

# Cups of Coffee: Hubert "Lefty" Atkinson

"The Griffs have a new outfielder one Hubert Atkinson of the Chicago Logan Squares, an exceedingly fast Independent team. Hubert is a flea-like sort of a fellow who flings with his left wing and bats on the wrong aide of the plate."  
 - Washington Times Herald, July 13, 1927

## Wednesday, July 13, 1927, Navin Field, Detroit, Michigan

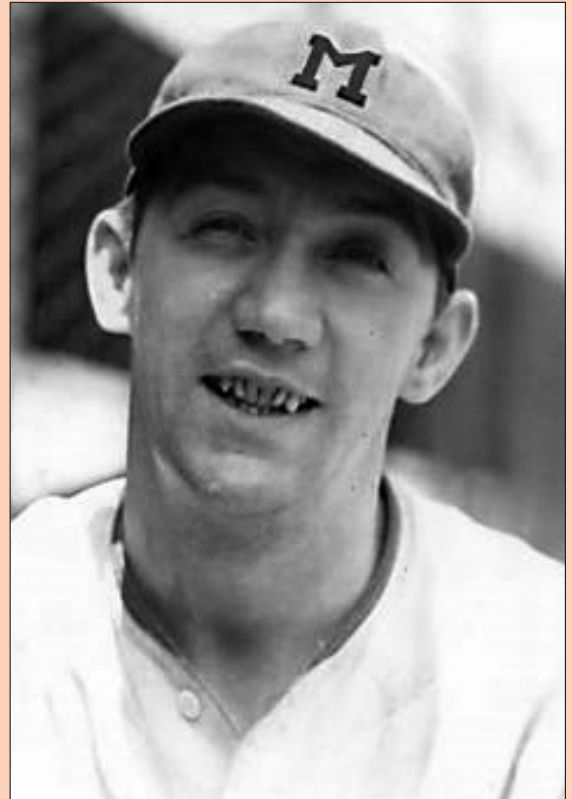
The morning dawns overcast with scattered early morning rain showers throughout the general Detroit area. The Washington Nationals, fresh off a 9-6 win over the homestanding Tigers the day before, arrive at Navin Field early to prepare for that day's double-header, with first pitch slated for 1:45 pm.

Bucky Harris' Nationals are in second place in the American League with a 47-32 mark, but trail the New York Yankees (58-24) by 9 1/2 games.

Upon arriving at the team's clubhouse, Harris has a surprise visitor in diminutive Hubert Burley Atkinson, who first tells the Nationals' skipper that he likes to be called "Bert." Harris later tells his coaches that he assumed that the 5-foot-6 Atkinson was the visiting team's clubhouse attendant. "Bert" says he weighs 150 pounds, but that's up for debate.

## New Recruit Signs With Nationals

Atkinson, Outfielder, Has Reputation as Heavy Hitter.



## SENATORS WALLOP BROWNS, SCORING TEN IN FOURTH

WASHINGTON, Aug. 5 (AP)—Hammering four St. Louis pitchers for a total of 17 hits, Washington won a slugging match today from the Browns, 17 to 8.

In the fourth the Senators scored 10 runs, Goslin, after starting off the inning with a single, getting a homer over the right field wall, scoring two ahead of him. It was his ninth circuit clout of the season.

ST. LOUIS					WASHINGTON						
	ab	r	h	o	a		ab	r	h	o	a
O'Rourke 3b	4	4	3	1	4	M'Neely cf	6	1	0	4	0
Bennett rf	5	1	2	2	0	Harris 2b	5	2	2	5	2
Sisler 1b	5	1	2	12	0	Rice rf	6	2	2	3	1
Williams rf	4	0	3	0	0	Judge 1b	4	3	3	6	1
E. Miller cf	5	0	0	2	0	Goslin lf	6	2	3	1	0
Adams 2b	5	0	0	4	6	Ruel c	2	3	2	5	0
Schang c	4	1	1	2	0	Bluege 3b	5	1	2	1	1
Miller ss	4	1	2	1	3	Reeves ss	5	2	3	1	3
Wingard p	2	0	0	0	1	Hadley p	0	0	0	0	1
Crowder p	0	0	0	0	0	Burke p	0	0	0	0	0
Stewart p	0	0	0	0	0	M'berry p	0	0	0	0	0
Jones p	1	0	0	0	1	Braxton p	1	0	0	1	0
xO'Neill	1	0	0	0	0	zThurston	1	0	0	0	0
Totals	40	8	13	24	16	zzzHayes	0	0	0	0	0
						zzzTato	0	0	0	0	0
						xxAtk'son	1	1	0	0	0

Totals 42 17 17 27 9  
 xBatted for Stewart in fifth.  
 zBatted for Hadley in second.  
 zzRan for Thurston in second.  
 zzzBatted for Marberry in fourth.  
 xxRan for Tate in fourth.

