

# June 15, 1902 "Casketmakers as Good as Buried"

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On June 15, 1902, the Corsicana Oil Citys defeat the Texarkana Casketmakers 51-3 in a Texas League game highlighted by a record-breaking eight home run performance by Oil Citys catcher Jay Justin "Nig" Clarke. Some telegraph operators, thinking that there was a mistake, report the score as 5-3.

Jay Justin "Nig" Clarke



Once voted the second most famous feat in minor league history, Clarke's eight home runs that afternoon in Ennis came under scrutiny almost immediately. However 14 years later, noted Texas League historian William Ruggles says the eight home runs were accurate and that he had a sworn affidavit from the game's official scorer. Six years later, on October 2, 1908, Clarke is behind the plate for the Cleveland Naps when Hall of Famer Addie Joss throws the fourth perfect game in major history.

The game, originally scheduled to be played in Corsicana, is moved to Ennis to avoid breaking the Blue Laws that prohibits the playing of baseball on Sunday.

Taking advantage of the park's short right field fence that reportedly measures only 210 feet, the 19-year-old Clarke is 8-for-8 and drives in 16 runs. However, even the 210-foot measurement may be an exaggeration as a section of bleachers from the first base side extends across right field.

And then there is this.

In an interview carried in the February 29, 1940, edition of *The Sporting News*, Corsicana shortstop Walter Morris is quoted as saying: "The right field fence at Ennis wasn't more than 40 feet back of first base. Nig just pulled eight short flies around and over that wall."

Corsicana pounds out 53 hits, 29 for extra bases, including 21 home runs. Clarke, left fielder Isaac Pendleton and second baseman Alec Alexander each have eight hits to lead the Oil City attack. And, despite the 62 combined hits and 54 runs, the box score lists the game as taking only 2:10 to play.

With the win, Corsicana improves to a league-best 38-8, while Texarkana drops to 18-31. The Oil Citys go on win the Texas League championship with a 86-22 record, finishing a full 28 1/2 games ahead of the second-place Dallas Griffins.

And who exactly is Texarkana's Charley DeWitt, the unfortunate soul who may be the only pitcher in professional baseball history to pitch a 53-hit complete game?

According to Morris, he was the son of C.B. DeWitt, a local business man, who, along Fred Ball, were in the process of buying the team from player/manager/owner Cy Malkey.

Morris remembers:

"Just before the affair started, a strapping youngster sought out Mulkey (sic) in the ballpark at Ennis and told him he was owner DeWitt's son and had been sent by his father to pitch that day's game. That made old Cy pretty sore, but he started the young fellow on the mound anyhow. We made seven and eight runs an inning for

## ENNIS GAME UNIQUE

BROKE THE TEXAS RECORD FOR NUMBER OF RUNS MADE AND WORLD'S BATTING RECORD.

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS.

Corsicana, Tex., June 16.—Yesterday's game of baseball at Ennis, in which the Oil City team defeated Texarkana by a score of 51 to 3, was, in some respects, the most remarkable game ever played. It broke a record for the Texas League in point of runs, and Clark of Corsicana broke the world's record in batting, making eight runs, three of them home-runs, and eighteen bases out of eight times at the bat. Previous to this time Napoleon Lafolie held this record, having made six runs and seventeen bases out of six times at the bat. It is also believed to have been a record-breaker in home-runs, as sixteen were made.

The official score below will be interesting:

	AB.	R.	BH.	PO.	A.	E.
Corsicana—						
Maloney, c. f.....	6	5	3	5	0	0
Alexander, 2 b.....	8	5	8	4	5	0
Ripley, r. f.....	8	6	5	0	0	0
Pendleton, l. f.....	8	6	8	1	2	0
Markley, 3 b.....	7	7	6	3	4	0
O'Connor, 1 b.....	8	7	7	8	0	0
Clark, c.....	8	8	8	3	1	0
Morris, ss.....	8	6	6	3	4	0
Wright, p.....	4	1	2	0	2	0

Totals .....	65	51	53	27	18	0
Texarkana—						
Deskin, c. f.....	5	1	2	6	1	0
Mulkey, 2 b.....	4	0	1	0	2	1
Welter, 3 b.....	4	0	1	2	2	2
Wolfe, c.....	4	1	1	2	2	0
Murphy, l. f.....	4	0	1	3	1	0
DeWitt, p.....	3	0	1	0	2	0
Tackaberry 1 b.....	4	1	1	9	0	0
Gillon, r. f.....	4	0	1	1	0	0
Burns, ss.....	4	0	0	4	3	2

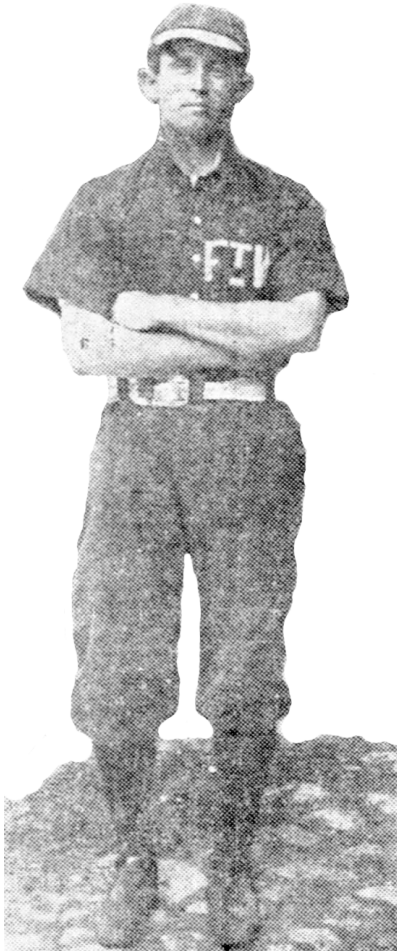
Totals .....	36	3	9	27	13	5
By innings:						
Corsicana .....	6	2	9	2	7	5
Texarkana .....	0	1	0	0	0	0

