

Bob Fesler, "The Atomic Pitch"

©DiamondsintheDusk.com

Softballer Bob Fesler Wild; Seals Beat Rainiers Twice

With 55 career softball no-hitters to his credit, 25-year-old Bob Fesler, armed with his "Atomic Pitch" curveball, makes a much publicized professional baseball debut for the first-place Seattle Rainiers on August 10, 1955 ... 13,999 fans make their way into Seattle's Sicks Stadium to watch the highly-acclaimed pitcher start the first game of a doubleheader with the seventh-place San Francisco Seals.

Suds Sign Hurler With 'Atomic Pitch'

Earlier (July 28), pitching from a 46-foot distance used in softball, Fesler strikes out all 11 batters selected from

the rosters of the Sacramento Salons and Rainiers (nine of them starters) ... signing a Rainier contract on August 8, accolades for the underhanded hurler are effusive:

Dewey Soriano, Seattle General Manager:
"Fesler is amazing. Every pitch he throws does something - none of his pitches is straight or 'true'. He really has great stuff."

Fred Hutchinson, Seattle Manager
"It's not a publicity stunt. I think Fesler has an excellent chance in organized baseball."



BOB FESLER

Unfortunately for Soriano and Hutchinson, Fesler's debut fails to match the pre-game hype ... after striking out second baseman Jimmy Moran on three pitches to start the game, Fesler loses sight of the strike zone, allowing five runs on two hits, five walks, two wild pitches and a balk before yielding to John Oldham who shuts down the Seals for the remainder of the game.

Hutchinson takes another look at Fesler in the nightcap ... entering the game in the eighth inning he doesn't fare that much better, allowing four runs on four hits, four walks, a hit

batter and two more wild pitches in two innings of relief work in a 13-5 loss.

At the end of his first day as a professional baseball player, the Nampa, Idaho, native leaves the stadium saddled with a 30.37 ERA with nine earned runs allowed in 2 2/3 innings, on nine hits, nine walks, four wild pitches, a hit batter and a balk.

Bob Fesler Debut, August 10, 1955
 Seattle Rainiers vs. San Francisco Seals



UNDERHAND MANNER: Bob Fesler, softball-pitching star making his debut with the Seattle Rainiers last night, slung an underhanded pitch at a San Francisco hit-

ter. Fesler walked five and yielded two hits —for five runs—in two thirds of an inning. The Rainier catcher was Joe Ginsberg.

Other News for August 10, 1955:

An Air Force captain is arrested for releasing a secret document showing that Jay Lovestone, a former general secretary of the Communist Party is now the executive secretary of the Free Trade Union Committee of the American Federation of Labor ... two US Military C-119 transport planes collide in mid-air over Germany's Black Forest, killing all 66 people on board ... Hoot Evers hits a three-run home run to lead first-place Cleveland past Detroit 3-1.

SAN FRANCISCO				SEATTLE					
	AB	R	H	O	AB	R	H	O	
Moran, 2b	4	0	1	1	Mauro, cf	4	1	1	3
Beard, cf	2	1	0	4	Zerna, 3b	4	1	3	0
Ritchey, c	2	1	0	4	Glynn, 1b	3	0	0	6
Belardi, 1b	4	1	2	6	Ginsberg, o	3	0	1	3
Judnich, rf	3	0	0	1	Balcena, rf	2	0	0	1
Melton, lf	2	1	0	1	Schull, lf	3	1	1	1
Baxes, ss	2	1	1	4	Basgall, 2b	3	0	0	4
Serena, 3b	3	0	1	0	Rignell, ss	2	0	1	3
Bradford, p	2	0	0	0	a-Lombardi	1	0	0	0
					Fesler, p	0	0	0	0
					Oldham, p	2	0	0	0
					b-Zuvela	1	0	0	0

Totals 24 5 5 21; Totals 28 3 7 21

a-Filed out for Rignell in 7th.

b-Grounded out for Oldham in 7th.

San Francisco	500	000	0-5
Seattle	012	000	0-3

F—Melton, Baxes, RBI—Serena 3.
 Belardi, Baxes, Rignell, Zerna, Balcena.
 2B—Serena. 3B—Rignell. S—Beard.
 SF—Balcena. DP—Moran-Baxes-Belardi.
 Left—San Francisco 5, Seattle 5. RB—
 Fesler 5, Oldham 1. SO—Bradford 4.
 Fesler 1, Oldham 1. HO—Bradford 7 in
 7. Fesler 2 in 7½. Oldham 3 in 6½.
 R—Elt—Bradford 3-0. Fesler 5-5. WP
 —Fesler 2. Balk—Fesler. PB—Ginsberg.
 Winner—Bradford (9-4); Loser—Fesler
 (0-1). T—1:51.