SCORE BY INNINGS:  
 St. Louis ..... 2 2 0 3 0 1 0 0 0 — 8  
 Washington ..... 0 2 0 10 0 0 2 3 x—17  
 Errors—O'Rourke, 3; Williams, Miller, Harris, 2; Reeves, Two base hits—Williams, O'Rourke, 2; Ruel, 2; Reeves, Bennett, Three base hit—Goslin. Home run—Goslin. Sacrifices—Williams, Braxton, Judge. Double play—Miller to Adams to Sisler. Left on bases—St. Louis, 7; Washington, 9. Bases on balls—Off Wingard, 2; off Crowder, 2; off Jones, 2; off Hadley, 1. Hits—Off Wingard, 5 in 3 innings (none out in fourth); off Hadley, 5 in 2 innings; off Crowder, 0 in 1-3 inning; off Burke, 4 in 1 1-3 innings; off Stewart, 6 in 2-3 inning; off Marberry, 1 in 2-3 inning; off Jones, 6 in 4 innings; off Braxton, 3 in 5 innings. Wild pitch—Crowder. Winning pitcher—Marberry. Losing pitcher — Wingard.

Atkinson is the "first fruit" of scout Jimmy Callahan's labors as a new "ivory hunter" for the Nationals. Atkinson has been playing right field for the Logan Squares, a strong semipro team in Chicago and comes to the Nationals with a reputation of being an excellent hitter, although not of the slugging type, and a sensational fielder.

With no professional experience, it's considered "a long shot" for a sandlot player to make it with an American League team in pennant contention (at least in their manager's opinion). In pre-game drills, Atkinson shows himself to be a fine judge of "loopers" and is said to have the speed of a jack rabbit in getting under them. Twice he snares liners with his bare hand.

Atkinson travels with the team for three weeks before Harris gives him an opportunity on August 5, against the St. Louis Browns. In a Friday afternoon game at Griffith Stadium. In the fourth inning, he is sent in to pinch run for Bennie Tate. He comes around to score on a single by Joe Judge. The Nationals bat around en route to scoring 10 runs, which allows the 21-year-old sandlot graduate to have a major league at bat. Unfortunately, Atkinson either rolls (one account), or drills into a 6-4-3 double-play against Lefty Stewart. Following his lone major league at bat, Atkinson is replaced by pitcher Garland Braxton in an eventual 17-5 Washington victory.

Four days after his major league debut, Atkinson is sent by Harris to North Adams, Massachusetts, of the semipro Mill Valley League to get more playing time. The Mill Valley League is noted for employing college players "who have to eat as well as get an education." Atkinson returns to the Senators on September and takes part in pre-game drills. Manager Harris tells *The Washington Post* that he believes Atkinson might eventually "make the grade."

"He sure can cover some ground and has an ideal temperament for a ball player. I don't know whether or not he can hit for he has had little opportunity at the bat but he will get a stood trial at Tampa next spring."  
 - Bucky Harris, September 21, 1927

During the off-season, Washington President Clark Griffith looks to place Atkinson with a team for the 1928 season. Over the winetr the Chicago native has a "sad experience" with the South Atlantic

## Lefty Atkinson [2 of 3]:

League's Greenville Spinners. In February, Atkinson had been sent under option to the Spinners. Later Greenville advises Griffith that Atkinson is refusing to report, prompting the Nationals' owner to wire the Atkinson that he is suspended. When Atkinson receives the Griffith's telegram, he asks him why, seeing that he has received no instructions of any kind from the Spinners.

The case is eventually submitted to Commissioner Landis, who after talking with Atkinson and Greenville President Walker, determines that Atkinson had not received "a square deal" from Greenville and holds them accountable for the ball player's past salary and tells them they must pay Atkinson's future salary until he gets in condition and is placed somewhere. That somewhere turns out to be in Albany, Georgia, where on May 3, he is assigned to the Southeastern League team. In 18 games with the Nuts,, Atkinson hits .225 with two doubles and two home runs before being released.

Unable to place Atkinson with another minor league team, Washington releases him in October. Now a free agent, Atkinson signs with the South Atlantic (B) League's Knoxville Smokies during the 1929 spring training and earns a starting spot in centerfield. Hitting just a little above .220, Atkinson is one of four players released by Knoxville on May 11. Four days later he signs with the Spartanburg Spartans and after two summers of basically hanging on the fringes of organized baseball, Atkinson, despite being released by two teams, finally gets his chance to play a full season. He finishes with a solid .279 average with 19 doubles, 10 triples and four home runs.

Following his pro career, Atkinson returns to Chicago and plays until 1938 for the Chicago Mills teams of the semipro Wisconsin-Illinois League. Atkinson serves in the military for two years during World War II. Following the war, he's a maintenance worker for the Gas and Light Coke Company. He dies at his home in Chicago, from pneumonia on February 2, 1961, at the age of 55.

