer in his home state of Illinois; 24 years later he ends it as a 42-year-old pitcher for the Fort Lauderdale Lions of the Florida International (B) League.

Covington is best remembered for a contentious personality that results in him pitching for 21 teams in nine different leagues over a 15-year career, and a durable left arm that allows him to throw nearly 3,000 innings and nets him 221 career victories.

Nicknamed "Chesty" for his imposing physical dimensions, Covington will win 20 or more games six times, lead four leagues in ERA, three in strikeouts and three in wins ... in 1943, he fashions the first perfect game in Eastern League history, pitches seven games in 17 days for the Scranton Miners and is named the Minor League Player of the Year by *The Sporting News*.



"Kid" Covington

Under contract with three major league teams during his career - the Detroit Tigers,

Boston Red Sox and the Philadelphia Phillies - a 33-year-old Covington will make to the majors in 1944 for one brief 19-game fling with Freddie Fitzsimmons' last-place Phillies before being sent back to the minors for (no surprise here) "clubhouse dissension".

At one time or another, Covington works as a radio announcer, truck driver, plumbing supply distributor, a hillbilly disc jockey, deputy sheriff at a dog track in Tampa, parking lot attendant and a salesman for Hada-col, a popular Southern "medicine" marketed as a vitamin supplement that is 12 percent alcohol.

As a professional boxer, "Kid" Covington, appears in 216 bouts, winning 187, losing 19 with 10 draws ... convinced by his wife to give up boxing following a broken nose suffered in a boxing match, the 6-1, 205-pounder takes up baseball as a 28-year-old with the Portsmouth (Va.) Cubs in the spring of 1939.

Covington dies in Pembroke Park, Florida, of a heart attack on June 11, 1976, at the age of 65.

Chet Covington Year by Year

Year	Team	League	Level	W-L	G	INN	H	SO	BB	ERA
1939	2 Teams	2 Leagues	D-B	7-9	27	117	146	74	52	5.23
	Portsmouth Colts	Piedmont	B	0-0	2	4	2	5	1	0.00
	Tarboro Serpents	Coastal Plain	D	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Goldsboro Goldbugs	Coastal Plain	D	7-9	25	113	144	69	51	5.42
1940	Hollywood Chiefs	Fla East Coast	D	21-10	32	266	254	212	72	2.10
1941	2 Teams	2 Leagues	D-B	24-12	49	308	271	237	92	2.40
	Fort Pierce Bombers	Fla East Coast	D	22-7	37	241	198	197	64	1.85
	Jacksonville Tars	South Atlantic	B	2-5	12	67	73	40	28	4.16
1942	3 Teams	3 Leagues	A-A1-AA	12-11	39	176	189	19	67	4.24
	Springfield Rifles	Eastern	A	8-8	25	131	122	89	50	3.23
	Birmingham Barons	Southern	A1	1-1	4	13	24	8	6	11.77
	Louisville Colonels	America Assoc.	AA	3-2	10	32	43	19	11	5.34
1943	2 Teams	2 Leagues	A-AA	21-8	38	256	183	2	64	1.65
	Louisville Colonels	America Assoc.	AA	0-1	1	5	9	2	3	9.00
	Scranton Miners	Eastern	A	21-7	37	251	174	187	61	1.51
1944	Philadelphia Phillies	NATIONAL	ML	1-1	19	38.2	46	8	13	4.66
	Utica Blue Sox	Eastern	A	10-11	23	166	155	115	53	3.25
1945	Chattanooga Lookouts	Southern	A1	4-3	9	56	57	32	17	3.86
1946	Tampa Smokers	Florida Int.	C	28-8	45	303	250	260	55	1.66
1947	2 Teams	2 Leagues	B-C	25-8	45	316	293	234	68	2.76
	Tampa Smokers	Florida Int.	C	12-2	17	129	113	108	26	2.09
	Montgomery Rebels	Southeastern	B	13-6	28	187	180	126	42	3.22
1948	3 Teams	2 Leagues	C-B	19-11	48	192	175	111	72	2.67
	Miami Tourists	Florida Int.	C	9-6	18	109	96	56	47	2.97
	Port Chester Clippers	Colonial	B	0-1	1	9	7	7	4	4.00
	Portsmouth Cubs	Piedmont	B	10-5	30	83	79	48	25	2.28
1949	2 Teams	2 Leagues	B-D	22-11	36	272	215	185	85	1.56
	Tampa Smokers	Florida Int.	B	11-9	22	167	138	91	58	1.46
	Palatka Azaleas	Florida State	D	11-2	14	105	77	94	27	1.71
1950	Ft. Lauderdale Braves	Florida Int.	B	18-11	36	260	231	105	82	2.25
1951	Ft. Lauderdale Braves	Florida Int.	B	0-1	5	14	27	8	12	7.71
1952	3 Teams	2 Leagues	B	8-11	38	197	204	92	80	3.11
	Tampa Smokers	Florida Int.	B	3-5	16	81	84	32	34	3.03
	Lakeland Pilots	Florida Int.	B	3-5	18	91	94	39	38	3.03
	Greensboro Patriots	Carolina	B	2-1	4	25	26	21	7	3.60
1953	Fort Lauderdale Lions	Florida Int.	B	1-1	3	26	21	14	5	3.32
Major League Totals	1 season			1-1	19	38.2	46	8	13	4.66
Minor League Totals	15 seasons			220-126	473	2912	2664	1974	878	2.57

