

Hooper Triplett, "\$20 Career Mistake"

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**"That was the damnedest joke I ever saw. He was just sitting in a bar with a bunch of guys, and there was something said about who was going to win. He just said 'I'll bet you' and they made it a big issue. It wasn't a big issue at all. He didn't mean a damn thing by what he said."
- Coaker Triplett**

The Charlotte Observer, June 4, 1952

Tiny globes of sweat clung precariously on the tip of his nose as he stepped into the dank coolness of the pool room. August afternoons in Columbus, Ga., can be hell in a molten state, and no pun intended, he thought as his eyes adjusted from the painful glare of the sidewalk to the dim interior. "Beer," he said, "don't bother with the brand just as long as it's cold."

CARDS SUSPEND TRIPLETT



Hooper Triplett
1940 Columbus Red Birds

Hooper Triplett's Final Game

August 3, 1946

Columbia Reds at Columbus Cardinals

Columbus, Georgia

Columbia	AB	R	H	O	A
Martin, 2b.	4	0	1	2	1
Fox, ss.	4	0	1	1	3
Korhonen, lf.	4	1	1	0	0
Warren, rf.	4	1	2	1	0
Daley, 3b.	3	0	0	1	2
Ticco, 1b.	2	0	1	8	9
Scheffel, c.	3	0	0	6	0
Davis, cf.	3	0	0	2	0
Gates, p.	3	1	1	0	0
Totals	30	3	7	21	8
Called end 7th, rain.					
Columbus	AB	R	H	O	A
Czaplicki, cf.	3	1	2	2	0
Wright, ss.	4	0	1	3	4
Kazak, 2b.	3	2	2	0	2
Triplett, lf.	1	0	0	0	0
Broome, cf.	3	0	2	2	0
Erps, 3b.	3	0	0	0	0
Kerr, c.	4	1	1	3	0
Bollweg, 1b.	2	0	0	10	0
Wissman, p.	3	1	1	0	3
McCawley, lf.	2	0	0	1	0
Totals	28	5	9	21	9
Columbia000	.002	1-3		
Columbus003	.110	0-5		

Called end of seventh, rain. Errors—Kazak, Bollweg. Runs batted in—Czaplicki 2, Broome 2, Kazak, Ticco, Scheffel, Fox. Two base hits—Martin, Korhonen, Gates. Three base hits—Wissman, Broome 2. Home runs—Kazak. Sacrifice—Bollweg. Double plays—Fox, Martin to Ticco. Left on bases—Columbia 7, Columbus 8. Bases on balls—Off Wissman 1, Gates 5. Struck out—By Wissman 3, Gates 6. Hit by pitcher—By Wissman (Ticco). Umpires—Bearden and Rudolph.

The Columbus Cardinals make it two in a row over visiting Columbia winning 5-3 in a game shortened to seven innings by rain ... the win was the Cardinals' fifth in a row... Columbus' second baseman Eddie Kazak is 2-for-3 with a home run.

He had waged a battle with his conscience over that beer while limping into range of the clicking cue balls and snapping bottle tops: "I won't play tonight, was the argument." Naw, old Kemp (Wicker) won't use me, not with this bum ankle. Too valuable, the Cards wouldn't like it. Come off that valuable stuff, boy, you've just gone no for 12, remember? Sure, you know why - grabbing that bottle too often. So what, I can drink and still rap that baseball.

The big fan in the rear hummed, the beer was cold, and his billfold bulged with tens and twenties. Yesterday, had been payday. Talk shifted to baseball More beer and more baseball and more beer. Some of the hangers-on drifted upstairs, and with a fresh bottle of brew, he followed. That's where the ticker was, the cubes, the cards, and the place to back up your baseball arguments with tens and twenties.

The big fellow with the overlapping belly and unlit cigar was accepting most of the bets. "I'll take twenty of that," says Triplett. "Okay, sonny, you've got \$20 on the Yankees and giving me one; now what about the Giants? Twenty more on the Giants even. Columbia is in town tonight. You'll take Columbia? With Wehmeier scheduled and Kluszewski hitting like he is, you're probably right, but let's say twenty, huh?"

