

Cups of Coffee: Jimmy Wacker

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"I've pitched against Jimmy and know him from the ground up, and although I would like to see him make good, I believe that after a cup of coffee with the Reds, he will be ready for another season in the Central."
 -- Harry Hammond, 1908

Pittsburgh Pirates' left-hander Jimmy Wacker makes his major league debut against the St. Louis Cardinals on April 28, 1909. The 25-year-old Jeffersonville, Indiana native allows two unearned runs on two hits and a walk in two innings of work. Errors by third baseman Tommy Leach and first baseman Bill Abstein allow the Red Birds to plate two runs in eighth inning. The following morning, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reports, "The crowd got after him from the first, but Wacker demonstrated at least one faculty of a first-class ball player. He kept his head and listened to the coaching (Honus) Wagner was shouting at him from the short field."

WACKER MAKES HIS FIRST BOW
 Pitches Two Innings and Two Runs Are Scored Against Him by Bresnahan's Crowd.



Jimmy Wacker
 1907 Evansville River Rats

Those two Wednesday afternoon innings mark Wacker's lone appearance in the major leagues. Three weeks later on May 19, the Pirates sell Wacker to the American Association's Milwaukee Brewers.

April 28, 1909
 Pittsburgh Pirates at St. Louis Cardinals
 Robison Field, St. Louis, Missouri

ST. LOUIS	AB	R	H	O	A	E
Byrne, 1b	4	2	3	3	3	0
Shaw, c. f.	4	1	2	3	1	0
Phelps, c.	3	0	1	3	1	0
Konetchy, 1b	4	0	1	12	2	0
Evans, r. f.	3	0	1	1	0	0
Hills, l. f.	2	0	0	2	1	1
Charles, 2b	2	0	1	2	4	0
Casteen, ss	4	1	1	2	0	0
Boebe, p.	3	0	0	1	3	1
Totals	29	4	13	27	15	3
PITTSBURGH	AB	R	H	O	A	E
W. Miller, c. f.	2	0	0	2	0	0
Leach, 1b	3	0	1	1	2	0
Clarke, l. f.	3	0	1	1	0	1
Wacker, ss	3	1	0	4	5	1
Abstein, 1b	4	0	0	11	1	1
J. Miller, 2b	3	1	1	1	2	0
Wilson, r. f.	2	0	0	0	0	0
Gibson, c.	3	0	1	1	4	0
Maddox, p.	1	0	0	0	1	0
Leifield, p.	1	0	0	0	1	1
Wacker, p.	1	0	0	0	1	0
*Hyatt	1	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	31	2	6	24	17	3

*Batted for Wacker in ninth.

SCORE BY INNINGS.

Club	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Pittsburgh	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
St. Louis	1	0	2	0	0	2	0	2	8

Two-base hits—Byrne, Charles. Sacrifice hits—Phelps, J. Miller, Charles (2). Sacrifice fly—Boebe. Double plays—Boebe, Charles, Konetchy and Byrne; Abstein, Wagner and Abstein. Passed ball—Gibson. Stolen bases—Leach (2). Wagner, Wilson. First base on balls—Off Boebe, 5; off Leifield, 1; off Maddox, 1; off Wacker, 1. Struck out—By Boebe, 2; by Leifield, 1. Pitching record—Off Maddox, 7 hits and 3 runs in three innings; off Leifield, 4 hits and 3 runs in three innings; off Wacker, 2 hits and 2 runs in two innings. Left on bases—St. Louis, 4; Pittsburgh, 8. Time of game—1:28.00. Umpires—O'Day and Emslie.

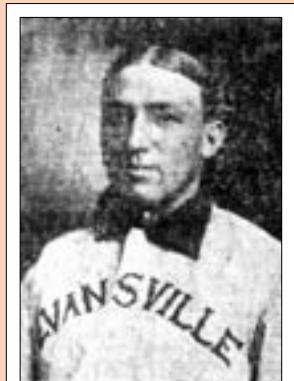
Two years later, Wacker's once-promising diamond career essentially comes to an unexpected and disappointing end at the ripe old age of 27.

