

# Pinch Hits, "What Pitch Count?"

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## PONCA CITY, OKLAHOMA

What was Muskogee Reds manager Ben Tincup thinking on that Sunday afternoon back on August 7, 1938.

In a game played years before pitch counts become popular, Tincup, a veteran pitcher of 27 seasons, allows Alex Swails to set a professional baseball single-game record when the tall (6-foot-5) right-hander issues 32 base on balls in a 12-7 loss to the first-place Ponca City Angels in a Western Association (C) League game.



Alex Swails  
1935 Clemson Tigers

A native of Kingstree, South Carolina, and a graduate of Clemson Agricultural and Mechanical College, Swails allows only seven hits and does not walk more than five batters in any one inning en route to stranding 22 Ponca City runners. In addition, Swails hits the only home run of his minor league career, a three-run shot in the seventh inning that ties the game at 7-all. But his wildness costs him five runs in the bottom of the eighth.

Swails' mound opponent that afternoon is 21-year-old Hub Kittle, who adds to the game's walk total when he issues 11 free passes. Kittle later gains fame for his lengthy association with the game, including eight years as a pitching coach for the Houston Astros (1971-75) and the St. Louis Cardinals (1981-83).

In August of 1980, at age 63, Kittle is believed to be one of the oldest players, if not the oldest, to pitch in a minor league game when he throws a perfect 11-pitch inning for the Springfield Redbirds of the American (AAA) Association.

To put Swails' accomplishment in perspective, the major league record for most walks issued by a pitcher in a nine-inning game is 16, set by Philadelphia Athletics' left-hander Bruno Haas in a 15-7 loss to the New York Yankees in his professional baseball debut on June 23, 1915.

In 11 games for Muskogee, Swails walks 81 batters in 46 innings and finishes 1-4 with a 10.76 ERA. In his four minor league seasons (1936-1939), Swails is 31-40, including a career-best 17-13 mark with a 3.07 ERA in 1937 for the Deland Reds of the Florida State (D) League.

Following an 8-10 record for the KITTY League's Paducah Indians in 1939, Swails leaves professional baseball. A year later, Swails fails to make the opening day roster of the Three-I League's Waterloo Hawks and returns home to his native Kingstree to pitch in the semipro Palmetto State League.

Following his playing days, Swails becomes a full-time scout for the Philadelphia Phillies.

## He Scatters Walks; Never Over Five in Inning; Total Is 32

Ponca City, Okla., Aug. 8.—(AP)—Pitcher Alex Swails of Muskogee feared he held a world record today.

Alex walked 32 Ponca City Angels in a nine-inning Western Association baseball game yesterday.

Contributing to what sport writers believed was another record, Pitcher Hugh Kittle of Ponca City walked 11 batters for a total of 43 free trips to first in the game.

Swails distributed his walks so well—he never gave more than five an inning—that he left 22 Angels stranded, 21 of them in the first seven innings. He allowed seven hits.

Alex, a good-natured rookie, got a bigger kick from his three-run homer than from his base on balls record. The homer helped Muskogee tie the score at 7-all in the seventh but in the same inning Ponca City scored five runs for a 12-7 victory.