He took a shower at the ball park, but his head was still buzzing. No matter, old Kemp surely wouldn't use him, not with the ankle. He was wrong. The lineup thumb tacked on the end of the bat rack said he was starting in left field. A third strike the first time up, a walk the second, and then Kemp took him out. "See me in my office after the game," Kemp had said, but what the hell could be expect, the bum ankle and all. The somber looks on the circle of faces in the office failed to register, but the question, "Did you bet on Columbia tonight?" did: He nodded numbly. "You're suspended indefinitely," said the business manager.

Two weeks later came the letter: "Suspended from organized baseball for life." That was Hooper Triplett in 1946.

Hooper Triplett 1 of 6:

Hooper Triplett [2 of 6]:

To recap:

On the afternoon of August 3, 1946, while in a local bar and pool room, Columbus Cardinals' outfielder and North Carolina native Hooper Triplett, thinking that he would not play that evening because of an ankle injury, places a \$20 bet "with a bunch of clowns," against his Columbus Cardinals in that evening's game at Golden Park with the visiting Columbia (S.C.) Reds.

Triplett walks in the first inning before striking out looking in the third inning. In the second inning he makes a "great" running catch of a foul ball. He is removed from the game in the third inning after information of his earlier bet reaches team business manager Bing Devine. "It was just something you could not take a chance with, even if Triplett had no intention of doing anything," Devine says after the game before announcing that his left fielder has been indefinitely suspended for an "infraction of team rules."

Team officials say that the man who handled Triplett's bet, is the person who warns the team to get him out of the lineup that evening.

The next morning, the local newspaper runs the headline: "Hooper Triplett Caught Gambling On Game." The highest-salaried player in the South Atlantic League, Triplett is accused of betting against his team. At first, Triplett is suspended by the Cardinals for what is announced as an "infraction of club rules." On August 11, he is fined \$500 and suspended indefinitely by the South Atlantic League.

Knowing that more punishment will be forthcoming, Columbus fans plea for a consideration of leniency for Triplett with a signed petition. Petition aside, 10 days later the 26-year-old World War II veteran and the pride of the Columbus Cardinals, becomes the first North Carolinian to be banned from baseball for gambling when W.G. Bramham, President of the National Association, makes his suspension permanent.



Hooper's older brother by eight years, **Coaker Triplett** hits .256 with 27 home runs and 173 RBIs in six major league seasons with the Cubs (1938), Cardinals (1941-43) and Phillies (1943-45). In 1943, the 31-year-old North Carolinian ties for fourth in the National League with 15 home runs. In 13 minor league campaigns, the right-handed hitting outfielder hits .327 with 112 home runs.



Hooper Triplett
1942 Rochester Red Wings

Hooper Triplett Year by Year:

Year	Team	League	Lev	W-L	Finish	Age	AB	R	HT	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	SLUG	AVG
1937	Shelby Cardinals	North Carolina State	D	55-52	4 of 8	17	347	62	106	20	1	10	56	8	.455	.306
1938	Gastonia Cardinals	North Carolina State	D	66-45	2 of 8	18	367	75	105	21	7	17	15	1	.520	.286
1939	Gastonia Cardinals	Tar Heel	D	72-36	1 of 8	19	379	116	148	33	4	27	115	15	.712	.391
1940	Columbus (Ga.) Red Birds	South Atlantic	B	88-63	2 of 8	20	483	133	178	36	12	15	105	17	.586	.369
1941	2 Teams	2 Leagues	A1-AA			21	502	15	156	36	7	10	86	5	.470	.311
	Columbus (Ohio) Red Birds	American Assoc.	AA	95-58	1 of 8	21	76	15	19	6	2	1	9	1	.421	.250
	New Orleans Pelicans	Southern	A1	78-75	3 of 8	21	426	68	137	30	5	9	77	4	.479	.322
1942	2 Teams	2 Leagues	AA			22	276	38	72	14	1	3	42	1	.351	.261
	Columbus (Ohio) Red Birds	American Assoc.	AA	82-72	3 of 8	22	41	5	8	3	0	0	7	1	.268	.195
	Rochester Red Wings	International	AA	59-93	8 of 8	22	235	33	64	11	1	3	35	0	.366	.272
1942	Camp Croft, S.C.	Military	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	--	--
1943	Fort Lawton, Oklahoma	Military	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	--	--
1944	Camp McCoy, Wisconsin	Military	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	--	--
1946	2 Teams	2 Leagues	A-AAA			26	211	32	66	10	2	5	45	3	.452	.313
	Columbus (Ohio) Red Birds	American Assoc.	AAA	64-90	8 of 8	26	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	.000
	Columbus (Ga.) Cardinals	South Atlantic	A	79-60	1 of 8	26	210	32	66	10	2	5	45	3	.452	.314
1951	Fries (Va.) 2 of 8	Virginia-Carolina	SPro	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	--	--
1951	Robbins	Carolina	SPro	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	--	--
Minors (7 seasons)							2,565	471	831	170	34	87	464	50	.518	.324

