

Pinch Hits, "Jesse Batterton, Gone too Soon"

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On July 3, 1933, a little more than 24 hours after having his skull fractured from a pitch thrown by Omaha Packers right-hander Floyd "Swede" Carlson, Springfield Cardinals' second baseman Jesse "Hot Potato" Batterton passes away at St. Joseph's Hospital in Omaha following unsuccessful surgery earlier that morning.

A native of La Puente, California, the 19-year-old St. Louis farmhand is hitting .302 with eight doubles, four triples and one home run when he is hit in the top of the second inning during the second game of a Western (A) League doubleheader at Omaha's Vinton Street Park.

After a moment's rest, Batterton gets up and walks to the clubhouse telling fellow players that he is not hurt badly and will "be all right after a rest."

Initially Batterton wants to leave Omaha with his teammates but Omaha team doctor J.F. Schleier admits him to St. Joseph's hospital where his condition worsens and he lapses into unconsciousness.

Springfield manager Joe Schultz tells Batterton to go to the hospital and follow later by train when released. Sadly there will be no rejoining the team for the prized Cardinal farmhand as further examination reveals that in addition to a skull fracture he has suffered a cerebral hemorrhage.



Jesse Batterton
1932 Greensboro Patriots

At Batterton's bedside throughout the night, a distraught Carlson reportedly shouts "I'm sorry, I'm sorry," when the doctors eventually give up hope for his recovery. A verdict of accidental death is determined at a hastily convened inquest and Carlson is cleared by acting Omaha Coroner Paul Steainwender.

Batterton, in his second year of professional baseball, is considered by Cardinals General Manager Branch Rickey and chief scout Charles Barrett as one of the more promising prospects in the team's vaunted farm system.

Signed off of the sandlots of Los Angeles as an 18-year-old in the summer of 1931, Batterton's obvious talent convinces Rickey to assign him to the Mobile (Ala.) Red Warriors of the Southeastern (B) League.

However his stay with the Red Warriors lasts all of four days in spring training when on March 29, Rickey and Parrott drive Batterton (by automobile) to Dallas where he is to finish spring training with the Columbus Red Birds of the American (AA) Association.

Meanwhile, Rochester Red Wings manager Billy Southworth informs Rickey that he wants Batterton for his club and another unnamed team offers the Cardinals \$2,500 for Batterton's services.

Batterton's reputation is such that when he is assigned to the Red Wings a Columbus newspaper runs a banner headline announcing his arrival: "Rickey Headed Towards Columbus with a Hot Potato."

Quite a heady start for an 18-year-old.

July 2, 1933
Springfield Cardinals vs. Omaha Packers
Vinton Street Park, Omaha, Nebraska

Spr'g'd.	AB.	H.	O.	A.	Omaha	AB.	H.	O.	A.
Patton.cf	4	3	2	0	M'M'h'n.ss	3	0	1	4
Barton.1b	3	1	1	0	Jelen.2b	3	2	1	0
Keane.ss	3	1	1	1	Kelly.cf	3	0	0	0
Bremer.c	3	0	5	1	Tutaj.3b	3	2	3	3
Ch's.lf-2b	3	1	0	0	Doerr.c	3	0	2	0
How'd.cf	4	1	1	0	Knox.lf	3	2	7	1
Batt'n.2b	0	0	0	0	Edw'ds.rf	4	1	1	0
Ryha.lf	2	1	1	0	Larson.1b	3	0	6	0
Lick.3b	2	0	1	1	Carlsen.p	2	0	0	1
Baker.p	3	2	0	2					
Totals	27	9	21	5	Totals	27	7	21	9

Score by innings:
Springfield 010 600 0—7
Omaha 012 000 0—3

Summary—Errors, Keane, Jelen: two base hits, Keane, Howard, Jelen; sacrifices, Tutaj, Lick; hit by pitcher, by Carlsen (Batterton), Baker (Kelly); bases on balls, off Baker 5, Carlsen 2; struck out, by Carlsen 2, Baker 5; left on bases, Springfield 5, Omaha 10. Umpires, Ohlinger and Rapp. Time, 1:25.

Jesse Batterton [2 of 2]:

On April 6, a mere 13 days after arriving in Mobile by train from Los Angeles, Batterton debuts for the Red Birds in an exhibition game against the Cincinnati Reds. Pinch hitting for pitcher Bill Lee in the seventh inning, Batterton is hitless in his one at bat against 37-year-old veteran Ray Colp.

On April 15, Batterton's stay with the Red Birds comes to a close when he is sent back to Mobile to begin the season.

Batterton hits his first minor league home run on May 8, in Mobile's 15-4 win over the Selma Cloverleads in the second game of a doubleheader.

Batterton is hitting .232 in 31 games for the first place Red Warriors when late on the afternoon of May 18, the financially troubled six-team Southeastern League calls it quits and ceases play immediately.



Jesse Batterton
1932 Greensboro Patriots

On May 26, Batterton reports to the Greensboro (N.C.) Patriots of the highly competitive Piedmont (B) League where he hits a solid .269 and shows some power with 21 doubles, five triples and two home runs in 104 games for the eventual league champion Patriots.

Batterton's body is shipped by train back to his native Los Angeles where he is buried on July 7.

One month after Batterton is laid to rest, Carlson is released by Omaha on August 7 and signs with the Des Moines Demons where he ends his career that September.



Floyd "Swede" Carlson
Carlson, a right-hander of note among Omaha amateur baseball circles, fields offers from several big league teams including the Cardinals, Reds and Cubs, but turns them down because he can earn as much as \$12 a day as an expert bricklayer, no mean feat during the country's Great Depression which started in 1929 ... Carlson figures he will stay in the bricklaying business until a team can offer him more in salary ... Carlson eventually signs with the local Omaha Packers and is 12-12 in his rookie season of 1930 ... in four minor league seasons, Carlson throws for 200 innings or more three times and is 43-47 ... following his release by the Packers on August 7, one month after Batterton's death, Carlson quickly signs with the Des Moines Demons and wins three games before finishing his career that September.