

TEAM SNAPSHOT: 1942 Hickory Rebels

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They saved the worst for last.

What begins as a research project on the 1942 North Carolina State League turned into a short research project on the hapless Hickory Rebels and their season-ending 26-game losing streak accented (with an exclamation mark) by a 23-0 loss to Thomasville on the season's final day.



Bud Shaney

"Struttin' Bud" Shaney is named the Rebels' manager on April 6, a full month later than any other North Carolina State League manager. A 223-game winner in 21 minor league seasons, Shaney's eight wins account for 44 percent of the team's 18 wins on the season. A three-time 20-game winner, the New Albany, Indiana, native will pitch five shutout innings as a 54-year-old for the Asheville Tourists in 1954. Following his playing days, Shaney will become the grounds keeper at Asheville's historic McCormick Field.

Managed by the popular (at least at the start of the season) 42-year-old veteran pitcher Charles "Bud" Shaney, the hapless Rebels finish the season with the worst record in organized baseball that season (18-80) and a distant 47 games behind the first-place Concord Weavers.

What makes their record even more amazing is that Hickory actually starts the season out fairly well, standing at 7-7 on May 27. But due to an already thin talent pool made even more thin by various players reporting for military duty, the Rebels will win only 11 times over their last 84 games for a .130 winning percentage.

A total of 55 players will suit up for Hickory that summer, including one player, locally-grown catcher Pat Burris, making it as the major leagues.

Back in the ranks of professional baseball following a one-year hiatus, and for only the third time in the town's history, Hickory's admittance into the six-year-old North Carolina State League could not look more promising when it is granted league membership on December 23, 1941, a mere 16 days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, spurring America's entry into World War II.

Left out of the pro ranks when the Tar Heel League folds after the 1940 season, the inhabitants of the small (13,500) town in the

foothills of North Carolina couldn't be more excited as the ownership reveals that they are taking over the reigning two-time defending North Carolina State League champion Kannapolis Towlers "lock, stock and barrel." Included in the lock, or stock, or barrel, are the contracts for 14 players, but not for manager Joe Palmisan, who is given his release. Only two of the 14 players will play for the Rebels in 1942.

Kannapolis officials explain that the unexpected sale was brought about by the uncertainty of future manpower needs (i.e. players) and the "uncertain reception" the sport might receive in view of the war. In addition, any money derived from the sale will be invested in war bonds and used as "a nest egg" once the Towel City decides again to try organized baseball.

However, early optimism turns into reality in April. Despite being faced with a complete roster overhaul, the team elects not to hire a manager until April 6, a full three weeks later than any of the other seven teams and only four weeks prior to the season opener. Hired to manage the American Legion team in his hometown of Asheville, Shaney says he had contacted several players, but wasn't satisfied with their "records." In an interview the *Statesville Daily Record*, Shaney proclaims, "The Hickory Rebels are not going to be just another minor league team, because I'm only interested in the best of material for a fast club."

But, the warning signs are there.

On the first day of training camp, Shaney is still in the process of acquiring players. The Charlotte Hornets say they are going to send him a left-handed pitcher and a catcher. The Pittsburgh Pirates agree to option some players to Hickory and a pitcher named Alexander may be signed soon. The Brooklyn Dodgers say they have seven to 10 players available for selection.

August 29, 1942
Hickory Rebels at Thomasville Tommies
Finch Field, Thomasville, N.C.

Tommies Wallop Hickory, 23 to 0

(Special to Daily News)

THOMASVILLE, Aug. 28.—Thomasville walloped Hickory, 23 to 0, in concluding its North State league season here Saturday night. Pitcher Kotenski led the attack with two triples and two singles.

HICKORY		THOMASVILLE	
ab r h a		ab r h a	
Burris, lb	4 0 0 0	Barnes, cf	3 1 1 0
Pavoris, c	3 0 0 0	Nance, ss	6 1 2 5
S'borough, cf	4 0 1 0	Bönnling, lf	3 0 1 0
Warlick, 3b	4 0 1 2	Mahry, 3b	2 1 2 7
Akin, 2b	4 0 0 3	Hickernell, 1b	4 4 3 0
Conahan, p	3 0 0 2	Rosen, 2b	4 2 2 3
Johnson, lf	3 0 0 0	Younts, rf	4 2 1 0
Gawrys, 2b	3 0 0 3	Boger, c	5 2 1 0
Arndt, rf	3 0 0 0	Kotenski, p	4 4 1 1
		Whitman, lf	0 1 0 0
		Teague, cf	0 1 0 0
		Gruzdls, 3b	4 3 3 2

Totals	31 0 2 10	Totals	39 23 20 12
Hickory	000 000 000—0		
Hickory	012 723 26x—23		

E—Akin, Warlick, 3; Hickernell, Gruzdls, Johnson. RBI—Rosen, 2; Kotenski, 5; Barnes, 2; Mahry, Hickernell, 4; Gruzdls, 2; Younts, 2; Nance, Boger. 3B—Kotenski, 2; Gruzdls, Hickernell, 2. 2B—Mahry. BB—Off Conahan, 10; Kotenski, 1. SO—By Conahan, 1; Kotenski, 1. LOB—Hickory, 6; Thomasville, 8. U—Burnette and Cross. T—2:20.