Summary—Earned runs, Corsicana 26, Texarkana 1; stolen bases, Maloney, Alexander, Morris, Clark, Ripley; two-base hits, Morris, Alexander, Maloney, Pendleton, Deskin, Tackaberry, Welter; three-base hits, Markley, O'Connor; home-runs, Maloney, Alexander 3, Ripley 2, Pendleton 2, Markley, O'Connor 3, Clark 3, Morris; double plays, Morris to Alexander to O'Connor, Alexander to Morris to O'Connor, Markley to Alexander to O'Connor, Morris to Alexander, Burns to Tackaberry; bases on balls, off Wright 1, off DeWitt 3; hit by pitched ball, by DeWitt 3; struck out, by Wright 2, by DeWitt 1; left on bases, Corsicana 5, Texarkana 15; time of game, 2 hours and 10 minutes; umpires, Method and Cavender.

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several frames. After each inning, Mulkey would walk by me and whisper 'So, his old man sent him down to pitch today. Well, he's damn sure pitching.'

### William "Lucky" Wright



Corsicana lefthanded pitcher William "Lucky" Wright leads all Texas League pitchers with a 35-8 mark and 43 complete games. Wright is 1-4 with the Oil Citys the following year before being sold to San Antonio in late May. Wright compiles an 18-12 mark splitting time with San Antonio, Beaumont and then San Antonio a second time. Following the 1903 season, Wright's career looks like a road map - San Antonio (1904), Galveston (1904), New Orleans (1905), San Antonio (1906), Denton (semi-pro) Athletics (1906), Fort Worth (1908), Hot Springs (1909), Memphis (1909) and Laredo (1911). In addition to working as an umpire in the Lone Star State, Wright is unable to play in 1907 after suffering an accident at the I&G&N Railroad yard in Palestine, Texas.

DeWitt goes the "route" for the Casketmakers, allowing 51 runs (26 earned) on 53 hits while striking out one and walking three. There is no record of DeWitt pitching again in professional baseball.

Corsicana wins both halves of the 1902 Texas League race, finishing with an overall record of 86-22 (.796). Michael O'Connor's pitching staff features three 20-game winners, including William "Lucky" Wright (left) who leads the league with a 35-8 mark, followed by Monte Method (28-6) and Bobby White (20-6).

Oil City pitchers complete all 108 of the team's games played. Three members of the Oil Citys go on to play in the Major Leagues - Hunter Hill, a late-season pick-up, plays for the St. Louis Browns and the Washington Senators from 1903 to 1905.

Shortstop Walter Morris hits .178 for the St. Louis Browns in 1908, and later becomes President of the Texas League.

Clarke, DeWitt's main nemesis that Sunday afternoon, is one of the first Canadian players to have an extended major league career. The Amherstburg, Ontario, native will have a nine-year major league career with the Cleveland Naps (1905-1910), Detroit Tigers, (1905), St. Louis Browns (1911), Philadelphia Phillies (1919) and the Pittsburgh Pirates (1920).

On June 15, 1949, Clarke dies at the age of 66, on the 47th anniversary of his record-setting game.

Founded in 1848 and named after the island of Corsica, Corsicana is where oil is first discovered west of the Mississippi and in 1900, has a population of 9,313.

### Morris Tells of Game in Which Owner's Son Took 51 to 3 Beating

**F**ORT WORTH, Tex.—The National pastime is a business in which the club operator's son can't pick a soft spot and ride over the rank and file; it's ability alone, as many have found, that counts on the diamond. This was further emphasized by a story of a game, related by J. Walter Morris, business manager of the Fort Worth club of the Texas League, played just after the turn of the century. The now partly Morris was the ace shortstop of the Corsicana club of the old Texas League, which in 1902 established a world's record of 27 consecutive victories and won 58 of its first 67 games.

The contest to which Walter referred was between Corsicana and Texarkana, the score of which was 51 to 3 for Corsicana. This was the game in which Nig Clarke, Corsicana catcher, hit eight home runs in eight trips to the plate.

"It seems that the Texarkana club had just been sold the day before to C. B. DeWitt," Morris recalls. "The game had been transferred to Ennis on a Sunday. Just before the weird affair started, a strapping youngster sought out Cy Mulkey, manager of the Texarkana team, in the ball park at Ennis and told him he was Owner DeWitt's son and had been sent by his father to pitch that day's game.

"That made old Cy pretty sore, but he started the young fellow on the mound anyhow.

"The game rolled along and we (the Corsicans) made seven and eight runs an inning for several frames. After each inning, Mulkey would walk by me and whisper, 'So, his old man sent him down to pitch today. Well, he's damn sure pitchin'."

"Believe it or not, Mulkey let the boy stay the full route and he took the worst licking of any pitcher in the history of the game."

Morris explained why Clarke swatted that octette of four-baggers in as many times at bat.

"The right field fence at Ennis wasn't more than 40 feet back of first base," Walter says. "Nig just pulled eight short flies around and over that wall. Of course, I'm not taking anything away from old Nig's batting prowess—he was one of the best hitters I ever saw. But that's the way he hit eight homers that day. Didn't have to send the ball more than 140 feet, at the most." **ZEKE HANDLER.**

### 1902 Corsicana Oil Citys

