

# Cups of Coffee: Olaf "Sam" Brenegan

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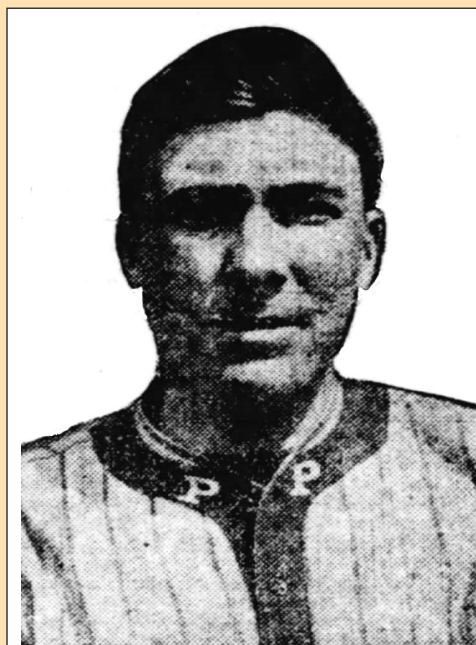
March 19, 2019

**"The Devil must be in me and everything is going wrong."  
-Olaf "Sam" Brenegan**

Brenegan's introspective analysis is quite revealing for a 26-year-old catcher just three years removed from making his major league debut.

However, it does capsule his lengthy professional baseball career, including his seven-batter, one and 1/3 inning stay in the major leagues.

Olaf Selmar "Sam" Brenegan is 23 years old when he makes his major league debut with the National League's Pittsburgh Pirates on April 24, 1914, in a 8-1 loss to the visiting St. Louis Cardinals in a game that snaps the Corsairs' seven-game win streak.



**Sam Brenegan  
Pittsburgh Pirates -1914**

On April 8, the *Pittsburg Press* reports that Brenegan "seems to have won a berth as the second catcher on the Pittsburgh team for the coming season." One of the "giants" on the squad, the 23-year-old Galesville, Wisconsin, native stands 6-2 and weighs 190 pounds and when he is not playing baseball, Brenegan is an engineer. Brenegan begins his pro career in 1909 with the Regina Bonepilers of the Western Canada League.

Replacing starting catcher George Gibson in the top of the sixth inning, Brenegan draws the everlasting ire of veteran Pirates' manager Fred Clarke when he fails to hustle to the backstop on a wild pitch and a passed ball, while Cardinal base runners "were scampering around the bases."

But, it's a passed ball in the seventh inning that seals the catcher's fate.

After singling to center with one out, Cardinals' third baseman Cozy Dolan is able to go from first to third while Brenegan "loafs" after a Joe Conzelman pitch.

With Dolan perched on third, Clarke had seen enough and pulls Brenegan from the field, replacing him with Jake Kafora, the Pirates' third-string catcher.

Brenegan remains on the team's roster for four more weeks, occasionally performing bullpen duties, when on May 22, the Pirates send him to the Portland Beavers of the Pacific Coast League.

From the age of 18 to his death at the age of 65, the Galesville, Wisconsin, native devotes his life to the game of baseball. The teenager makes his organized baseball debut with the LaCrosse (Wisc.) Boosters in 1908, one of the state's top semipro teams, and one that he will return to 17 years later as a player/manager.

In 1909, he makes his professional debut with the Regina Bonepilers of the Western Canada League where he plays first base and hits a meager .190 with four hits in 21 at bats before being let go in mid-May.

April 24, 1914  
Forbes Field  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

ST. LOUIS.						PITTSBURGH.											
A	B	R	H	P	O	A	A	B	R	H	P	O	A				
Hug'ns, 2b.	5	1	1	5	2	Carey, lf.	3	0	1	4	0	Joe K'ly, cf.	4	0	0	1	0
Magee, cf.	4	0	1	4	0	Butler, ss.	2	1	1	0	4	M'wr'y, 3b.	4	0	1	4	3
Miller, 1b.	6	0	0	7	0	Wilson, rf.	5	1	2	2	0	Wagner, ss.	4	1	1	3	2
Dolan, 3b.	5	3	2	2	1	Cruise, lf.	3	0	2	1	1	K't'chy, lb.	3	0	2	12	0
Snyder, c.	3	1	2	6	0	Perritt, p.	4	1	0	0	1	Viox, 2b.	4	0	1	0	3
Perritt, p.	4	1	0	0	1	Gibson, c.	1	0	0	1	3	Mitch'l, rf.	3	0	1	0	0
Total	.36	8	11	27	9	*Leonard	.1	0	0	0	0	Gibson, c.	1	0	0	0	0
						Br'gan, c.	0	0	0	0	0	Kafora, c.	2	0	1	2	2
						Kantl'r, p.	1	0	0	0	0	H'rm'n, p.	0	0	0	0	1
						†Hyatt	.1	0	0	0	0	Conzelm'n, p.	1	0	0	0	5
						‡Jim K'ly	.1	0	0	0	0	Total	.33	1	8	27	17