With prohibition not yet in effect and despite being "one of the best left-handers to grace a hill in the Central League," Wacker was never able to stay in shape and is finished in 1911 when Clarence "Punch" Knoll, the manager for most of his minor league career, finally had enough and sent him packing, effectively ending his career.

As the Fort Wayne Daily News opined on April 4, 1913:

"Wacker was one of the best left-hand pitchers the Central League ever had and with any sort of care of himself should have had several years in the majors, but that was not the pattern from which Wacker was cut."

Born on December 8, 1883, Charles James Wacker, after several years playing in local semi-pro leagues, makes his pro debut in 1906 with the Evansville River Rats of the Central (B) League. The 5-foot-9, 155-pound slabster is 17-17 in 282



Charles "Punch" Knoll
 1908 Evansville River Rats

innings over a team-high 38 appearances with the River Rats. His 17 wins and 282 innings rank second to staff ace James Freeman, who finishes third in the league with 22 victories. He allows five-or-fewer hits 11 times.

Jimmy Wacker 1 of 4:

Jimmy Wacker [2 of 4]:

It's reported in late June that the "south-winged" artist has been sold to the Pirates for the tidy sum of \$2,000 (\$58,000 in today's economy), but Evansville team President Jonathan Walker refutes the rumor and Wacker finishes the season in a River Rats uniform.

Following a self-described vigorous off-season program keeping in shape by being a butcher in his hometown of Jeffersonville, Wacker returns to Evansville for a second season in 1907, but slips to 2-5 in an injury-filled campaign featuring a sore left arm and a near-death illness in early June with a ruptured appendicitis.

WACKER IN VERY CRITICAL CONDITION

Undergoes Operation For Appendicitis and Chances For Recovery Are Few

On June 1, when a Dr. Heberer removes his appendix, the physician finds that it had ruptured earlier and the surrounding tissue was in poor state. Heberer says Wacker's chances of recovering are "very slight."

But Wacker does improve, and on June 28 he is strong enough to appear at the local ballpark to see the River Rats play. In late July, he takes his first steps towards returning to the diamond, but while throwing his patent curveball, the movement proves to be too much stress on his surgical wound from the operation and he decides not to return that season.

On August 9, he makes a surprise return to the diamond, allowing two runs on six hits in a 2-1 loss to Terre Haute. Appearing in only a couple of subsequent games, Wacker elects to further hone his craft pitching for New Albany of the semipro Southern Indiana League after the season. Signing a contract for his third year with Evansville in February, Wacker assures veteran manager Punch Knoll that he will drink only "ice water" during the upcoming season. Knoll opines that his star pitcher appears to be more mature and hopefully more responsible.



Jimmy Wacker
1908 Evansville River Rats



Jimmy Wacker
1908 Evansville River Rats

Wacker Sold to Cincinnati.
[Special to The Indianapolis News]
EVANSVILLE, Ind., August 21.—Fitcher "Jimmy" Wacker, regarded by many as one of the best twirlers in the Central League, has been sold to the Cincinnati Reds, according to a telephone message received here this morning from Harry Stahlhefer, president of the Evansville club, who is at Zanesville with the local team. Wacker has been with the Evansville team two years. His home is at New Albany, Ind.

The "Dubois County Demon" (later shortened to simply "Demon") rebounds in a big way in 1908, going 27-8-2 with seven shutouts. During the season he has winning streaks of eight and six games, completes all 37 games he starts, strikes out a league-record 175 batters and allows only 224 hits in a career-high 291 innings. With three days left in the season, Wacker pitches the pennant-clinching game on September 6, shutting out Terre Haute 4-0, as Evansville captures its first-ever pennant, winning the Central League title by four games over the South Bend Greens.