Hooper Triplett [3 of 6]:

"The act of the player is a reflection upon the game and his profession, but the greatest injury is to the player himself," says Bramham. "If he remained in baseball, this act would relentlessly follow him. Though he might play his heart out to win, every excusable error he might make, every strikeout charged against him, however hard he might hit, would find the cry 'how much have you bet on the game?' ringing in his ears."

Before leaving Columbus for his home in the Tar Heel State, Triplett tries to explain the circumstances of his bet. "I just didn't realize what a wrong thing I was doing," He tells the *Columbus Enquirer*. "I wasn't in full control of myself at the time and when some people came around me the afternoon of the game in question and began talking about Columbia's chances, I foolishly said I'd take a bet they'd win. I took it as a joke then."

The Cardinals win 16 of the 24 games after Triplett is suspended.

Now banished from the game he loves, Triplett signs with Neuvo Laredo Tecolotes of the Mexican League on August 25. However, Triplett faces a cold welcome at the Mexico border when Mexican League President Jorge Pasquel orders the Tecolotes to cancel its contract with Triplett. His brother, Croaker Triplett, a six-year major league veteran, comes to his brother's defense, "He didn't mean a damn thing by what he said. You get in a bar and you get to talking. He had never had any trouble with anybody but he was drinking and talking with a bunch of clowns".

A career .324 hitter in a seven-year minor league career now finished, Triplett forever censures himself for "one of the costliest jokes I ever made."

Before the war, Triplett is a heralded prospect in the St. Louis Cardinals organization. He was just regaining his form that fateful summer after serving in the military for three years during World War II, and returning home with an injured leg. Triplett is hitting .314, with 45 RBIs in 61 games as Columbus' cleanup hitter when he places the \$20 bet and if not for the ban, he was due to be promoted to one of the Cardinals' two AAA-level minor league teams the following week.



Hooper Triplett
1946 Columbus Cardinals

Mex League Bans Hooper Triplett

September 1, 1951
City Stadium
Asheboro, North Carolina

Cherry Point Loses Second Game By 13-5

Asheboro, Sept. 1. (P)—Robbins handed Cherry Point its second defeat in the North Carolina Invitational Semipro Baseball Tournament here tonight 13-5.

The winners tallied four runs in the first, eight in the third and one in the fourth to win the seven-inning contest. The game lasted seven innings because in this tourney a team which is leading by eight runs or more in the seventh inning is declared the winner.

Hooper Triplett blasted a home run in the third inning for Robbins. B. Morton and Herbert Rouse led the Robbins nine at the plate with two hits in three trips apiece.

Score by innings: R. H. E.
Cherry Point .. 000 230 0— 5 9 5
Robbins 408 010 1—13 8 2
Albinus, Langston and Warzyniak;
Clnard and Enloe.