\*Batted for Gibson in fifth inning.  
†Batted for Kantlehner in fifth inning.  
‡Batted for Conzelman in ninth inning.

St. Louis.....0 5 0 0 2 0 1 0 0-8  
Pittsburgh .....0 1 0 0 0 0 0 0 0-1

Two-base hits—Butler, Wilson, Wagner, Carey, Konetchy. Three-base hit—Wilson. Sacrifice fly—Mitchell. Hits—Off Harmon, 6 in two innings; off Kantlehner, 3 in three innings; off Conzelman, 2 in four innings. Left on bases—St. Louis, 7; Pittsburgh, 7. Bases on balls—Off Harmon, 2; off Kantlehner, 2; off Perritt, 1. Hit by pitched ball—Konetchy, by Perritt. Struck out—By Kantlehner, 1; by Conzelman, 2; by Perritt, 3. Wild pitches—Harmon, Conzelman. Passed ball—Brenegan. Time of game—Two hours and twelve minutes. Umpires—Messrs. Byron and Orth.

Gibson and Kantlehner gave way to pinch-hitters, Leonard and Hyatt, in the fifth and Conzelman and Brenegan formed the Pirate battery in the sixth. Brenegan was slow in recovering a wild pitch and then showed much hesitation in getting after a passed ball which had split his finger. Kafora took his place and showed much more ginger, but the game was irretrievably lost and Jake's pepper did not avail much.

## Sam Brenegan [2 of 5]:

Brenegan will play two years (1910-1911) of semipro ball in North Carolina with the Raleigh Red Birds and the Warrenton Indians before reemerging with the Petersburg Goobers of the Virginia (C) League for two seasons.

The 6-2, 185-pound left-handed hitter signs with Pittsburgh in early January of 1914 and is considered a prized catching prospect. Brenegan makes the team's opening day roster despite missing four days of training camp after being afflicted with boils.

Over the next five years, Brenegan will play for, and apparently wear out his welcome with five minor league teams.

■ The consensus of the Pittsburgh management is that Brenegan "lacks ambition and sand" for success at the major league level.

■ At the end of the 1914 season, Portland Beavers' President Walter McCredie sells Brenegan outright to the Spokane Indians saying Brenegan "wasn't my type of catcher."

■ Despite hitting a solid .298 for Spokane in 1915, Brenegan, noted as a hard hitter when "going good" but discourages easily, is given his outright release.

■ In a 1916 preseason game between Terre Haute and the Pittsburgh Pirates, Brenegan, now with Terre Haute, has so many bases stolen on him that he gets frustrated and finally refuses to throw to second base on any attempted steal.

■ With the Dayton Veterans in 1917, Brenegan is so upset with his play that he tells Veterans' manager Johnny Nee that he wants his release as soon as a replacement catcher arrives.

In eight minor league seasons, Brenegan hits .275. Following his playing days, he runs a tavern in his hometown of Galesville, Wisconsin, where he dies on April 20, 1956, at the age of 65.

## BRENEGAN CHRONOLOGY

May 17, 1909

"Brenegan" collects one of Regina's eight hits and makes 12 putouts at first base as the Bonepilers edge Moose Jaw 4-3 for their first victory of the Western Canada League season ... despite the decisions of umpire Walton being "unsatisfactory," Regina's Joseph "Lefty" Sporer, a 13-game winner for Minneapolis in 1902 and Winnipeg in 1906, strikes out 10 Robin Hoods en route to one of his 11 wins on the season.