Hickory saves the worst for last, losing 23-0 to the Thomasville Tommies on the final day of the 1942 season and extending its season-ending losing streak to 26-in-a-row, with their last victory coming exactly one month earlier. Shortstop-turned-slabster Richard Conahan has a complete game for the Rebels, allowing 23 runs on 20 hits, 10 base on balls and five errors, including three by third baseman Guy Warlick. Thomasville's James Gruzdls, the league's batting champion, is 3-for-4 and finishes the season with a .418 batting.

Hickory Takes Over Kannapolis Franchise

1942 Hickory Rebels [2 of 4]:

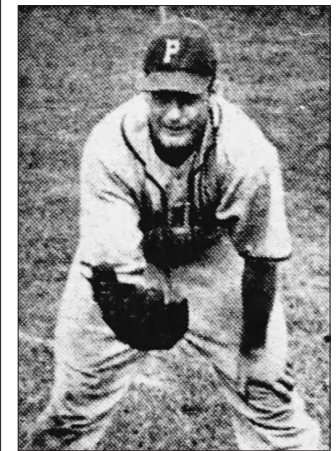
The St. Louis Cardinals may make available some "surplus players" from their Johnson City (Tenn.) franchise. Of the 15 players in the Rebels' camp a week prior to the opener, only three will make the opening day roster. So concerned about the team's talent, Shaney "dickers" with shortstop Hank Dvorak, who hit a paltry .224 in two previous seasons (1939 & 1940) with the Rebels.

But the die is cast and the season begins.

HICKORY CHRONOLOGY

April 21

Hickory trades pitchers Red Ennis and Johnny Martin and outfielder Lewis Davis to the Landis Millers for pitcher John Carr and outfielder John Coakley.



Thomas Sezna

One of the few players in the league to throw right-handed and bat from the left side, Sezna begins his pro career with the Hornell Maples of the PONY (D) League before being released on May 20 and signing with the Rebels a week later. Following a four-year stint in the military, Sezna returns to pro ball in 1947 with the Tallahassee Pirates of the Georgia-Florida (D) League. While with the Pirates, he has his "one shining moment" when he becomes the state of Florida's champion grapefruit thrower in 1947, throwing a "choice morsel" of Florida fruit more than 100 feet in the air.

May 7, 1942
Hickory Rebels at Statesville Owls
Statesville High School, Statesville, North

HICKORY				STATSVILLE					
	ab	r	h	a		ab	r	h	a
Reeder, cf	6	2	1	0	Keller, cf	3	0	0	0
Simpson, ss	4	1	2	3	Whitlock, c	4	1	0	1
Heath, 2b	4	1	1	2	Poole, 1b	5	1	2	0
Coakley, 1b	5	2	3	0	Smith, lf	5	1	4	0
James, lf	5	1	3	0	Southard, rf	5	1	1	0
Kirby, rf	5	1	2	0	Reynolds, 2b	3	1	1	5
Sealli, 3b	5	1	8	1	Honan, 3b	2	0	0	0
Solomon, c	4	2	1	0	P. Palzini, ss	4	0	1	3
Carr, p	4	0	0	2	Barnes, p	3	0	0	5
					Lentz, p	1	0	0	1
Totals	42	11	16	8	Totals	35	5	9	15

Score by Innings: R.
 Hickory .. 010 022 150-11
 Statesville000 310 100- 8

Errors—Reynolds, Keller, Honan. Runs batted in—Honan, Coakley, 4; James, 3; Smith, Solomon, 2; Reynolds, Heath. Home runs—Soloman, James. Three-base hits—James, Coakley. Two-base hits—Coakley, Poole. Stolen bases—Simpson, 2; Honan, Reynolds, P. Palzini, Solomon. Bases on balls—Off Carr, 6; Barnes, 2; Lentz, 1. Struck out—By Barnes, 13; Carr, 6; Lentz, 2. Hits—Off Barnes, 13 in 7; Lentz, 3 in 2. Left on base—Statesville, 10; Hickory, 18. Umpires—Sherrill and Price. Time—2:20.