1943 - The Sporting News Minor League Player of the Year

1943 - Led Eastern League with nine shutouts; Eastern League All-Star

All-Star Team: 1940 - Florida East Coast; 1947 - Southeastern; 1949 - Florida State; 1950 - Florida International.

Chet Covington [2 of 5]:

In his obituary, *The Sporting News* carries the following story:

Late in the 1946 season, while with Tampa, he was fined and suspended for what management called an indifferent performance – not warming up before the game. He lost the contest, but struck out 14.

"If that's indifference," he said, "then the hell with it."

COVINGTON CHRONOLOGY

June 3, 1939

Making his professional baseball debut, Covington picks up a save as the Portsmouth Cubs tally twice in the bottom of the eighth inning for a 3-2 win over the visiting Winston-Salem Twins in a Piedmont (B) League contest ... the 28-year-old lefty pitches a scoreless ninth inning in relief of Arnold Heft, allowing one hit and striking out one.

COVINGTON FANS 17 IN 17-0 VICTORY OVER UTICA CLUB

Miners Take Close Second Game, 9-8, to Capture Twin Bill

SCRANTON (EL)									
	ab	r	h	po	a	e			
Dente, 2b	4	2	1	2	0	0			
Genovese, cf	6	2	2	1	0	0			
Chapman, ss	5	2	2	1	3	0			
Zipay, 1b	6	2	3	5	1	0			
LaForest, 3b	5	1	1	0	0	1			
Howerton, lf	2	2	2	0	0	0			
Dinges, rf	3	2	2	0	0	0			
Savino, c	5	3	3	17	0	0			
Covington, p	5	1	1	1	2	0			
Totals	40	17	17	27	4	1			
UTICA (EL)									
	ab	r	h	po	a	e			
Sugrue, ss	3	0	0	5	5	2			
Flarson, cf	4	0	0	1	0	0			
Pesta, 3b	4	0	1	0	3	0			
Latschaw, 1b	4	0	1	8	1	0			
Klinkert, lf	4	0	0	9	0	1			
Winters, 2b	2	0	0	5	1	1			
Cabrera, c	3	0	0	8	6	0			
Diaz, p	0	0	0	0	0	0			
Enright, p	2	0	0	0	0	0			
Ahrens, p	0	0	0	0	0	0			
Reid, p	1	0	0	0	3	0			
Totals	30	0	2	27	10	4			

Scranton Southpaw Hurls First Perfect Tilt In Eastern Loop

Southpaw Chet Covington credited his teammates today with a share in the glory of pitching the first perfect game in the history of the Eastern League.

Covington, 28, faced the minimum of 27 batters in shutting out the Springfield Rifles 6-0 in the first of two games won yesterday by the league-leading Miners who now have run their victory string to ten straight. The Miners took the nightcap 4-0 behind Charley Mason.