## Sam Brenegan Year by Year:

Year	Team	League	Lev	AB	HT	2B	3B	HR	SB	AVG
1908	LaCrosse (Wisc.) Boosters	-	SPro	-	-	-	-	-	-	---
1909	Regina Bonepilers	Western Canada	D	21	4	1	0	0	0	.190
1909	LaCrosse (Wisc.) Outcasts	-	SPro	-	-	-	-	-	-	---
1910	Raleigh (NC) Red Birds	-	SPro	-	-	-	-	-	-	---
1911	Warrenton (NC) Indians	-	SPro	-	-	-	-	-	-	---
1912	Petersburg Goobers	Virginia	C	142	30	6	1	0	1	.211
1913	Petersburg Goobers	Virginia	C	284	78	10	6	1	1	.275
1914	Pittsburgh Pirates	NATIONAL	MLB	0	0	0	0	0	0	---
1914	<b>2 Teams</b>	<b>2 Leagues</b>	<b>AA-B</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>.273</b>
1914	Portland Beavers	Pacific Coast	AA	30	7	2	0	0	0	.233
1914	Spokane Indians	Northwestern	B	14	5	0	0	0	0	.357
1915	Spokane Indians	Northwestern	B	447	133	21	9	4	5	.298
1916	<b>2 Teams</b>	<b>3-l League</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>.208</b>
1916	Rockford Wakes	3-l League	B	-	-	-	-	-	-	---
1916	Hannibal Mules	3-l League	B	-	-	-	-	-	-	---
1917	2 Teams	Central	B	415	135	-	-	1	-	---
1917	Dayton Veterans	Central	B	-	-	-	-	-	-	---
1917	Garfields	-	SPro	-	-	-	-	-	-	---
1917	Muskegon Muskies	Central	B	-	-	-	-	-	-	---
1918	Camp Grant	US Army	Amt.	-	-	-	-	-	-	---
1919	St. Joseph Saints	Western League	A	165	45	6	2	1	-	.273
1919	Toledo Rail Lights	-	SPro	-	-	-	-	-	-	---
1920	Toledo Rail Lights	-	SPro	-	-	-	-	-	-	---
1921	Briscoe Motors, Jackson, Mich.	-	SPro	-	-	-	-	-	-	---
1922	Jackson, Mich.	-	SPro	-	-	-	-	-	-	---
1922	Racine Belles	Midwest	SPro	-	-	-	-	-	-	---
1923	Racine Belles	Midwest	SPro	-	-	-	-	-	-	---
1922	Horlock-Racines	Chicago-Midwest	SPro	-	-	-	-	-	-	---
1923	Horlock-Racines	Chicago-Midwest	SPro	-	-	-	-	-	-	.333
1923	Sturgis, Mich.	-	SPro	-	-	-	-	-	-	---
1924	Ft. Wayne, Mich.	-	SPro	-	-	-	-	-	-	---
1925	LaCrosse (Wisc.) Boosters	-	SPro	-	-	-	-	-	-	---
1926	Postums, Battle Creek, Mich.	-	SPro	95	20	-	-	-	-	.201
1927	Postums, Battle Creek, Mich.	-	SPro	-	-	-	-	-	-	---
1927	Madison (Wisc.) Blues	-	SPro	-	-	-	-	-	-	---
1928	Postums, Battle Creek, Mich.	-	SPro	-	-	-	-	-	-	---
1929	Postums, Battle Creek, Mich.	-	SPro	-	-	-	-	-	-	---
1930	Postums, Battle Creek, Mich.	-	SPro	-	-	-	-	-	-	.361
1937	Galesville, Ind.	-	SPro	-	-	-	-	-	-	---
<b>Major League Totals</b>				<b>1 Season</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>---</b>
<b>Minor League Totals</b>				<b>8 Seasons</b>	<b>1082</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>.275</b>

ML Debut: April 24, 1914 at Forbes Field, Pittsburgh: Replaced starting catcher George Gibson in the sixth inning in an 8-1 loss to the St. Louis Cardinals. One passed ball.

## Olaf (Sam) Brenegan

GALESVILLE, Wis. (Special)—Olaf (Sam) Brenegan, 55, former major league baseball player, died Friday at his home here. He had been ill since Christmas.

Born Sept. 1, 1890, in Gale Town, he played professional baseball for 25 years including two years as a catcher with the Pittsburgh Pirates.

