

Pinch Hits, "Mountain States History"

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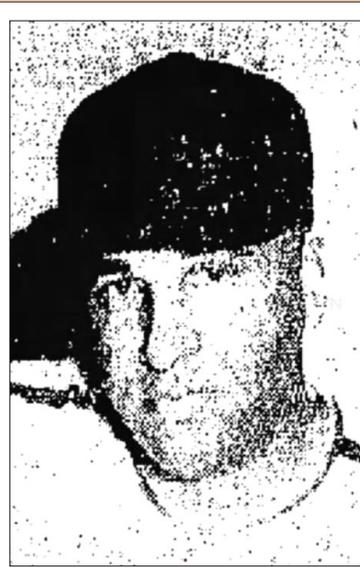
With little fanfare, Mountain States League history is made on Monday, August 26, 1951, when Middlesboro's Bob Bowman and Pennington Gap's Dick Mims take to the mound in the first game pairing two African-American pitchers.

Adding to the significance of the event is that Bowman, at the end of a extremely successful rookie season, is 45 years old, while Mims, a former Homestead Gray, is thought to be anywhere from 50 to 58 years old.

The highly-anticipated pitching duel taking place in the middle of the league's pennant race turns out to be one-sided as Mims is pulled in the first inning after yielding three runs to the hit-happy Athletics. Bowman, pitching for a second-straight day, has a 12-1 lead going into the bottom of the ninth before tiring and yielding five runs.

Among Middleboro's 17 hits are home runs by Bowman (his only one of the year), Eddie DeHogues, Oscar Rodriguez (later named the 1952 Puerto Rico League Rookie of the Year), Marion Fajo. Bill Halstead and Tony Immatteo have four-baggers for Pennington Gap.

With only four days and six games left to play in the regular season, Middlesboro, with the win, increases its lead over the Miners for the fourth and final spot in the league playoffs to 4 1/2 games.



Bob Bowman
1951 Middlesboro Athletics

August 26, 1951
Middlesboro Athletics vs. Pennington Gap Miners
Pennington Gap, Virginia

Middlesboro	AB	R	H	PO	A
Rodriguez rf ...	4	3	4	3	0
Peace 3b	5	1	1	3	1
Wyatt lf	5	0	1	2	0
Dehogues cf ...	5	2	3	3	0
Russ c	5	2	3	2	0
Fajo 2b	4	1	2	2	2
Edwards 1b	5	1	1	8	0
Williamson ss ..	4	1	1	4	7
Bowman p	5	1	1	0	1
Totals	42	12	17	27	6

Pennington	AB	R	H	PO	A
Ridenour ss	5	1	2	5	4
Grose 2b	2	0	0	0	2
Immatteo (z) 2b 2	1	1	1	1	1
Voni 3b	4	1	1	1	3
Halstead cf	4	1	2	2	0
Feriancek lf ...	4	0	0	5	0
Pankovits c	5	0	1	0	1
Vercruysse 1b ..	4	0	1	12	2
Elder rf	3	1	0	0	0
Mims p	0	0	0	0	0
Deith p	2	0	0	0	0
Woolford p	1	1	1	1	0
Totals	36	6	9	27	12

x—Struck out for Grose in 7th.
M'boro .. 301-000-152—12-17-1
Penn'ton .. 000-001-005—6- 9-1
Errors: Ridenour, Dehogues.
Runs batted in: Dehogues 3,
Rodriguez, Russ, Fajo 2, Edwards
2, Bowman 3, Immatteo 4, Hal-
stead. Two-base hits: Fajo, Ed-
wards, Russ. Home runs: Deho-

League President Approves Signing Of Bob Bowman

MIDDLESBORO, Ky., May 8—Virgil Wacks, Mountain States League president, stated today that he had no objection to Middlesboro signing a Negro player and that the league had no rules against it, however he did not know how other clubs would react.

Wacks said that Pennington Gap started to sign a "good" Negro player last year but did not do so after so much objection was raised by home town fans and other league teams.

"Three teams in the loop have said previously that they would not play against a colored player," Wacks said, "however, just what they will do now remains to be seen when Middlesboro shows up to play."

"I know this is the first Negro player signed in organized baseball below the Mason-Dixon line," the loop president went on, "as I checked this last year when Pennington planned to sign a Negro."

Wacks said he personally hoped the player "got along o.k."

The game also marks the debut for George Kennis, the Athletics' new manager replacing Ted Russ who tendered his resignation Sunday evening following four-straight losses to the seventh-place Norton Braves. Under Kennis, Middlesboro will close out the season with five wins in seven games before losing in the first round of the playoffs to Morristown.

Bowman's last appearance in 1951 is a 13-inning masterpiece on September 4, in a 13-inning 3-0 loss to the Morristown Red Sox in the first round of the league's post-season playoffs. Bowman and Gordon McDonald "hook up in a sizzling duel" for 12 innings before the Red Sox push across three runs in the top of the 13th. Bowman strikes out 11 and allows only five hits in the season-ending setback.

The signing of Bowman back on May 8, causes quite a stir in the Mountain States League with league president Virgil Q. Wacks giving the transaction a lukewarm approval (see left).

The popular Bowman will finish the season 17-6 with a 3.49 ERA and 175 strikeouts and 88 walks in 196 innings pitched. The 175 strikeouts are the third-most among league hurlers while his 17 wins tie for sixth and his ERA is ninth. Twenty-three of his 27 games were starts.

Later in life, Bowman suffers a stroke that eventually leads to his death at the age of 69 in Middlesboro on June 25, 1975.



MOUNTAIN STATES LEAGUE				
Club	Won	Lost	Pct.	GB
Hazard	01	30	.252	—
Morristown ..	84	34	.712	5½
Harlan	79	41	.658	11½
Middlesboro ..	55	64	.462	35
Pennington ..	51	69	.425	39½
Big Stone ..	48	72	.400	42½
Norton	47	71	.398	42½
Jenkins	24	96	.207	66½