

Pinch Hits, "Oliver Faulkner & His World Record"

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During the summer of 1903, 26-year-old Oliver Faulkner sets what is called a "world record" by pitching 77 consecutive scoreless innings for the Wilmington (Delaware) Athletic Club.

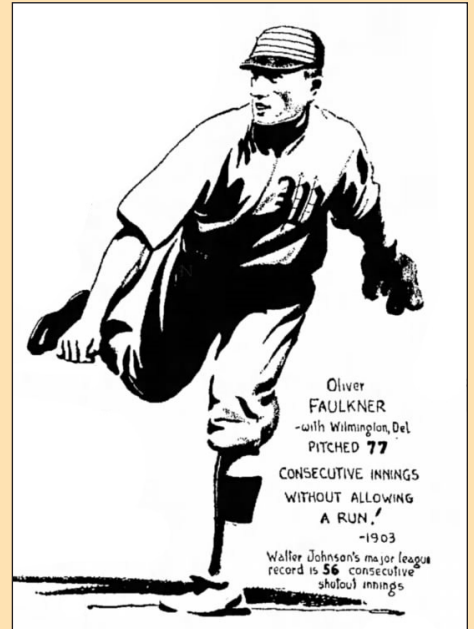


Oliver Faulkner
1901 Boston Beaneaters

Despite pitching for a semipro team, Faulkner's streak is hailed by the media as a record for baseball, eclipsing the standard set by James "Big Jim" Wiggs of the Helena (Montana) Senators of the Pacific Northwest (B) League, who blanked opponents for 44 consecutive innings a year earlier.

For the enigmatic Faulkner, the scoreless streak will be the highlight of a career full of promise but filled with disappointment.

After toiling for semipro teams since 1894, the Hartley, Delaware, native is signed to his first professional baseball contract on March 21, 1901, by the National League's Boston Beaneaters. The 6-foot right-hander, who pitched for the North Attleboro nine in 1900, is considered a talented enough pitcher to be included in the Beaneaters pre-season team photograph (left).



Unfortunately for the Beaneaters and their manager Frank Selee, Faulkner finds practice "too irksome" and is quickly sent to nearby Worcester of the Eastern (A) League to begin the season. Faulkner never takes the mound for the Farmers, telling manager Malachi Kittridge that he is ill and returns home to Delaware.

A year later Faulkner is pitching for an independent team in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, for \$400 per month, when he is signed by Detroit Tigers' manager Frank Dwyer for \$2,000 in early August. Dwyer travels to Woonsocket and brings Faulkner to Boston where the last place Tigers have just completed a two game series with the with the Red Sox.

While Dwyer, the coaches and players are waiting for the train to Baltimore, Faulkner excuses himself, and no one with the Tiger organization will see him again.

Following still another illness, Faulkner joins the Wilmington Athletic Club in 1903 and sets his "world record".

Faulkner reemerges onto the professional baseball scene in 1904, signing with the Eastern League's Rochester Bronchos. His signing is protested by the Tigers and heralded by *The Buffalo Express*:

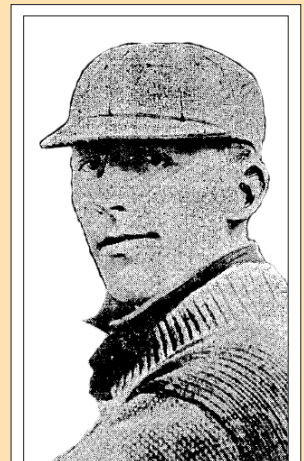
"He is a giant in stature has all of the curves of the experienced pitcher, and it is expected that he will be one of the sensations of the year on the slab."

Faulkner wins six and loses 13 while striking out 94 and walking 62 for a Rochester team that finishes last place in the Eastern League with a 28-105 mark.

A year later (1905), Faulkner is 11-18 for the Bronchos and is the team's highest salaried player when he is released by manager Al Buckenberger who considers the eccentric one a source of annoyance because of his failure to "keep in condition".

Faulkner will pitch two more seasons in the minors, splitting time between Rochester and Baltimore in 1906 and finishing 1-3 for the Wilmington Peaches of the Tri-State (B) League in 1907.

On May 13, 1956, Faulkner dies at the age of 83 in Hartley, Delaware.



One of three major leaguers born in Norway, 6-foot-4 Jimmy Wiggs is 3-4 with a 3.81 ERA in parts of three seasons in the majors ... in nine minor league seasons Wiggs wins 20-or-more games in 1903, 1904 and 1911, with a career-best 23 victories with three teams in 1903.