Despite being pursued by the Baltimore Orioles' [Jack Dunn](#) during the season, Evansville eventually sells the league's star hurler to the Cincinnati Reds on August 20 for \$1,000 and following extensive negotiations, Wacker inks a Reds' contract in December.

Wacker is a no-show at Cincinnati's 1909 spring training camp. In addition to missing several games he is also absent for a scheduled start against Pittsburgh before finally arriving in camp 10 days late.

Wacker in Motion

Following his major league debut against St. Louis, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* describes Wacker's pitching motion: "He is a left hander and has a jack-knife delivery. Before throwing the ball he makes two or three passes in the air, then he winds himself up, places his right foot in the air about the top of his head and lets go. Maybe all these gymnastics encourage the ball to do the proper thing. At any rate, when he turns loose of it, it is going towards the plate like a shot. The lad has all sorts of speed and fair control."

The Reds sell the talented portsider to the Milwaukee Brewers of the American Association during spring training for \$1,000 - providing he clears waivers with other National League teams.

The Reds' plan is upset when the Pittsburgh Pirates, coming off a second-place finish in 1908, claim Wacker off of the waiver list four days later. He makes the Pirates' opening day roster, one of only two lefties on the mound staff.

WHERE IS JAMES WACKER, DEMON?

Premier Twirler Again Is Slow to Show Up at Red Camp

The demon twirler by name, James Charles Wacker, who left for Cincinnati Saturday to break into the Red camp and mystify the batters of the National league with the brand of offerings that doomed his enemies in the Central, has failed to make an appearance in that city. He was slated to pitch for Cincinnati against Pittsburgh at Cincinnati Sunday, but did not report for duty. When the team left for the east Sunday night Wacker had not yet been seen and the Redlegs hiked to the east without the demon. Jimmy ought to get a move on him if he intends to satisfy the management of the major club.

Jimmy Wacker [3 of 4]:

Twelve games into the season, the "Dubois County Demon" makes his Pittsburgh debut on April 28, in a 8-2 loss to the St. Louis Cardinals. Allowing two unearned runs on two hits and a walk in two innings of work, it will be Wacker's lone appearance in the major leagues. Removed from the team's active list, Wacker returns to Evansville where it is rumored that the that he may be sent to the Wheeling Stogies. While in Evansville, he adds a spitball to his arsenal of pitches, but wonders if the team will ever let him use it.

Milwaukee Gets Former Evansville Southpaw From Pittsburgh—Still Property of Pirates.

Jimmy Wacker Year by Year:

Year	Team	League	Level	W-L	GP	INN	H	BB	SO	ERA	
1904	Jeffersonville	Indiana	SPro	-	-	-	-	-	-	--	
1905	Huntingburg Babies	Southern Indiana	SPro	-	-	-	-	-	-	--	
	New Albany Glenwoods	Southern Indiana	SPro	-	-	-	-	-	-	--	
1906	Evansville River Rats	Central	B	17-17	38	282.0	237	81	-	--	
1907	Evansville River Rats	Central	B	2-5	-	-	-	-	-	--	
	Marion Patriots	Southern Indiana	SPro	-	-	-	-	-	-	--	
1908	Evansville River Rats	Central	B	27-8-2	37	291.0	224	73	175	--	
1909	Pittsburgh Pirates	NATIONAL	MLB	0-0	1	2.0	2	1	0	0.00	
1909	Milwaukee Brewers	American Associaton	A	7-7-3	25	153.0	140	36	65	--	
1910	Dayton Veterans	Central	B	12-9	28	210.0	170	60	-	--	
1911	2 Teams	Central	B	13-13	26	203.0	210	67	-	--	
	Dayton Veterans	Central	B	8-6	-	-	-	-	-	--	
	Fort Wayne Brakies	Central	B	5-7	-	-	-	-	-	--	
1912	Mt. Vernon (Indiana)	Ohio Valley	SPro	1-1	2	12.0	8	7	14	--	
	Evansville Goldblumes	Southern Indiana	Spro	-	-	-	-	-	-	--	
1913	Springfield Ponies	Eastern	B	0-0	1	2	2	1	1	--	
Major League Totals				1 Season	0-0	1	2.0	2	1	0	0.00
Minor League Totals				6 Seasons	78-59-5	155	1,141.0	983	318	241	--

