

Festus Higgins, "Minooka Blues"

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In 1909, Festus Higgins begins a 16-year odyssey into organized baseball as a member of the famous Minooka Blues, a Catholic Temperance League club in Scranton, Pennsylvania ... a talented right-handed pitcher noted for a "splendid curve ball, terrific speed and the best of control", Higgins will pitch in 10 minor league seasons, spanning from 1911 to 1923.



Festus Higgins
Minooka Blues

Born in 1893 in Minooka, a southern suburb of Scranton, Festus will enjoy his best seasons with Binghamton Bingos of the International (AA) League in 1918 (15-4; 1.89) and 1919 (16-9; 2.87).

Ending his career following an 0-3 mark with three different teams in 1923, the 31-year-old Higgins dies at 4:00 a.m., on October 3, 1924, in his hometown of Minooka.

Higgins' early death is attributed to lingering effects from an accident sixteen years earlier when he was struck on the side of the head by a pitched ball ... following the beaming, Higgins undergoes two operations in hopes of relieving pressure on his brain ... some reports have Higgins being uncon-

scious for twenty days following the incident ... unfortunately, he never fully recovers from the injury and his baseball career will suffer from the reoccurring "weak spells" over the coming years.

Higgins Year by Year:

Year	Team	League	Level	W-L	INN	BB	SO	ERA
1909	Minooka Blues	Catholic	Temperance	-	-	-	-	-
1910	Minooka Blues	Catholic	Temperance	-	-	-	-	-
1911	Adrian Yeggs	South	Michigan	C	1-2	-	-	-
1911	Saginaw Crazy Kats	South	Michigan	C	14-4	39	77	-
1912	Scranton Miners	New York	State	B	8-9	159.2	39	58
1913	Utica Utes	New York	State	B	4-3	72	28	46
1913	Belvidere (N.J.)	Semi-Pro		-	-	-	-	-
1914	Binghamton Bingos	New York	State	B	2-0	42.2	22	16
1915	Scranton Miners	New York	State	B	16-11	-	50	80
1916	Scranton Miners	New York	State	B	5-8	-	16	29
1917	Scranton Miners	New York	State	B	1-6	-	-	-
1918	Binghamton Bingos	International		AA	15-4	210	51	1.89
1919	Binghamton Bingos	International		AA	16-9	226	99	2.87
1920	Akron Buckeyes	International		AA	2-1	23	13	8.22
1922	Scranton	Inter-County		-	-	-	-	-
1923	Newark Bears	International		AA	0-3	29	15	-
1923	Elmira Red Jackets	New York-Penn		B				
1923	Scranton Miners	New York-Penn		B				
10-year Minor League Totals					74-60	-	-	-

Higgins Twirls No-hit Game for Bings, and Utes Drop Contest, 1-0

Binghamton, May 1.—Festus Higgins twirled himself into the baseball hall of fame in a grand inaugural game against M. Joyce O'Neill's fast Utica galaxy, the former Ute twirler allowing no hits, but one man reaching second base, and issuing no transfers. Little short of Higgin's gala early season showing was the work of Oberlin, who allowed only one hit, a solid smash to right by Peterson after two were down in the eighth frame. He gave two bases on balls. Both twirlers had everything and received support that bordered on brilliancy at all times.

The Binghamton infield formed a stellar defense for any Ute attack, as did the O'Neill inner works for Oberlin. In fact, the playing of both teams was up to midsummer form at all times.

It became evident early in the struggle that it was to be a pitchers' bout and the only question was whether Higgins or Oberlin would crack early or late. Higgins went the route and of course had a shade at the finish. To all appearances the contest was scheduled for extra rounds after the Utes had been disposed of in the ninth, but in the Bingers' half Calhoun was walked. Higgins laid down a neat sacrifice, but Eddie McDonough hurled low to Tony Walsh, the Bing manager racing to third and Higgins galloping on to second.