May 7

Catcher Lewis Soloman and left fielder Pinky James homer as Hickory beats Statesville 11-5 in the season opener for both teams ... John Carr strikes out six and allows nine hits in a route-going effort.

May 11

Hickory beats Salisbury 4-3, improving to 3-1 on the year ... Thomas Senza gets the win.

May 12

Hickory hands Salisbury a 14-4 setback and moves into a three-way tie for first-place with Mooresville and Concord with identical 4-1 records ... outfielder Charles Reeder has two home runs and five RBIs.

May 19

John Coakley has a single, double and home run and drives in four runs as Hickory pounds out 19 hits in a 19-7 win at Lexington.

May 20

Infielder William Kreuger is acquired from the Dayton Ducks of the Middle Atlantic (C) League.



Ernest Utz

Nineteen-year-old Ernest Utz is 15-6 with 183 strikeouts in 224 innings in his rookie season with the Harrisonburg Turks of the Virginia (D) League in 1938, earning the Brightwood, Virginia, left-hander a spot on the league's all-star team. Utz is 5-2 in the midst of his third season, when on July 21, 1940 he is felled by a line drive off the bat by Staunton's Al Kubski. Unconscious for half-a-day, Utz is 7-20 for the remaining three years of his career.

May 27

Shaney pitches an 8-0 shutout of Salisbury ... the win evens Hickory's record at 7-7, marking the last time that the Rebels are at .500.

June 2

Hickory sweeps a doubleheader from Concord 4-0, 6-4 ... Shaney notches his second shutout in the first game ... "Lefty" Chester, signed just prior to the game, pitches a six-hit win in the second game.

June 10

Hickory pulls off a triple play in a 3-2 loss at Mooresville with newly-acquired 18-year-old George Lekrone taking the loss.

Shaney Suspends Hurler John Carr

June 11

Hickory is 9-18 when starting pitcher John Carr, beset with a sore arm, asks to be suspended in able to return to his home in Baltimore for treatment ... Shaney arranges with St. Louis' Branch Rickey "to secure the services" of a 5-foot-11, 186-pound "fast ball artist" Raymond Gawrys from North Tonawanda, N.J.

... the 18-year-old Gawrys will go 0-12 for the Rebels, allowing 129 hits in 83 innings before entering the service and being assigned to Camp Davis in Holly Ridge, North Carolina (population 28) ... ever the optimist, Shaney says, "I'm going to give Hickory a winning ball club yet, if they keep me here long enough."

1942 Hickory Rebels [3 of 4]:

Bud Shaney's Luck So Bad He's Good Mind To Stop Strutting

Hickory, June 26.—“Gosh, what luck,” moaned Struttin' Bud Shaney, playing manager of the Hickory Rebels, when a pitcher he secured only two days ago received a card yesterday ordering him to report at Scranton, Pa., Sunday for his physical examination in the draft.

The hurler is James P. Abdalla, who pitched most of the second game of a twin bill against Statesville here Wednesday night.

“The army's already got two of my first basemen,” groaned Bud. Munday is in the American army and Gallena was ordered to report for duty in the Mexican army.

Now Bud is not unpatriotic, but he thinks all the hard luck of the N. C. State league is descending right on his shoulders at present.

July 29, 1942

Statesville Owls at Hickory Rebels
Lenoir-Rhyne College Stadium

Statesville	AB	R	H	O	A	E
Keller, cf	4	0	1	3	0	0
Wilson, rf	4	0	1	2	0	0
Davis, 3	2	0	0	0	0	0
Poole, 1	4	0	0	8	1	2
Smith, c	4	0	1	4	0	0
Feathers, lf	4	0	0	2	0	0
Christopher, 2	3	2	2	4	3	0
Reynolds, ss	3	0	1	1	5	0
Jaynes, p	3	0	1	0	3	0
Reiber, p	1	0	0	0	0	0

TOTALS 32 2 7 24 12 2

Hickory	AB	R	H	O	A	E
Scarborough, cf	5	1	0	0	0	0
Basile, 1	4	1	2	12	0	1
Comahan, ss	5	0	0	3	4	0
James, rf	2	0	0	1	0	0
Smith, rf	2	1	0	0	0	2
Simpson, lf	3	1	3	4	0	0
Burris, c	4	0	1	3	1	0
Pavoris, 3	4	2	2	1	1	0
Aiken, 2	3	0	0	3	6	0
Weaver, p	3	1	2	0	2	0