ML Debut & Finale: April 28, 1909 at Robison Field, St. Louis: relieved Lefty Leifield at the start of the bottom of the 7th inning in a 8-2 loss to the St. Louis Cardinals; pitched two innings, allowing two unearned runs on two hits and one base on balls.

On May 19, Pittsburgh eventually sells Wacker to the ever-persistent Milwaukee Brewers for an unnamed amount, but the Pirates insist on retaining his rights and he is subject to recall. With the Brewers, Wacker is 7-7 with three ties over 25 appearances, including 17 starts.

WACKER FANNED THIRTEEN
Milwaukee, Aug. 16.—Milwaukee and Columbus played 14 innings to a tie this afternoon. The game was a pitchers' duel between Wacker and Geyer, with honors about even. Wacker struck out 13 men. The score:
Innings— R. H. E.
Milwauk 00000000000000—0 5 4
Columb's 00000000000000—0 4 1
Batteries—Wacker and Warner; Geyer and James. Two-base hit—Strunk. Struck out—By Wacker 13, by Geyer 4. Time—1:46. Umpires—Guthrie and Sullivan.

In back-to-back games on August 16 (T 0-0) and August 20 (W 4-1), against Rube Geyer and the Columbus Senators, Wacker allows one run on 13 hits with 20 strikeouts in 24 innings.

The calendar barely flips over into 1910 when in mid-January, it's reported that Wacker is on the "outs" with the Brewers after the team sends him a contract calling for a \$50 cut in salary. Sending the contract back unsigned, he says that he doesn't care much about playing in Milwaukee and has already asked the team to release him.

Returning to Evansville, he takes a job pitching hops and such for the Cook Brewing Company - probably not a good idea.

On January 30, the Brewers grant the 26-year-old his wish and sell him to the Dayton Veterans for \$650 and is reunited with his old Evansville manager Punch Knoll. At first, things go swimmingly for Wacker and the Veterans, but during the second week in July he suffers a broken rib after being hit by

a throw by a teammate. He finishes 12-9 with one shutout in 28 appearances.

October 10, 1909

Horse Swallowed Ball As Knoll Made Circuit

Evansville Talent Was Whole Cheese—Wacker Struck Out 17—Fifteen-Year-Old Boy Is a Comer.

When Jimmy Wacker started for just a brief instant in yesterday's game between Mt. Vernon and McLansburg at the pocket city. While contemplating the advisability of building a fire in the grate at home after supper, the Merchants from Illinois slipped over a lead of one run in the fourth inning.
A minute later Punch Knoll lumbered the sphere to left. A horse grazing along the left field fence took the ball for a hole of hay and swallowed the Yankee's offering. Of course, the ball couldn't be batted, so Knoll ceased striving to prevail as he completed the circuit.
The next inning left by Criswell and Knoll and Brady's two-bagger sewed up the game. Four runs were scored by the home team in the sixth.

Wacker shows up in Dayton's 1911 spring training camp having discarded most of the "extra flesh" he had put on last season. However, he is one of three Dayton players left behind on the team's first road trip because "his stuff is weak."

However, Wacker does pitch well for the Veterans and is 8-6 when on July 19, he is acquired by Fort Wayne after Dayton manager Punch Knoll says he wants only one southpaw (Rudy Sommers) on his pitching staff. Wacker's final appearance in the Central League comes on September 10, when he pitches a complete game 20-hitter in a 10-7 loss at Grand Rapids. The loss evens his record at 13-13 for the season.