A veteran of World War I, Mr. Brenegan managed the Galesville team a number of years after retiring as an active player. He had owned a tavern here ten years.

## Sam Brenegan [3 of 5]:

### August 13, 1913

The Petersburg Goobers, behind a pair of complete game shutouts by lefty Harry Hedgepeth, sweep a Virginia (C) League doubleheader from the visiting Richmond Colts, 1-0, and 10-0. Hedgepeth, a University of North Carolina graduate, allows the Colts only one hit in the opener before twirling a no-hitter and allowing only two base runners in the second game. Brenegan catches both games.

### September 20, 1913

Brenegan and pitcher Jack Shenn are drafted by the Pittsburgh Pirates in the annual minor league draft ... Shenn, tall righthander, was 15-17 with a 4.26 ERA in 277 innings pitched for the Norfolk Tars of the Virginia League while Brenegan hit .275 for Petersburg ... Shenn is told to report to the Pirates immediately, while Brenegan, who was recommended by former Pirates' player Frank Dobson, is told to report next spring.



### January 9, 1914

Pittsburgh Pirates' president Barney Dreyfuss receives Brenegan's signed contract for the 1914 season.

### April 14, 1914

Brenegan makes his major league debut in an 8-1 loss to the St. Louis Cardinals.

### April 25, 1914

Brenegan is one of five Pirate players left behind by manager Fred Clarke when the team leaves for Chicago. Along with Brenegan are pitchers Marty O'Toole, Barney Duffy and Flame Delhi and infielder Alex McCarthy ... all of the players are left with instructions to practice daily at Forbes Field when the weather permits.

### May 8, 1914

Brenegan's major league career is over when he is sold to the Portland Beavers of the Pacific Coast League. The general consensus of the Pirates management is that the big catcher "lacks ambition and sand" for success at the major league level.

### June 15, 1914

Brenegan returns to Portland after being "loaned" to Spokane for two weeks.

### August 14, 1914

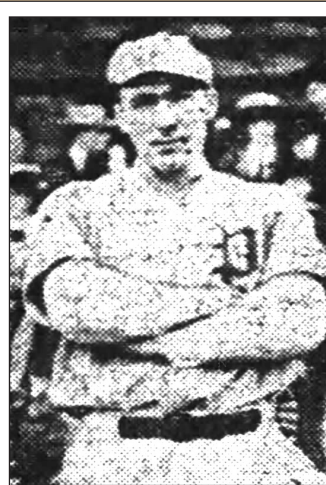
Brenegan is one of three Beaver players left behind when the Portland team departs on a Pacific Coast League road trip.

### December 13, 1914

Portland President Walter McCredie sells Brenegan outright to the Spokane Indians of the Northwestern (B) League ... the Beavers had loaned him to Spokane for a week during the 1914 season and he had hit .357 in four games ... McCredie says that Brenegan "wasn't my type of catcher."

### August 22, 1915

Brenegan plays the second game of a doubleheader against Vancouver with his throwing hand bandaged to protect a thumb broken in the first game ... it turns out that a local jeweler has offered a gold watch to the player who leads the team in runs batted in and Brenegan is tied with shortstop Herb Murphy for team lead in that department.



### Sam Brenegan Portland Beavers - 1914

Brenegan will hit .233 with a pair of doubles in only 30 at bats for the Beavers in 1914.

## August 13, 1913 Petersburg, Virginia

PETERSBURG.						RICHMOND.					
AB.	R.	H.	O.	A.	E.	AB.	R.	H.	O.	A.	E.
Simmons,rf	4	0	1	0	0	Laval,rf	4	0	0	0	0
Keller,lf	3	0	1	0	0	Piez,lf	2	0	0	0	0
Krepps,2b	3	0	0	0	3	Griffin,2b	3	0	0	0	0
Busch,cf	3	0	1	0	0	Newton,ss	3	0	1	1	0
Barnett,ss	2	0	0	4	0	Raley,lb	1	0	0	5	0
Brenegan,c	3	0	1	7	1	Ebers,cf	3	0	0	3	0
Damrau,3b	3	0	0	0	4	Davis,3b	3	0	0	1	1
Laugh'n,lb	3	1	1	4	0	Mace,c	2	0	0	13	2
Hedgep'h,p	3	0	1	0	2	Ayers,p	3	0	0	1	3
						*Lusk	1	0	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>Totals</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>

\*Batted for Mace in ninth.  
Petersburg..... 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 1-1  
Richmond..... 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0-0  
Two-base hit—Keller. Sacrifice hit—Barnett.  
Stolen base—Brenegan. Double plays—Avers to Raley; Barnett (unassisted). Base on balls—Off Hedgepeth. Struck out—By Ayers, 13; by Hedgepeth, 6. Left on bases—Petersburg, 3; Richmond, 1. Time of game—1:30. Umpires—Kelly and Williams.

