

Pinch Hits, "The Most Popular Man in Butte"

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Roy Grover may or may not have been the most popular player in Butte baseball history, but for one inclement afternoon on September 3, 1916, there could be no doubt.

On the second-to-last day of the Northwestern (B) League's regular season and between games of that day's scheduled doubleheader with the Great Falls Electrics, the diminutive (5-foot-8) second baseman is accorded an emotional farewell by the town's mayor and Miner fans before leaving on the train the following day for Cleveland to join the Philadelphia Athletics.

Following Great Falls' 11-3 win in the first game, Butte Mayor Charles H. Lane, surrounded by players from both teams, tells the 24-year-old that he is "as fine a gentleman as he is a ball player" and that he hoped that Grover would become as good a second baseman for the Athletics as Eddie Collins has been. Grover is then presented with the finest walrus skin handbag as could be purchased in Butte, a solid silver name plate and a travelling set courtesy of team president Sam Caulkins.

Just how popular was Grover?

This is the second Roy Grover Day of the season as back on May 4, the town had the initial "Roy Grover Day" *only 13 games into the season.*

Sam Kinville, the groundskeeper at the Butte ball park pays his own way to Cleveland later in the week just to be in attendance for Grover's major league debut. Two years earlier, playing for the Saskatoon Quakers of the Western Canada League, Grover suffers from complications of an appendicitis operation in June. After the final game of the season, players from Edmonton and Saskatoon elect to stay in Saskatoon an extra day to play a benefit game with all of the proceeds going to pay for a second surgery Grover requires. The Quakers' star third baseman is, "one of the smartest ball players in the league and is most popular with all the players."

Grover finishes the 1916 season second in the Northwestern League in hits (177), fourth in batting (.342) and first in runs scored (119). On July 6, Grover sets a league record with 158 straight fielding chances without an error.

On September 13, 1917, Grover makes his major league debut against the Cleveland Indians. Batting third and starting at second base, the Snohomish, Washington, native has a double and a single in five at bats in an 8-4 loss to the Indians. The loss drops Philadelphia's record to 30-104 and 47 1/2 games behind first-place Detroit.

In 1917, Grover hits .224 in 141 games as the Athletics' every day second baseman. The following spring, Grover quits the game, saying that he "is satisfied" with his war job in the Seattle shipyards and has no intention of going to spring training. After sitting out the entire 1918 season, Grover resigns with Philadelphia and returns to the majors for the 1919 season, splitting time between the Athletics and Washington, hitting .206. He plays his major league last game on July 5 and concludes his brief major league career with a .226 average over 207 games in three seasons.

While Grover may not have been successful at the major league level, he could always say that he was the most popular man in Butte, Montana - at least for one day.

ROY GROVER TO GET SENDOFF TOMORROW

Every real fan in Butte is going to be at the ball park Sunday, for it is to be Grover day. The wonderful little second sacker leaves Tuesday to join the Philadelphia Athletics and some of his friends started the ball rolling to give the best second sacker that ever played in Butte a real send-off. They are gathering some dollars, as well, and Grover will be presented with something that will be a permanent reminder that every lover of baseball in Butte is pulling for him to make good under the big baseball tent. The present is being taken care of by a few of the regulars and all they want the hundreds of friends of Roy Grover to do is to be on hand Sunday afternoon to give Grover the welcome he deserves. Grover isn't much on speechmaking and he will be excused from this tomorrow, but he will be able to be in the lineup, the club physician says.

Grover has a rousing sendoff due him and he is going to get it Sunday afternoon. The only sad thing is that it is hard to say good-bye to as wonderful and clean an athlete as Grover is.



Roy Grover
1916 Butte Miners