Covington fanned five Rifles, issued no walks and permitted only four balls to be lifted to the outfield. One of these, by George Torres in the 7th, necessitated a diving catch by Center Fielder Chick Genovese.

SCRANTON (EL)									
	ab	r	h	po	a	e			
Dente, ss	5	1	1	0	5	0			
Genovese, cf	3	2	1	2	0	0			
Chapman, 3b	4	1	2	0	4	0			
Zipay, 1b	3	1	2	15	0	0			
Stelner, 2b	4	0	1	2	4	0			
Howerton, lf	4	0	0	6	0	0			
Dinges, rf	2	0	0	2	0	0			
Savino, c	4	0	0	5	0	0			
Covington, p	4	1	1	1	3	0			
Totals	33	6	8	27	16	0			
SPRINGFIELD (EL)									
	ab	r	h	po	a	e			
Miller, ss	3	0	0	4	4	2			
Torres, 2b	3	0	0	0	3	1			
Butka, 1b	3	0	0	11	1	0			
Drew, 3b	3	0	0	2	1	0			
Frelmier, cf	3	0	0	1	0	0			
Stephenson, c	3	0	0	4	0	1			
Wells, lf	3	0	0	0	0	0			
Rosso, rf	2	0	0	1	1	0			
Oates, p	4	0	0	1	0	1			
xComiskey	1	0	0	0	0	0			
Totals	27	0	0	24	10	5			

Scranton 6, Springfield 0. 911 020 20x-6
Runs batted in, Savino, Zipay, Chapman, Stelner, Stolen bases, Stelner, Zipay, Dente, Chapman, Genovese, Dinges. Left on bases, Springfield 0, Scranton 7. Struck out, by Oates 4, Covington 5. Bases on balls, off Oates 4. Umpires, Padden and Winters. Time, 1:30.
x—Batted for Wells in 9th.

July 18, 1942

Mired in last place of the Eastern (A) League, the Springfield Rifles sell Covington to the Southern League's Birmingham Barons on a 20-day option ... despite losing his last three decisions, Covington's eight wins are still 1/3 of the team's 24 wins ... friction arises between Covington and manager Lester Bell, who is tired of the lefty's "moodiness"

August 9, 1942

In his first start for the Louisville Colonels, Covington pitches a five-hit shutout in a 5-0 win over St. Paul.

May 16, 1943

Pitching for the Scranton Miners, Covington pitches a two-hitter and strikes out a career-high 17 in a 17-0 shutout win over the last-place Utica Braves.

◀◀ May 23, 1943

In the first game of a doubleheader, Covington pitches the first perfect game, and the 13th no-hitter, in Eastern League history with a 6-0 victory against the Springfield Rifles ... facing the minimum 27 batters, Covington strikes out five and allows only four balls to be hit to the outfield ... the Miners also win the second game 4-0 before 3,819.

"I didn't feel good before the Springfield game and as a result I just didn't have my stuff," says Covington, "I certainly was not as fast, nor did I have the power I did at Utica (17 strikeouts). But somehow I kept getting them out and when Chick Genovese saved me with a great diving catch in the seventh, I said to myself: 'Boy, he really wants you to have this one;' and I did."

Gains Perfection



Chet Covington [3 of 5]:

May 27, 1943

Covington extends his hitless streak to 16 1/3 innings and his scoreless streak to 30 innings with a four-hit, 6-0 shutout of the Binghamton Triplets ... Doug White's single to center with two outs in the fifth inning snaps the hitless skein.

Scranton Wins 16th Straight; Covington Adds to Zero String

SCRANTON, Pa.—Records fell faster than snow at the North Pole, when the Scranton Miners set an all-time Eastern League total on the night of May 31, by achieving their sixteenth consecutive triumph before the biggest crowd of the year in Tommy Richardson's domain, 6,192 payees. In accomplishing the feat, the Miners smashed a couple of other long-standing marks. Their first came when the scoreless duel between the circuit's two premier southpaws, Chesty Chet Covington and the Barons' Harold Kleine, went into the fifteenth frame before the rangy Wilkes-Barre representative out of St. Louis yielded the lone run, with the aid of an error.