PETERSBURG.						RICHMOND.					
AB.	R.	H.	O.	A.	E.	AB.	R.	H.	O.	A.	E.
Simmons,rf	3	1	2	0	0	Laval,p,cf	4	0	0	1	7
Keller,lf	5	2	3	1	0	Piez,lf	3	0	0	0	0
Krepps,2b	4	2	1	2	2	Griffin,2b	3	0	0	1	3
Busch,cf	5	1	1	5	0	Newton,ss	3	0	1	0	0
Barnett,ss	3	0	1	0	5	Raley,lb	3	0	0	11	0
Brenegan,c	3	1	0	2	0	Ebers,cf	0	0	0	0	0
Damrau,3b	3	1	1	1	3	Ayers,rf	1	0	0	0	0
Laugh'n,lb	8	2	2	13	0	Mace,rf	3	0	0	1	0
Hedgep'h,p	4	0	1	0	3	Davis,3b	3	0	0	1	1
						Lusk,c	5	0	0	8	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>Totals</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>12</b>

\*Newton out for interference.  
Petersburg..... 6 0 0 0 0 4 0 0 0 1-10  
Richmond..... 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0-0  
Two-base hits—Busch, Barnett, Laugh'n, Hedgepeth. Three-base hit—Krepps. Sacrifice hit—Krepps. Stolen base—Keller. Sacrifice fly—Barnett. Bases on balls—Off Hedgepeth, 2; off Laval, 2. Batter hit—Brenegan. Struck out—By Hedgepeth, 2; by Laval, 4. Wild pitch—Laval. Left on bases—Petersburg, 6; Richmond, 3. Time of game—1:40. Umpire—Kelly.

## LOAFS HIMSELF OUT OF MAJOR LEAGUE

PITTSBURGH, May 12.—Catcher Sam Brenegan, who loafed a job away, has been released by Pittsburgh to the Portland, Ore. Sam had a job cinched until he broke into the game one afternoon out at Forbes Field. He failed to deliver and was at once marked for decapitation.

Brenegan is the catcher who allowed a wild pitch to roll to the wire screen and then failed to go after it. A few minutes later he was guilty of a passed ball, and again he loafed on the job while runners were scampering around the bases.

Manager Clarke at once took the recruit out of the melee, sending "Jake" Kafora in. Since then Brenegan has taken no part in the Pirates' activities other than to warm up a pitcher occasionally.

Prior to the opening of the season the correspondents who had watched the work of the youngsters down in the Southland were unanimous in picking Brenegan as the one best bet in the catching line. He was declared to be a whale behind the bat and a bear at throwing.

## Sam Brenegan [4 of 5]:

### BRENNEGAN TURNED LOOSE BY SPOKANE

#### President Farr of Indians Hands Unconditional Release to Backstop.

Spokane has released Sam Brenegan, the big catcher who did most of the backstop work last year. Brenegan was a hard hitter when he was going good, but was easily discouraged.

Brenegan has the natural ability to make quite a ball player, but it did not take the Seattle bunch long to find out that he would crack if crowded pretty hard, and after that he was not of much value when playing against other clubs.

Sheely and Dutch Altman will likely do the catching for Spokane. Altman was a fare more valuable man behind the bat than Brenegan last year, despite the latter's natural advantages.

#### ◀ January 7, 1916

Despite being the team's primary catcher and hitting a solid .298 for the Spokane Indians, Brenegan is initially given his outright release ... noted as a hard hitter when "going good" but discouraged easily.

#### January 1916

Spokane eventually trades Brenegan and Ted Kaylor to Terre Haute for pitchers Tom Cantwell and Hancock ... Spokane eventually suspends both hurlers when they refuse to report to training camp ... Cantwell and Hancock are later released from their contracts and made free agents.

