

The Mysterious Case of Delos Brown

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As far as baseball games go, Washington's afternoon encounter with the Chicago White Sox on June 12, 1914, was pretty much a run-of-the-mill affair.

Despite a forecast of temperatures in the 90s, the winds coming off nearby Lake Michigan have turned the air, and probably the fans, inside Comiskey Park to "bracing and cool" as the White Sox come to bat in the bottom of the eighth inning trailing the Senators 5-0 in the Friday finale of a three-game series.

On the mound for the visitors from the nation's capital is Doc Ayers, a lanky 23-year-old right-hander from Snake Creek, Virginia, which for the uninitiated is near Fancy Gap in the Southwestern part of the state. Aberrant for his time, Ayers is both an underhanded spitball pitcher and a former student at the Medical College of Virginia in Richmond.

To begin the eighth, White Sox manager Jimmy Callahan elects to pinch hit Charlie Kavanagh for third baseman Scotty Alcock. Alcock is hitless in two previous at bats and hitting .193, while Kavanagh only the day before had singled in his major league debut.

Ayers makes short work of the Windy City native, picking up the fifth of his six strikeouts on the afternoon.

Callahan then sends up recently signed **Delos Brown**, fresh off the campus of Millikin University in nearby Decatur, to bat for relief pitcher Hi Jasper. Ayers finishes off the 21-year-old on three pitches, spoiling Brown's debut in what turns out to be his only major league appearance.

Ayers goes on to record his second shutout of the Chisox in the still-young season and raise his record to 7-4. The second-place Senators improve to 29-20 while the sixth-place White Sox drop to 23-27.

How Millikin Star Nearly Lost Job

But here is where it gets interesting, as the headline suggests.

A week later on June 19, *Chicago Tribune* sports writer L.E. Sanborn reports that the Brown who pinch-hit for Jasper, was not Delos Brown, fresh off a college campus, but instead was J.A. Brown, Jr., a Union Stockyard's meat expert at the city's Armour Plant.

Sanborn wrote that Brown Jr., "an amateur of considerable renown," had obtained a letter of introduction to Chicago owner Charles Comiskey from a mutual friend expressing a desire to spend his vacation practicing with the team. Upon arriving at the stadium on June 12, Brown is met by Harry Grabiner, the team's acting secretary, and in introduction says his name is "Brown."

Grabiner, without looking at the letter, assumes that the young man standing in front of him is *Delos Brown* reporting for duty as

Delos Brown



1913 Centralia White Sox

Washington Senators at Chicago White Sox
Comiskey Park, Chicago, Illinois
June 12, 1914

DELOS BROWN GETS IN FIRST BIG GAME

Chicago, June 12.—Washington hit Russell hard today, while Ayres shut out Chicago, 5 to 0. Ayres kept the hits well scattered. Schalk had his arm badly cut by Moeller's spikes when the latter slid into the plate in the fifth inning and retired from the game. Infielder Brown, a college player from Decatur, reported to Manager Callahan today.

Washington—	A.	B.	R.	H.	P.	O.	A.	E.
Moeller, rf.	4	0	2	1	1	1	0	
Foster, 3b	4	0	1	2	0	1		
Milan, cf.	4	1	2	5	0	0		
Gandil, 1b	2	1	1	7	0	0		
Shanks, lf.	4	0	0	1	0	0		
Morgan, 2b	3	1	2	1	1	0		
McBride, ss.	4	1	1	2	1	0		
Henry, c.	4	1	1	8	1	0		
Ayres, p.	2	0	0	0	2	0		

Totals	31	5	11	27	6	1		
Chicago—	A.	B.	R.	H.	P.	O.	A.	E.
Weaver, ss.	4	0	2	2	4	0		
Blackburn, 2b ..	3	0	2	5	2	0		
Demmitt, lf.	4	0	0	1	0	0		
Collins, rf.	4	0	1	0	0	0		
Chase, 1b	4	0	1	6	0	0		
Bodie, cf.	4	0	2	2	0	0		
Schalk, c.	1	0	0	5	3	0		
Daly, c.	3	0	1	4	1	0		
Alcock, 3b	2	0	0	2	3	0		
*Kavanaugh ..	1	0	0	0	0	0		
Breton, 3b	1	0	0	0	0	0		
Russell, p.	1	0	0	0	2	0		
Jasper, p.	1	0	0	0	1	0		
**Brown	1	0	0	0	0	0		
Lathrop, p.	0	0	0	0	0	0		

Totals

*Batted for Alcock in eighth.

**Batted for Jasper in eighth.

Washington	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	—	5
Chicago	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	—	0

Two-base hits, Moeller (2), Bodie, Milan; three-base hit, Morgan; hits, off Russell 9 in 4 2-3 innings, off Jasper 2 in 3 1-3 innings, off Lathrop 0 in 1 inning; stolen bases, Gandil (2), Morgan; double play, Moeller to Foster; left on bases, Washington 4, Chicago 8; bases on balls, off Jasper 2; struck out, by Russell 3, by Ayres 6, by Jasper 4.

announced that morning in the papers. He immediately takes Brown to see White Sox Manager Callahan, who like Grabiner, assumes that his Millikin University product has arrived and tells the equipment manager to give the startled Brown a uniform.