## Atkinson Chronology

July 2, 1921

Pitching for the Westminster Sunday School team, 15-year-old "Lefty" Atkinson sets the season record for strikeouts in the Chicago area when he causes 23 of the Third Presbyterian batters to "vainly swing the willow." ... despite his heroics, Third Presbyterian wins 1-0 in 10 innings.

July 14, 1927

Atkinson is signed by Washington Senator scout Jimmy Callahan from the Logan Squares, a strong semipro team in Chicago ... Callahan signs the diminutive (5-foot-6) Atkinson because of his hitting power and "ball hawking."

August 8, 1927

Following a 12-year hiatus, outfield Bill Lamar returns to the Washington Senators to fill in for injured Tris Speaker (sprained left wrist) ... with Lamar's return, it is expected that Atkinson will be sent to the minors to receive more playing time.

August 8, 1927

Atkinson is sent to the semipro Mill Valley League in Massachusetts.

August 9, 1927

Atkinson returns to the Senators and takes part in the team's pre-game drills.

January 5, 1928

Atkinson is mentioned by the team as one of 10 outfielders in the running for team roster spots this coming season.

### Lefty Atkinson Year by Year:

Year	Team	League	Lev	W-L	Finish	AB	R	HT	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	SLUG	OPS	AVG
1926	Lord Reading	Central Virginia	SPro	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	--	--	--
1927	Logan Squares	Chicago City	SPro	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	--	--	--
1927	Washington Senators	AMERICAN	MLB			1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	.000	.000
1928	Albany (Ga.) Nuts	Southeastern	B	62-60	3 of 8	80	14	18	2	0	2	-	3	.325	.665	.225
<b>1929</b>	<b>Two Teams</b>	<b>South Atlantic</b>	<b>B</b>			<b>420</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>.400</b>	<b>.752</b>	<b>.279</b>
	Knoxville Smokies	South Atlantic	B	85-61	1 of 8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	--	--	--
	Spartanburg Spartans	South Atlantic	B	59-84	8 of 8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	--	--	--
1930	Henderson Gamecocks	Piedmont	C	78-63	1 of 8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	--	--	--
1930	Greenville Spinners	South Atlantic	B	85-57	2 of 6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	--	--	--
<b>Major League Totals</b>						<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.000</b>	<b>.000</b>
<b>Minor League Totals</b>						<b>500</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>.450</b>	<b>.721</b>	<b>.270</b>

**ML Debut: August 5, 1927, at Griffith Stadium, Washington, D.C.:** pinch runs for Bennie Tate in the fourth inning and scores on a single by Joe Judge; the Nationals score 10 runs and bat around; Atkinson then grounds into a 6-4-3 double-play against Lefty Stewart; Atkinson is replaced by pitcher Garland Braxton in a 17-5 Washington victory.

### Lefty Atkinson [3 of 3]:

January 9, 1928

Atkinson and first baseman John Brewer, signed off the campus of Georgia Tech, are released to the Greenville Spinners of the South Atlantic (B) League.

April 22, 1928

Washington President Clark Griffith is trying to place outfielder Hubert Atkinson with a team for the 1928 season ... the Chicago semipro had "a sad experience" with the Greenville Spinners of the South Atlantic League ... a few weeks ago he was sent under option to the Spinners ... later the club advises Griffith that Atkinson has refused to report prompting the Nationals' owner to wire back that the Chicago native be suspended ... when Atkinson receives the telegram suspending him, he asks Griffith why, seeing that he had received no instructions of any kind from the Spinners ... the case is then submitted to Baseball Commissioner Landis, who after talking with Atkinson, determines that the player has not gotten "a square deal" from Greenville and holds them accountable for his salary and tell them they must pay Atkinson's salary until he gets in condition and is placed somewhere.

May 2, 1928

Atkinson rejoins the Senators, 14 games into the season.

August 5, 1928

Unable to place Atkinson with a minor league team, Washington releases their left-handed hitting outfielder.

April 1929

Now a free agent, Atkinson joins the Knoxville Smokies during spring training and earns a starting spot in the outfield.

April 16, 1929

Atkinson is 2-for-5 with a double and a single as Knoxville beats Spartanburg 6-1 in the team's SALLY League opener.

April 18, 1929

Atkinson draws four walks in Knoxville's 11-2 victory over Greenville.

May 11, 1929

Atkinson is one of four players released by Knoxville.

May 15, 1929

Atkinson and pitcher Spike Hunter, both released by the Smokies four days earlier, sign to play for the Spartanburg Spartans.

April 19, 1931

Atkinson is 3-for-5 with a double leading the Mills nine to a 9-1 win over the Chicago Giants 9-1 in the opening game of the Chicago Semi-Pro League.

February 2, 1961

Atkinson dies at his home in Chicago, from pneumonia at the age of 55.

###

### James Lympelopoulos

**Position:** Third Baseman

**Bats:** Unknown • **Throws:** Unknown

**Full Name:** James Lewis Lympelopoulos

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