Following his suspension, Triplett starts a new career in the wholesale shirt business, working 20 years in Independence, Virginia, before moving to Charlotte in the late 1960s. Triplett's final years are spent in Statesville, North Carolina, where he dies of cancer on April 12, 1988, at the age of 68.

At the time of his brother's death, Coaker Triplett remained convinced that Hooper was unfairly sentenced, "He was just tore up about it He wasn't a betting man."

Observers say the younger of the Triplett brothers would have made a great major leaguer, that he had more talent than his older brother. Several years after his suspension, Triplett says that it was the best thing to happen to him. He tells people that when he came out of the Army in the spring of 1946, he considered himself an alcoholic and when manager Kemp Wicker tried to help him, it didn't do much good as he was too headstrong and too crazy. Triplett says that he really didn't intend to bet against his own club, that he was so "soused," that he didn't know what he was doing, and didn't think of it again until they called me in after the game. In 1948, Triplett marries and later tells people that he hasn't had a drink since.

Triplett begins his pro career with the Cardinals' in 1937 at the age of 17, and is assigned to Shelby of the North Carolina State League where he hits .305 with 10 homers and 20 doubles. In 1938, he improves his home run production to 17, with seven triples and 21 doubles.

Trouble Ahead for Lenior
LENIOR, N. C., Dec. 19 (U.P.).
—The Lenior team in the Tar Heel League (Class D) is the baseball club Judge William G. Bramham charged had "14 forged contracts."

Hooper Triplett [4 of 6]:

During the off-season, the St. Louis Cardinals give up attempting to remodel his unorthodox swing and he responds by winning the Triple Crown season in the Tar Heel (D) League with a .391 average, 27 home runs and 115 RBIs. Earning a promotion to Columbus, Georgia, of the Sally League in 1940, he leads that circuit in hitting with a .369 average. Sixty-two of his hits were for extra bases, 15 clearing the fences.

Back with Columbus to start the 1941 season, Triplett is hitting .250 with one home run and nine RBIs when he is sent to New Orleans in mid-May. With the Pelicans, he regains his batting eye and leads the team in hitting with a .322 average. Despite being a major league prospect, Triplett's name isn't called at the annual major league draft because of Commissioner Landis' ruling that any player drafted into the Army before reporting to a major league team, that team will not be entitled to a refund of the \$7,500 draft fee. Triplett's 1-A rating from his draft board scares off several interested teams.

In 1941, he is promoted to Rochester of the International League. Missing a month with a sore arm, he plays irregularly thereafter and finishes with a career-low .272 average. After three years in the Army, he reports to the Columbus (Ohio) Red Birds in the spring of 1946, but after one at bat, the 26-year-old is sent down to Columbus, Georgia, to get back in shape.

He is hitting .314 for manager Kemp Wicker, the old N.C. State pitcher, when he is banished from baseball. Still playing baseball in his later years, he holds down a job with an Independence, Virginia, industrial plant. He manages the Independence semipro team, pitches and plays the outfield, hitting over .400 every year.

STATESVILLE — Mr. F. Hooper Triplett, 68, textile retiree, died April 12, 1988. Funeral is 11 a.m. today at Reins-Sturdivant Funeral Home, Independence, Va. Survivors are his wife, Frances; daughters, Mrs. Ann Gentry of Lawrenceburg, Ky., Mrs. Deborah Osburn; brother, Coaker Triplett of Boone; sisters, Mrs. Ola Thompson, Mrs. Olive Mast, Mrs. Chloe Storie, all of Boone.

Triplett Chronology

May 13, 1939

Triplett hits three home runs and a single to lead the Gastonia Cardinals past the Statesville Owls 13-5 ... Cardinal right-hander Glenn Gardner allows six hits in picking up one of his 17 wins on the season.

August 20, 1939

Triplett is 2-for-3 with a double and an RBI to lead the West to a 4-2 win over the East in the Tar Heel (D) League All-Star game.

End Date, 1939

Triplett captures the Tar Heel League batting title with a .391 average.



April 20, 1940

The St. Louis Cardinals option Triplett to the Columbus Red Birds of the South Atlantic League.