His overtime stint raised to 45, the number of stanzas the astounding Covington had pitched without allowing a tally since he came from Louisville of the American Association. Unlike his three preceding shutouts, notably his first perfect game in the annals of the Eastern. Covington had a couple of uncomfortably close calls as the Barons nicked him 11 times. Nevertheless, there was a seven-inning stretch during which he yielded only one knock.

For the first time in 31 1-3 frames an opposition runner passed first base on Chesty Chet, and it took a remarkable play on his part and a daring catch by Catcher George Savino to prevent Kleine from scoring after he tripled in the third and the Barons sought to squeeze-bunt him across. On another occasion, the Barons had the sacks populated, also an oddition for Chet, but he again survived the test, to produce the Miners' eighth shutout during the course of their 16-game excursion.

◀◀ May 30, 1943

It's after midnight when Scranton's Sam Dente scores in the bottom of the 15th inning from first base on Chick Genovese's single and an error by Wilkes-Barre right fielder Gene Woodling, giving Covington and the Miners a 1-0 win that extends Covington's scoreless streak to 45 consecutive innings and the Miners win streak to 16 in a row.

September 1, 1943

After finishing 21-7 with Scranton and setting an Eastern League single season record with his 1.51 ERA - breaking the existing record of 1.56 set by Wilkes-Barre's Allie Reynolds the year before - Covington and fellow pitchers Joe Wood, Jr., and Darwin Cobb are recalled by Louisville.

March 7, 1944

Covington receives orders to report for Army duty at Fort McPherson, Ga., on March 25.

April 15, 1944

The Philadelphia Phillies announce the purchase of Covington from Louisville after he refuses to report to the Colonels.

April 23, 1944

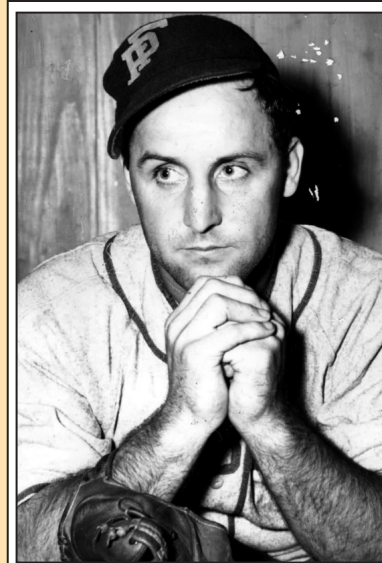
Covington makes his major league debut against the Boston Braves in the first game of a double header ... replacing Dick Barrett with one out in the seventh inning of an eventual 5-0 loss, Covington strikes out one and allows two hits in 1 2/3 scoreless innings.

April 30, 1944

Pitching three scoreless innings, Covington picks up his first major league win in a 14-inning 2-1 decision over the Boston Braves.

Phillies Curb New Outbreak

June 19, 1944
Following new reports of dissension in the clubhouse, Philadelphia Phillies' general manager Herb Pennock says, "one troublesome player" is creating a problem ... Pennock will not name the "troublesome" player, but on the same day the Phillies announce that pitcher Chet Covington is being "released" on a 24-hour recall to Utica, the team's farm club in the Eastern League.



Chet Covington
1941 Fort Pierce Bombers

PHILS PURCHASE CHET COVINGTON

Carry Pitching Burden for Springfield Rifles



1942 Springfield Rifles
Left to Right: Chet Covington, Dean Heckenberg, Lou Fette, Art Doll, Bob Wells, Harry Kelley, John Montero

Chet Covington [4 of 5]:

COVINGTON RUNS INTO SOME TROUBLE

Utica, N. Y., Sept. 9 — (A.P.) — Players and officials of the Utica Blue Sox of the Eastern league were questioned today by Leslie M. O'Connor, secretary to Baseball Commissioner Kenesaw M. Landis, on the conduct of Pitcher Chet Covington, returned this week to the Philadelphia Phillies of the National league. O'Connor said he had been directed to investigate after a complaint had been filed with Landis by an unidentified Utica fan.

Covington, the league's most valuable player with Scranton last year, was hooded for his playing last Wednesday night. Manager Eddie Sawyer returned Covington to the Phillies for what he termed "clashes in personalities" after he said Covington and other players had engaged in a free-for-all in the clubhouse following the game. O'Connor said he would make a full report to Landis within a few days.