Pete Curtis then sent a long sacrifice fly to right on which Calhoun tallied by good sprinting, and the most interesting local opening baseball clash in many a day was concluded.

President Farrell of the State league attended the game as the guest of George F. Johnson. Two bands played at intervals during the game. There was a parade of both teams to the center field flag pole, where the flag was raised, and the return march was made by both teams and bands to the stands, after which play was started without further ceremony. Two thousand six hundred saw the game.

The score: R. H. E.
Utica 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0—0 0 2
Binghamton .. 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 1—1 1 1
Batteries—Oberlin and McDonough, Higgins and Peterson.

Higgins begins his professional baseball career with the Adrian Yeggs of the Southern Michigan (C) League ... traded in June, to the rival Saginaw Crazy Kats, Higgins will post a rookie season mark of 15-6 ... Malachi Kittridge's Crazy Kats gain some notoriety in 1921 by having a total of 21 players suspended during the course of the season.

Festus Higgins [2 of 2]:

On April 30, 1914, pitching for the Binghamton Bingoes in the season opener of the New York State (B) League, Higgins hurls a no-hitter en route to shutting out the visiting Utica Utes 1-0 before 2,600, including League President John H. Farrell.

Minooka Blues

Like many towns across America in the early part of the 20th century, Scranton, Pennsylvania, has a love affair with baseball ... in and around Scranton there are numerous baseball leagues that are populated with talented players.

It is in one of those leagues that Festus Higgins begins his baseball career, playing two summers for the Minooka Blues in the CTAU (Catholic Total Abstinence Union).

The Blues became nationally famous between 1907 and 1912 before the exodus of its players to professional baseball deplete its ranks ... in the photo below, at least five of the eight uniformed players - Chick Shorten, Steve O'Neill, Jimmy O'Neil, Festus Higgins and Mike McNally - played professional baseball.



Minooka Blues (unknown year)

Front Row: Tony Walsh, Mike Walsh, P.F. O'Neill, Chick Shorten, Steve O'Neill, Jimmy O'Neill, Festus Higgins, Mike McNally, Tom Joyce

Higgins' mound opponent that day at Johnson Field is 38-year-old former major leaguer Frank (Flossie) Oberlin ... Oberlin allows only one hit but absorbs the loss when the Bingoes push across the game's only run in the bottom of the ninth on a walk, an infield error and a game-winning sacrifice fly by outfielder Pete Curtis ... the game's lone hit comes in the bottom of the eighth inning when Binghamton's Bob Peterson, a member of the Boston Red Sox in 1906 and 1907, hits a "solid smash" to right field.

Following his season-opening no-hitter, Higgins will pitch only 33 2/3 more innings for the Bingoes in 1914, allowing 14 runs on 33 hits and 22 walks.

On July 10, 1916, an ill Higgins, suffering from weak spells, announces his retirement from the Scranton Miners ... Higgins is replaced on the Scranton roster by Frank Oberlin, his mound opponent from the no-hitter two years earlier ... nineteen days after his "retirement" Higgins rejoins the Miners and manager Bill Coughlin releases Cuban infielder Rafael Almeida, who is hitting .294 in 72 games ... Higgins finishes the season 5-8 in 13 starts.

September 25, 1922

In what may be his only performance against a major league team, Higgins, pitching for a local Scranton semi-pro team, limits the National League's Chicago Cubs to eight hits in a 6-5 complete exhibition game victory ... Cub first baseman Ray Grimes has to leave the game after he is spiked in the third inning by Higgins.

Festus Higgins Dies From Old Injury

Scranton, Pa., Oct. 4.—Death today claimed Festus Higgins of Minooka, baseball pitcher and close friend of Bucky Harris, manager of the Washington Americans. Higgins was 31 years old. An injury, sustained several years ago when he was struck on the head with a pitched ball, is believed to have hastened his death. He played with teams in the old New York State league, the International and the Eastern association.