Jimmy Wacker
1907 Evansville River Rats

JIMMY WACKER MAY BE RELEASED AS HIS STUFF IS WEAK

Jimmy Wacker [4 of 4]:

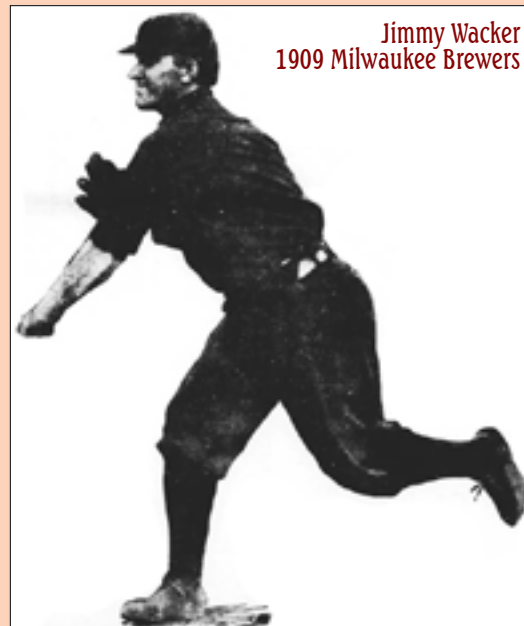
On November 21, Dayton trades Wacker to the Springfield Ponies of the Connecticut State (B) League in exchange for pitcher [Ralph Christopher](#) who was 24-19 in two seasons with the Ponies. Wacker doesn't like the salary offered by the Ponies and turns down their invitation to come North.

Unable to attract any offers from minor league teams in 1912, Wacker signs with the Mt. Vernon (Indiana) team in the semipro Ohio Valley League. He debuts in the OVC on April 28, with a two-hit, nine-strikeout shutout of Boonville. Following a less-than-successful appearance in a 10-3 loss to the Evansville Valley Leaguers on May 19, Wacker and teammate Edward Peeler quit the team four days later. Wacker later plays for the Evansville Goldblumes, one of the best semipro teams in Indiana.



Jimmy Wacker
1911 Dayton Veterans

**'DEMON' JIM WACKER
THREATENS TO QUIT
ORGANIZED RANKS**



Jimmy Wacker
1909 Milwaukee Brewers

Reunited with Punch Knoll at Evansville during the team's spring training in 1913, Wacker spends most of the spring in preparation to reporting to the Springfield Ponies two years after being traded there. By mid-April, he still hasn't heard anything from the Ponies. According to the *Springfield Union*, the Springfield management hasn't heard from Wacker. His transportation money already 10 days late, finally arrives and he leaves for Massachusetts on April 20.

Two days later, in an exhibition game against Worcester, "Charlie" Wacker allows one run on three hits in three innings in a 5-1 win. After appearing in one regular season game with the Ponies, Wacker "secures his release," and makes his way back home to Indiana and the Cook Brewing Company.

In 1922, he leaves his job with the brewing company to take a position in the Evansville stock yard, where he pitches hay to the cattle until the spring of 1925. That spring, the Igleheart Brothers Milling Company decide to field their first-ever baseball team, so they hire the 42-year-old Wacker to work in the warehouse so he can pitch sacks of flour Monday through Friday and baseballs for the company team on Saturdays.

Later employed at [Bosse Field](#), Wacker passes away on August 7, 1948, in Evansville at the age of 64.

Former Southpaw Jimmy Wacker Succumbs At 63

James Charles Wacker, 63, winning left-handed pitcher for Evansville's first Central league championship team in 1908, died at 6:40 o'clock last night at Welborn Baptist hospital.

He lived at 1201 Baker avenue and was employed for a number of years at Bosse field.

He is survived by two sons, Willard and John, of Evansville. The body has been taken to the Ziemer funeral home. Funeral arrangements have not been completed.