TOTALS 35 7 10 27 14 3

Score by innings: R
 Statesville 000 010 100—2
 Hickory 000 010 80x—7
 Runs batted in—Reynolds, James, Basile 2, Burris 2. Home run—Basile. Three-base hit—Christopher. Two-base hits—Pavoris, Simpson. Sacrifice—Aiken. Double play—Aiken to Basile. Base on balls—off Weaver 3, Jaynes 2, Reiber 1. Struck out—by Weaver 2, Jaynes 3. Hits—off Jaynes 9 in 7. Left on bases—Hickory 8, Statesville 7. Hit by pitcher—by Weaver (Davis). Losing pitcher—Jaynes. Umpires—Burnette and Dingler. Time—1:52.

Fresh off the campus of nearby Morganton High School, 18-year-old Bennett Jaynes is driven from the box in the seventh inning as Hickory explodes for six runs en route to a 7-2 win. Rebel first baseman Joseph Basile is 2-for-4 with a home run and two RBIs and Bob Weaver strikes out two and allows only seven hits in the route-going effort. Hickory improves to 18-54 and pulls to within a game of seventh-place Salisbury (18-52).

June 13

Two days after being acquired, Gawry makes his Hickory debut, yielding one run on three hits in a 9-7 loss to Salisbury.

June 24

Hickory acquires pitcher James Abdella from the Danville Leafs of the Bi-State (D) League.

June 26

After appearing in one game, Abdella receives an order to report for his physical at Scranton, Pennsylvania ... Abdella joins Joseph Munday and Carlos Gallena as Hickory players now in the military.

July 20

In an inexplicable trade, Hickory trades second baseman Fletcher Heath (.337) and outfielder John Coakley (.320) to Mooresville for pitcher Joe Dobson, infielder Jordan and \$800 in cash ... two days later, Heath is named to the North Carolina State League all-star team.

July 25

Gawry allows only two runs on nine hits but is out-dued by Lexington's Tony Foti, who picks up his 14th win with a two-hitter in a 2-0 win over Hickory.

July 28

Thomasville, with Jimmy Gruzdis, the league's leading hitter back in the lineup, top visiting Hickory 6-2 ... Gruzdis, who had left the team to accept a government job, collects two hits in the win ... Kannapolis native "Shade" Honeycutt is released to make room for Gruzdis' return.

July 29

Duke alumnus Bob Weaver allows seven hits and strikes out two as Hickory beats Statesville 7-2, improving its record to 18-54 ... the win will be the last of the season for the Rebels.

August 4

Pitcher "Lucky Luther" Smith sold to the Landis Millers for \$300.

August 23

Landis' George Wright is 5-for-5 as the Senators pound out 19 hits in a 7-3 win over Hickory that extends the Rebels losing streak to 20 in a row.

August 27

Despite being out-hit 11-9 and making four errors, Lexington defeats Hickory 6-1 in game highlighted by Brooklyn Dodger Hennie Groh, who umpires the game when the assigned umpire fails to show.

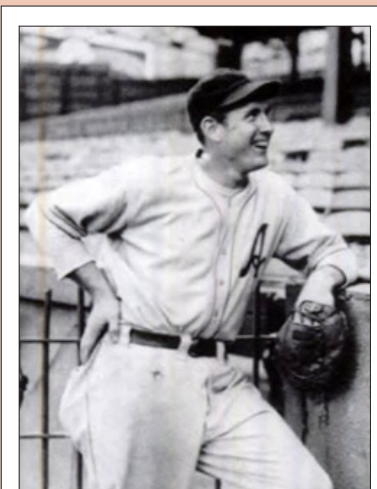
September 2

Arthur S. Mowrey, one of three owners of the Salisbury Pirates, dies at a local hospital after mistakingly drinking from a bottle containing commercial insect poison ... after



John Pavoris

Eighteen-year-old Detroit native and Michigan State product John Pavoris will play for three teams in 1942 - the Fulton Tigers, Winston-Salem Twins and Hickory. While playing third base for Fulton, Pavoris has his "one shining moment" when after fielding a slow grounder and while standing up, his cap flies off his head and his throw goes into the cap. The cap and ball go over the pitcher's head and land halfway between the mound and first base. With the umpire and first baseman not knowing where to look, the two runners that were on base both score before Pavoris runs across the diamond to retrieve the ball.



Pinky James

Thirty-one-year-old Norman "Pinky" James is hitting .387 on July 22, when he earns honorable mention recognition for the North Carolina State League all-star team. A former All-State high school football player at Hickory High School and a All-Southern end for Duke University, James will collect only five more hits for the Rebels before being sidelined in early August.