Bob Fesler [2 of 2]:

After the game, Hutchinson tells the media that Fesler will stay on the staff, but another starting assignment is not being contemplated ... the Rainier skipper is now a bit more guarded in his opinion of Fesler, "He'll have to learn to get the ball over. They didn't hit him too hard, but the walks killed him."

Bob Fesler 1955 Game by Game:

Date	Opponent	Site	W/L	Score	Inn	R	ER	HT	SO	BB	WP	ERA		
8.10	San Francisco.....	Home	....(L)	3-5	Start	0.2	5	5	5	1	5	2	67.46
8.10	San Francisco.....	Home	.....-	5-13	Relief	2.0	4	4	4	2	4	2	30.37
8.13	Hollywood.....	Home	.....-	1-7	Relief	1.0	1	1	1	0	1	0	25.54
9.11	Los Angeles.....	Home	....(L)	0-9	Start	4.0	4	4	6	4	1	3	16.43
1955 Season Totals.....					(0-2)	4 games	7.2	14	14	16	7	11	7	16.43

Seattle pitching coach Dick Barrett says Fesler has four pitches, "He throws a sinker or drop ball; a screwball, which breaks in to right-handers; a tantalizing, sweeping curve, and a breaking ball that he refers to as his 'atomic pitch.'"

"It is unlike any pitch in baseball today," says Hutchinson.

Fesler will make only two more appearances for the Rainiers, including one start on the final day of the season, ending his rookie campaign 0-2 with 16.43 ERA ... he allows 14 earned runs on 16 hits, 11 walks and seven wild pitches in only 7 2/3 innings.

Despite his apparent inability to adapt to baseball's 60-foot, 6-inch distance (as compared to softball's 40-foot distance), Fesler is the fourth player signed by Seattle for the 1956 season when he inks a contract on February 4 ... one of 19 pitchers brought to the Rainiers' spring training, Fesler reports early to work on the control issues that plagued him the previous season ... on March 17, in his initial outing of the spring, Fesler holds the Portland Beavers hitless and scoreless in a brief two-inning stint.

On March 26, Fesler is one of eight Seattle players sent to lower minor league classifications when he is optioned to the Visalia Cubs of the California (C) League ... despite a strong showing against USC, Fesler's stay with the Cubs is short-lived when he is returned to the Rainiers with doubts about his "attitude".

Rainiers Give Up on Fesler

The outright release of soft-
balling Bob Fesler was an-
nounced today by the Seattle
Rainiers.

The underhand-throwing
pitcher, attempting to convert
his softball talents to the base-
ball diamond, was returned to
the Rainiers yesterday by Vi-
salia, the California League
team to which he had been op-
tioned.

Fesler was returned on the
eve of the opening of the Cali-
fornia League season. Dewey
Soriano, Rainier general man-
ager, quoted Bob Bockman, Vi-
salia manager, as saying that
Fesler pitched well during
spring training, but his attitude
toward the game left a lot to
be desired.

"In the light of Fesler's ap-
parent lack of interest," Sori-

ano said, "we felt it would be
better to give him his release
and let him try to catch on with
another team if he wants to
continue his baseball career."

Fesler was signed shortly
after midseason of 1955 by the
Rainiers and appeared in two
games.

8 Seattleites Play In Canadian Tourney

Eight Seattle table-tennis
players will be competing in
the West Canada open tourna-
ment starting in Vancouver, B.
C., tonight.

Representing Seattle will be
Burt Hansen, Ed DiRito, Harry
McFadden, Joe Santic, Harry
Borylla, Hunter Goin, Fred Ses-
sions and Art McCullough.

On April 19, 1956, Seattle gives up on Fesler, giving him his out-
right release ... Fesler returns to the Seattle area to pitch for the
Renton Auto Dealers in the Cascade semipro league for the re-
mainder of the summer.

Fesler parlays his 9-1 start with the Auto Dealers into a spring
training invite with the Denver Bears of the American (AAA)
Association ... however Bears manager Ralph Houk, citing the
ubiquitous "control problems", farms Fesler out to the Western (A)
League's Albuquerque Dukes, where in turn the Dukes ship him to
the Plainview Ponies of the Southwestern (B) League.

Fesler pitches one game for the Ponies before being released ... re-
turning home to Seattle he resumes his full-time job as a pipe fitter
... he regains his amateur status in 1958 and is a softball standout for
the next two decades.

Looking back on his
baseball career in a July
1958 interview with the

Associated Press, Fesler says, "I think the change in pitching distance was
the main difficulty. The baseball pitcher throws 14 feet 6 inches farther
than the softball chucker. I had plenty of stuff and plenty of speed with the
smaller, harder ball but the plate, was tough to locate. I only wish I could
have made the try when I was 18 or 19."

August 29, 1983
Seattle, Washington

**Bob Fesler, 54, a member of
the Seattle Softball Hall of Fame,
died Sunday night following sur-
gery for internal bleeding.**

Fesler was an All-America soft-
ball pitcher in 1958 when he took
his team to third place in the world
championships.