#### April 11, 1916

In a preseason game between Terre Haute and the Pittsburgh Pirates, the major leaguers had a "field day" with Brenegan behind the plate, stealing bases at will ... Brenegan gets so frustrated, that he finally refuses to throw to second base on any attempted steal.

Dayton Herald, June 23, 1917

Sam Brenegan will have to put in several hours each morning finding where second base is located if he repeats his demonstration of throwing again. In two days Sam has thrown the ball to center field while trying to catch base runners.



#### Sam Brenegan Dayton Veterans - 1917

Considered a very "brainy" catcher, Brenegan has been doing the majority of catching for the Toledo Rail Lights, one of the top semipro teams in the country.

#### April 14, 1917

A "beefy" Brenegan shows up at the first day of spring training with the Dayton Veterans.

Dayton Herald, July 4, 1917

What on earth has ever made Manager Nee hold on to Sam Brenegan so long is the thought uppermost in the minds of Dayton fans. Although Sam is a hard worker and can hit, his bonehead plays have cost the Vets more games than his hitting has ever won.

#### July 7, 1917

A frustrated Brenegan asks Dayton manager Johnny Nee that when new catcher Pat Donahue arrives from the Portsmouth Truckers of the Virginia (C) League that he wants a release ... saddled with a bad hand for the past several weeks, Brenegan says, "the Devil must be in me and everything is going wrong."

#### July 8, 1917

In his last game for Dayton, Brenegan is 2-for-4 in an 11-4 win over the Richmond Quakers ... following the game, Brenegan and sore-armed pitcher Jack Frost, a 15-game winner for the Veterans a year ago, but 4-8 this summer, are released by the Veterans ... the 32-year-old Donahue will hit a meager .179 in 45 games as Brenegan's replacement.

#### July 9, 1917

Brenegan is officially removed from the Veterans' payroll but watches that day's game at the Richmond Quakers from the grandstand.

#### July 18, 1917

Brenegan signs with the Central League's Muskegon Muskies.

#### May 31, 1923

With the arrival of former major league catcher Ed Sweeney, Brenegan draws his release from the Racine Belles of the Midwest (semipro) League.

#### May 26, 1926

Brenegan, manger of the LaCrosse Boosters, releases long-time first baseman Orgy Woll and signs Fred Mollwitz, a former first baseman for Minneapolis of the American Association.



#### Sam Brenegan Toledo Rail Lights - 1919

Considered a very "brainy" catcher, Brenegan has been doing the majority of catching for the Toledo Rail Lights, one of the top semipro teams in the country.



#### Sam Brenegan Racine Belles - 1923

Brenegan's time with the Belles comes to an end after two seasons when the team signs former major league catcher Ed Sweeney.

## Sam Brenegan [5 of 5]:

August 16, 1937

Batting cleanup and playing first base for the Galesville (Wisc.) semipro team, a 47-year-old Brenegan goes 0-for-3 in an 8-5 loss to the Eau Claire Blackhawks.

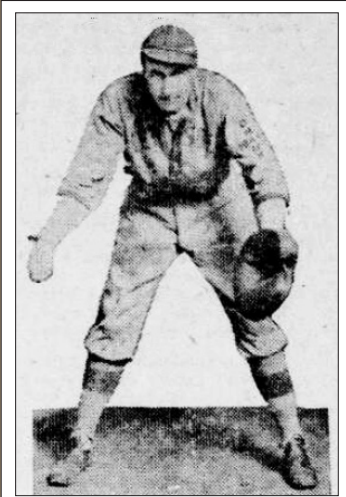
July 20, 1939

It's "Sam Brenegan Day" in Galesville, and the 49-year-old prodigal son will return home to play catcher in that afternoon's game against the Coon Valley nine ... in the morning edition the *LaCrosse Tribune and News Leader* a story about Brenegan states, "his spectacular rise on the diamond was climaxed in 1914 and 1915, by two successful seasons as the regular catcher for the Pittsburgh Pirates."

(Well it was his day).

April 20, 1956

Brenegan dies on April 20, 1956, in his hometown of Galesville, at the age of 65.



### **Sam Brenegan LaCrosse Boosters - 1925**

At the end of the season, Brenegan is uncommitted as to if he will coach the Boosters again next year. It is rumored that Brenegan is being pursued by a Southern League team.