1942 Hickory Rebels [4 of 4]:

realizing his mistake, Mowrey dries to the hospital and tells the attendants "I'm poisoned," before collapsing.

August 29

Hickory loses 23-0 to the Thomasville Tommies on the final day of the 1942 season and extends its season-ending losing streak to 26-in-a-row ... shortstop-turned-slabster Richard Conahan has a complete game for the Rebels, allowing 23 runs on 20 hits, 10 base on balls and five errors, including three by third baseman Guy Warlick.

1942 Hickory Rebels

James Abdella
Bo Akin
Charles Alexander
Arndt
Thurman Barnes
Joseph Basile
Charles Beck
Harry Boggs
Bowery
Paul Burris
Raymond Camp
John Carr
Stewart Chester
John Coakley
Richard Conahan
William Demchuk
Edwin Flack
Carlos Gallena
Pete Gouger
Fletcher Heath
Densil "Shade" Honeycutt
Norman James
J. Johnson
Dock Kanupp
Howard Kirby
William Kreuger
George Leckrone
Robert McDonald
Vincent Mello
Bill Morgan
Frank Mormino
John Mozie
Joseph Mundy
Webb Newsome
John Pavoris
John Potts
Charles Reeder
Reinhardt
Hubert Roberts
Arthur Scalli
William Scarborough
William Seigler
Bower Senert
Thomas Sezna
Bud Shaney
Ellis Simpson
Luther Smith
Lewis Solomon
Stevens
Hubert Urban
Ernest Utz
Guy Warlick
Bob Weaver
Charles Whitaker

Pete Gouger

North Adams Massachusetts, native Pete Gouger leaves the Rebels after only a couple of games in mid-June complaining of the heat in North Carolina. An All-Berkshire Country third baseman for Drury High School in 1941, Gouger enlists in the Army Air Force. A B-25 bomber navigator, Gouger is shot down over Germany on February 25, 1944 and is a prisoner of war for 15 months before being liberated from a prisoner of war camp in May of 1945. Following the war he attends Holy Cross University.

Webb Newsome

The 1934 football team captain of the Elon Fighting Christian, Newsome is a three-time All-Carolinas Conference quarterback. A native of Salisbury, Newsome is named to the school's Hall of Fame in 1975.

Hubert Urban

Released by the Rebels in late May, Hubert Urban signs with the Kingsport Dodgers of the Appalachian (D) League where on June 15 he pitches a no-hitter against Johnson City.



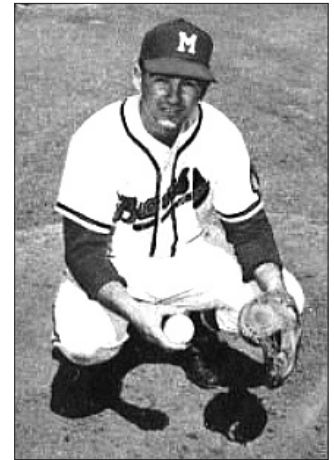
Jimmy Gruzdis

Thomasville player-manager Jimmy Gruzdis leads all of organized baseball in 1942 with his .418 batting average. The Minersville, Pennsylvania native will play 15 minor league seasons finishing in 1953 with the High Point-Thomasville Hi Toms of the Tar Heel (D) League.



Fletcher Heath

"Bound for the big leagues," says Shoeless Joe Jackson of the youthful Heath, who in 1932, is splitting playing for both the Renfrew Mill team and the Greenville Spinners while still attending Georgia Military College.



Paul Burris

Eighteen-year-old Paul Burris makes his pro baseball debut with Hickory on May 14, 1942, allowing two runs on three hits as a pitcher in a 7-4 loss to Landis. Despite hitting only .184 in 75 games for the Rebels, Burris gets promoted to the Durham Bulls at season's end. A native of Hickory, the 6-0, 190-pound catcher will play parts of four seasons with the Brooklyn Dodgers and the Milwaukee Braves.

One Who Didn't Come Back



Pete Viselli

On December 12, 1941, only five days after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, former Landis Senators' shortsop Armando "Pete" Viselli is the first former professional baseball player to be killed fighting the Japanese when his B-18 bomber leaves Clark Field on the island of Luzon in the Philippines and is never seen again. Fresh from his first military tour, the Ansonia, Connecticut, native begins his pro career with the Palestine Pals of the East Texas (C) League. After hitting only .206 with the Pals, Viselli is sent to the Landa Pandas on May 10 where he goes hitless in six at bats. In 24 games with Landis, Viselli collects 19 hits over 96 at bats for a .198 batting average.