Brown is taken in tow by coach Billy Sullivan, who also happens to be the person who scouted the Millikin Brown and recommended his signing to Comiskey.

In pregame warm-ups Sullivan notes Brown's lack of arm strength and accuracy. He remarks, "Wing a bit soft?"

"I haven't been playing much lately," admits Brown.

The story notes that once the game starts, Brown, sitting on the bench in a White Sox uniform, was probably enjoying his experience -- until the eighth inning when Callahan tells the stunned meat packer, "Hit for Jasper."

Brown trots out to home plate in his clean white uniform, and as Sanborn writes, he swings and misses at three pitches before the announcer is able to intone, "Brown, now hitting for Jasper." Returning to the dugout, he quickly goes to the clubhouse where he "shed" his uniform and (tongue in cheek) jumps to the Federal League.

After the game, members of the media ask Grabiner, who is the new player named Brown. Grabiner replies that Brown's first name is Delos and he is "a swell young player who had been going to school at Decatur, and was signed by Comiskey last summer after Billy Sullivan had looked him over."

On June 23, the Tribune (below) further reports that Delos Brown, "for whom John A. Brown Jr. of the Armour forces was mistaken," has been sent to Decatur for seasoning and left on the 22nd.

Delos Brown, the schoolboy from Decatur, for whom John A. Brown Jr. of the Armour forces was mistaken, has been sent to the Decatur team for seasoning and left yesterday.

So, where does that leave us? Was it Delos Brown that faced the former medical student-turned-spitballer from down under? Or was it John A. Brown Jr.?

BROWNS GOT MIXED UP

RECORD FOR SHORTEST PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL CAREER.

Meat Expert From Stockyards Is Mistaken for Young Player From Decatur Who Had Been Picked Out by Scout Sullivan.

Brown's in Town—Not the Right Brown; Acts as Pinch Hitter for the White Sox.

BY I. E. SANBORN.

J. A. BROWN JR., a Union Stockyards meat expert, holds the world's record with the shortest professional baseball career of any player who has yet broken into the major leagues. It lasted less than two minutes and he did not know he was going to break in two minutes before it happened.

Previous to that Brown Jr. was an amateur of considerable renown in the Armour plant, where he is employed. Wishing to inhale a little professional atmosphere from the inside, he obtained a letter of introduction to President Comiskey from a mutual friend and set out to spend his vacation practicing with the White Sox.

Encountering Acting Secretary Grabiner at the Sox offices, our hero asked for Comiskey, saying, "My name's Brown," and offering the letter of introduction. Without glancing at the document, Grabiner extended his hand and was so glad to see Brown that he took him right out and introduced him to the Sox pilot.

"So you're Brown, eh?" was Callahan's greeting. "Welcome to our midst. Here, Buck, give Brown a home uniform right away."

Although surprised at this warm welcome, Brown thought some of his stockyards admirers might have been swelling him up to the Sox manager, and obeyed the injunction to get dressed and get busy with alacrity. He was taken in tow by Billy Sullivan and started passing the ball with him.

"Wing a bit soft?" asked Sullivan after a while.

"I haven't been playing much lately," admitted Brown.

"You don't look as heavy as you were," said Sullivan, while Brown's chest expanded at the idea the Sox veteran knew him so well.

This happened before last Friday's game with Washington and Brown enjoyed his first experience on the bench in the uniform of a major league team—enjoyed it until the home half of the eighth inning. Ayres had the Sox beaten 5 to 0, and it was Jasper's turn at bat.

"Hit for Jasper," said Callahan, turning to Brown, who gasped in amazement, but thought it some new form of the third degree, which he was too game to dodge. Out trotted the meat expert, resplendent in his clean white suit, and — struck out on three wild pitches, even before the announcer could finish his spiel, "Brown, now batting for Jasper."

Not a smile was cracked on the bench when Brown returned and without a word he hustled to the clubhouse, shed his uniform, and jumped to the Federal league, where he has since done his practicing with Johnny Farrell. But the joke wasn't on Brown of the stockyards.

In the stands and the press box everywhere was heard, "Brown? Whoinell's Brown?"

After the game they asked Comiskey and



he turned them over to Grabiner, who informed the scribes that Brown's first name was Delos and that he was a swell young player who had been going to school at Decatur, and was signed by Comiskey last summer after Billy Sullivan had looked him over in several games. The way Brown had swung at those balls didn't raise the scribes' estimation of Sullivan as a scout, but they didn't know, nor did any one else except J. A. Brown Jr.

So Delos may make good yet.

It's been over 100 years since that "bracing and cool," afternoon in Comiskey Park and there is no definitive way of knowing which Brown actually took three swings in a major league game.

However, given the extensive Tribune story on June 19, and then the follow-up four days later noting that John A. Brown Jr., had been mistaken for Delos Brown, and that several reputable newspapers were still running the story a month later, my bet is on the meat expert.

Kudos to you, John.