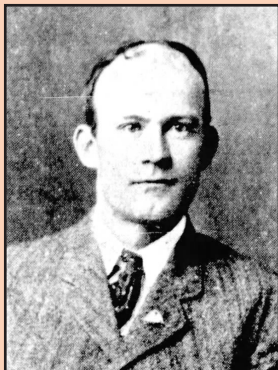


They Played the Game

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Pete Dowling



On June 30, 1905, former major league pitcher Pete Dowling, one of the best-known players on the West Coast, is killed by a train in Hot Lake, Oregon. The 28-year-old left-hander had just finished a treatment at a sanitarium in Hot Lake and is walking back to his home in La Grande when he is struck and killed by a passing train. One month earlier, on May 28, Dowling, who has been with the Ogden Lobsters since the opening of the season, is given his release by manager Frank Gimlin. Earlier, Dowling had his jaw broken when he was struck in the face by a batted ball and had been unavailable to pitch regularly which may have factored into his release. Gimlin insists that Dowling is not being released for any other reason but to cut down the team's salary list, which must come down to \$1,500. Born in St. Louis in 1876, Dowling begins his professional career as a 20-year-old with Paducah of the Central league in 1887, and he gave such a good account of himself that he is signed by the National League's Louisville Colonels with whom he makes his major league debut on July 17, 1897. He is 1-2 with a 8.97 ERA in four appearances before being farmed out to Milwaukee of the Western League. Returning to Louisville, he wins 13 games in both 1898 and 1899. In 1901, pitching for the Cleveland Blues he no-hits the Milwaukee Brewers 7-0. One month later, he allows the Brewers only one safety in another 7-0 whitewashing.

Joe Poetz



Nicknamed "Bull Montana," 26-year-old St. Louis native Joe Poetz appears in two late season September games for the New York Giants where he is 0-1 with a 3.38 ERA. Poetz makes his major league debut against the Pittsburgh Pirates on September 14, pitching a scoreless ninth inning in a 5-0 loss. Encouraged by the right-hander's debut, Giants' manager John McGraw gives Poetz a starting assignment eight days later against the visiting Chicago Cubs. The 5-foot-10 Missourian allows three runs on only five hits in seven innings, but walks eight, including leadoff hitter Sparky Adams three times and pitcher Percy Jones twice. He also allows solo home runs to right fielder Pete Scott in the sixth inning and catcher Gabby Hartnett an inning later. Poetz begins his professional career in 1922 playing briefly with the Terre Haute Tots. In 1923, he is 11-3 for KITTY League's Paducah Indians and 9-10 a year later for the Mayfield Pantsmakers, which includes three-straight shutouts to end the season while serving as the team's player-manager. On September 3, 1925, pitching for Portsmouth of the Virginia (B) League, Poetz pitches a no-hitter against first-place Richmond, snapping the Spiders' 16-game win streak. Eleven days later he will make his New York debut. A year later, Poetz is 21-13 with a 3.79 ERA for Portsmouth, with the 21 wins marking a career-high as he will finish 12-25 over the final four seasons of his career.

Bob Chesnes



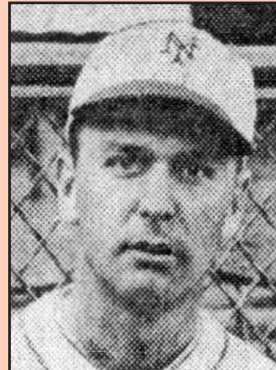
Considered by many to be the best shortstop in the 1942 Pioneer (C) League, Salt Lake City's Bob Chesnes, according to team owner Eddie Mulligan, is the first Bees' player to know his social security number by heart. Chesnes hits .280 with 12 doubles and eight triples for Salt Lake before enlisting in the Coast Guard the morning after the morning after the team's final game. Returning to the pro game after serving three years, Chesnes is now regarded as a "promising pre-war pitcher," and attracts national attention when he takes a pay cut to return to Salt Lake City for the 1946 season. He had signed with San Francisco in the spring, but fails to make the grade with Lefty O'Doul's Seals. The team wants to option him to Salt Lake City, but his contract calls for more than the class C circuit allows. His contract also has a clause stating his pay can't be cut. So to the amazement of everyone, Chesnes asks that his salary be reduced so that he can play with Salt Lake City. He is 18-6 with a 1.52 ERA that summer with the Bees and 22-8 with a 2.32 ERA with the Seals in 1947. Rated by *Baseball Digest* as the best minor league pitching prospect since Lefty Gomez in 1929, Chesnes is purchased by the Pittsburgh Pirates for a reported \$80,000. In his rookie year, the Oakland right-hander is 14-6 with a 3.57 ERA, earns a spot on *The Sporting News* All-Rookie team and finishes 21st in National League MVP voting.

Tony Jeli



On May 17, 1942, Twin Falls' Anton "Tony" Jeli turned in the no-hitter in Pioneer League history when he shuts down the first-place Pocatello Cardinals 4-2. The diminutive Twin Falls' left-hander strikes out 11, but walks seven batters and hits five others en route to picking up his second win of the season. The 22-year-old Molalla, Oregon, native, finishes the season 6-17 with a 4.02 ERA for the Cowboys. The 17 losses ties a Pioneer League mark set by Forrest Main of Idaho Falls, Paul Piscovich of Twin Falls in 1941, and Jack Hall of Twin Falls-Idaho Falls, in 1940. He is sixth in the league in strikeouts (151) and fourth in walks (107). After pitching most of the summer of 1940 with the Silverton Red Sox of the semipro Oregon State League, Jeli makes his pro debut with the San Diego Padres on September 14, 1940, the second-to-last day of the Pacific Coast League season. In the first game of a doubleheader with the Seattle Rainiers, Jeli allows two runs, on two hits, two walks and one strikeout. He also singles in his first professional at bat off of future major leaguer Les Webber. In 1941, Jeli is 3-19 with a 4.30 ERA for the Anaheim Aces of the California State League. The Aces went through 52 players in their only season of existence with Jeli and Eden DeVolder the only players lasting the entire season. In three minor league seasons, Jeli is 9-36 in 62 appearances. Jeli is last seen pitching for the Nogales Internationals of the Sonora State League in 1946.

Merritt Hubbell



The younger brother of New York Giants' Hall of Fame pitcher Carl Hubbell, Merritt Hubbell's dubious claim to fame occurs on August 11, 1932, when playing for the Muskogee Chiefs of the Western Association, the 5-foot-11 left-handed screwball pitcher is traded by Chiefs' manager Clifton (Runt) Marr to the Hutchinson Miners for four baseballs. Faced with the prospect of not having enough money to play that afternoon's game with the visiting Miners, Marr makes the horsehide trade with Hutchinson's Marty Purtell. The Chiefs put the four baseballs to good use as they pound out 15 hits in a 12-2 win. Following the game, Marr announces that because of poor attendance, the team's remaining games will be played on the road. The following afternoon, Hubbell is named to the Western Association All-Star team as an honorable mention performer. On August 19, Hubbell gains a measure of revenge when he shuts out his former teammates, allowing only six hits in a 10-0 win. In 1933, when his famous brother signs with the Giants, he sends a letter of recommendation that his younger brother Merritt (just a few months shy of being traded for four baseballs) be given a tryout with the team. Giants' secretary James Tierney says both Hubbell's will report at Los Angeles on February 24. Following a nine-year minor league career (1929-1937), Hubbell plays for the House of David touring team in 1938 and various semipro teams prior to being inducted into the Navy in 1942.