June 21, 1944

Covington joins the Utica team in Scranton and calls reports of friction on the Phillies, "a bunch of hooley."

◀◀ **September 7, 1944**

Utica returns Covington back to the Philadelphia Phillies following a clubhouse scuffle in which Covington reportedly strikes several teammates ... Utica manager Eddie Sawyer says Covington has "clashes in personalities".

September 9, 1944

Covington's action in a "free for all" in the Utica Blue Sox clubhouse is under investigation ... Leslie O'Connor, secretary to Baseball Commissioner Kenesaw Landis, oversees the investigation.

September 26, 1944

In his 18th and final major league appearance, Covington allows five runs on nine hits in four innings of relief during a 15-0 loss to the Chicago Cubs in the first game of a doubleheader.



**Chet Covington
1943 Scranton**

May 26, 1945

The Associated Press reports that Covington has voluntarily retired from baseball and has taken a job with the Eastern Airline Company.

August 1, 1945

Covington, on option from the Phillies, signs with the Chattanooga Lookouts of the Southern (A1) Association ... Covington tells the media that he has kept in shape pitching for the Eastern Airlines team.

April 23 1946

Now with the Tampa Smokers, Covington sets a Florida International League record striking out 14 Miami batters, walking none and scattering eight hits in a 9-2 victory.

August 20, 1946

With 25 victories to his credit and 17 games left to play in the regular season, 35-year-old Tampa pitcher Chet Covington figures he stands a good chance to win 30 games ... "I gotta work every few days to keep my arm limber," says Covington. "These young punks who get sore arms if they pitch once a week. Me, I train on beer and frankfurters and I can pitch

every night during the week and twice on Sundays."

May 16, 1947

For the third time in seven days, Tampa's Covington beats Fort Lauderdale and improves his record to 10-1 with a 5-3 victory, striking out 12 ... on May 10, Covington shut out the Braves 8-0, allowing four hits and striking out 11 ... two days later (May 12), Covington posts a 9-5 decision, yielding 10 hits and fanning nine.

February 7, 1948

Tampa Smokers' president Tom Spicola re-signs Covington six months after saying that the combative left-hander would never wear a Tampa uniform again ... Spicola had suspended Covington back in September following an altercation in a hotel lobby regarding player shares of a playoff game.

February 23, 1948

The Montgomery Rebels sell Covington to the Miami Tourists for \$2,500.



**Chet Covington
1947 Tampa Smokers**

Chet Covington [5 of 5]:

June 30, 1948

Following a doubleheader loss to Tampa, the Miami Tourists sell the "troublesome, talkative" Covington to Portsmouth of the Piedmont League ... knocked from the box in the sixth inning in a 9-2 first game loss, Covington is booed by fans as he leaves the field, "Under the circumstances, I think the sale is for the good of the team," says business manager Dave Coble, "Lefty told me he didn't want to play here anymore."

August 29, 1949

Covington, a member of the Palatka Azaleas, is suffering from fatigue and high blood pressure and is advised to give up pitching for the remainder of the season ... the 38-year-old pitcher is 22-11 with 272 innings pitched splitting time between Tampa and Palatka ... Covington wins his first 11 games with the Azaleas before dropping two in a row.

August 28, 1950

Covington and Fort Lauderdale teammate Joe Tuminelli engage in a fist fight on the Braves' bench during a Florida International (B) League game ... Covington is sent to the locker room by manager Chuck Aleno.

August 29, 1950

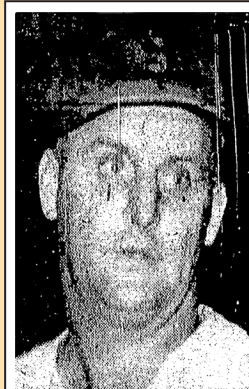
Aleno suspends Covington for the remaining week of the regular season ... the Braves are mired in sixth place with a 67-79 record, 32 games behind first-place Havana.

June 1951

Covington begins the 1949 season with Fort Lauderdale and believes he has an arrangement with team management to pitch only at home, in nearby Miami Beach and West Palm Beach, while retaining his warehouse job ... when Braves president Steve Calder later objects, Covington requests to be placed on the voluntarily retired list, but Calder suspends him instead ... Covington appeals to George Trautman, president of the National Association, who rules in his favor and upholds his retirement request.

August 7, 1951

Umpiring a softball game in Fort Lauderdale, the "voluntarily retired" Covington is involved in an altercation that results in another player suffering a broken jaw ... the former boxer hits Ralph Cimato when the player rushes at Covington after being ordered to leave the field because of abusive language during an argument over a ball and strike call.



Chet Covington
1942 Greensboro

August 25, 1952
Greensboro 4, Winston-Salem 3

WINSTON-SALEM					GREENSBORO						
	abr	h	r	oa		abr	h	r	oa		
Rooney,lf	4	0	0	2	0	Quake'h,lf	4	0	0	2	0
Powl'ge,cf	3	1	1	1	1	Koblos'h,3b	5	1	3	1	4
Owens,lb	4	1	1	1	1	Mitchell,rf	4	0	1	2	0
Kwak,rf	4	1	0	0	0	Rign,cf	2	1	1	1	0
Long,3b	4	0	1	2	2	Fanning,c	5	1	1	7	0
Neidrin's,c	4	0	1	5	2	Romano,2b	2	1	0	3	1
Fassler,ss	4	0	0	3	1	Forbes,lb	3	0	1	9	0
Baroz'ki,2b	3	0	0	1	1	Rigazio,ss	3	0	0	2	3
Michalec,p	1	0	0	1	1	Covings'n,p	3	0	2	0	0
Kohler,p	0	0	0	0	0						
Fasano,p	0	0	0	0	0						
Dunn,p	1	0	0	0	0						
bTaylor	1	0	0	0	0						
cObersch't	1	0	1	0	0						
dDauger	0	0	0	0	0						

Totals 34 5 6 24 0 Totals 31 4 8 27 6
 aPopped to second for Michalec in 6th.
 bReached first on fielder's choice for Kohler in 7th.
 cSingled for Fasano in 9th.
 dRan for Oberschmidt in 9th.

Winston-Salem 000 000 120— 3
 GREENSBORO 000 040 00x— 4

E—Michalec. Neidringhaus. Koblos'h. Romano. RBI—Kwak. Fanning. Romano Long 2. HR—Kwak. TBH—Owens. Neidringhaus. Long. S—Romano. DP—Koblos'h to Rigazio to Forbes. BB—Off Michalec 5; Kobler 2; Covington 1; Fasano 1. SO—By Michalec 3; Fasano 1; Covington 7. H—Off Michalec 8 in 5; Kobler 0 in 1; Fasano 1 in 2. LOB—Greensboro 13; Winston-Salem 7. HBP—Powledge (by Covington). LP—Kobler. U—Allen and Bolzano. T—3:45. A—1,327.

Covington Faces Charge After Softball Game Row

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla.—Chester (Lefty) Covington, long one of the game's most colorful pitchers and now a softball umpire, is scheduled for appearance in Fort Lauderdale Municipal Court, August 18, on an assault and battery charge growing out of an altercation on August 7 in which a softball player received a broken jaw.

Nick Cimato, brother of Ralph Cimato, the injured player, signed a warrant when Ralph was taken to the hospital after being struck by Covington. Covington was released on his own recognizance. Covington hit Ralph Cimato during an argument over ball-and-strike calls. Cimato, an outfielder, rushed toward Covington when the umpire ordered him to leave the field because of the use of abusive language.

Covington claims Cimato struck him first.

Cimato's brother, Nick Cimato, signs a warrant at hospital for Covington's arrest ... Covington is later released on his own recognizance.

April 19, 1952

For the fourth time in seven years, Covington signs with the Tampa Smokers.

June 1953

Greensboro (N.C.) Daily News legend Irwin Smallwood reports that Covington, pitching for Stuart against Jupiter in a Florida semipro game, strikes out 26 in a 21-inning, 1-1 tie.

June 11, 1976

Covington dies in Pembroke Park, Florida, of a heart attack at the age of 65.