July 6, 1940

Triplett (.433) leads runner-up **Herb Comptom** (left) of Savannah by 71 points in the South Atlantic (B) League batting race ... an 18-year minor league veteran, Comptom hits .196 in 38 major league games with the Washington Senators (1937) and the New York Yankees (1945).

July 8, 1940

In the South Atlantic All-Star Game, Triplett hits a triple to tie the game in the ninth inning and then a single in drive in the go-ahead run in the 10th as the All-Stars beat the Savannah Indians 4-1.

August 13-28

Triplett sets a South Atlantic League record by scoring at least one run in 16-straight games.

September 1, 1940

The Cardinals assign Triplett to the Houston Buffaloes of the Texas League.

September 3, 1940

Triplett breaks his right leg sliding into second base in the seventh inning against Macon ... his injury leaves Columbus shorthanded for the upcoming post-season playoffs.

Hooper Triplett [5 of 6]:

September 7, 1940

Triplett is a unanimous selection to South Atlantic League post-season All-Star team ... Triplett is one of a record six Columbus Red Birds named to the all-league team ... he captures the South Atlantic League league batting title, his second in as many years, hitting .369 for the Columbus Red Birds.

"There's Hooper Triplett over there. Brother of Coaker, up with St. Louis. You know how his brother hit 'em a mile with St. Louis over at St. Petersburg? Yeah, we both saw him do it. Just stick around and watch this kid brother Hooper. He lost 12 balls for us in batting practice yesterday."

- Burt Shotton, Columbus Red Birds manager, March 21, 1941



May 16, 1941

Triplett is hitting an uncharacteristic .250 with only one home run and nine RBIs when Columbus sends him to the New Orleans Pelicans of the Southern Association.

September 4, 1941

The Columbus Red Birds, the American Association champions, recall seven players, including Triplett and outfielder Stan Musial, for the team's 1942 spring training.

September 30, 1941

Despite being a major league prospect, Triplett isn't selected at the annual major league draft because of a recent ruling by Commissioner Landis that any player drafted into the Army before reporting to a major league team, that team will not be entitled to a refund of the \$7,500 draft fee ... Triplett's 1-A rating from his draft board scares off several interested teams.

November 28, 1941

Triplett is one of 239 players on the American Association's reserve list for 1942 ... the United States' Cavite Naval Base, 25 miles distant from Manila, has begun nightly blackouts as a "precaution." ... German army troops capture the Russian city of Rostov, the gateway to the vitally important Caucasus oil fields.

December 5, 1941

The new Hickam Air Base library, near Pearl Harbor, has opened after taking three days to move 5,500 books from the previous library ... Cuban President Fulgencio Batista asks the Cuban Congress to declare a state of emergency.

December 6, 1941

The Kilauea Volcano Recreation club meets to discuss plans for the upcoming year.

December 7, 1941

The Island of Oahu, including Pearl Harbor and Hickam Air Field, is attacked by the Japanese, bringing the United States into World War II.

April 16, 1942

Using a strange bat, Triplett is 2-for-4 with three RBIs as Columbus hammers Indianapolis 13-2 in the season opener for both teams before 12,242 at the Indians' **Victory Field** (right) ... Triplett broke his bat during batting practice, and the three dozen new bats Columbus ordered to be delivered here did not arrive ... despite the defeat, it was a great day for the concessionaires as they



University of Maryland track star and Marine First Lieutenant Mason F. Chronister serves with Baker Company, First Battalion, 4th Marines. Captured at Corregidor, the Baltimore native dies on June 17, 1942, while a prisoner of war at Cabanatuan Camp #3. Chronister, an outstanding miler for Maryland, dies as a result of gunshot wounds received when a party of the camp's prisoners and guards are ambushed by Filipino guerrillas. There are differing accounts of Chronister's burial; he may have been buried in the main Cabanatuan camp cemetery, on the Cabanatuan hospital grounds, or somewhere within the barrio itself. The DPAA writes that Chronister was "buried across a creek from the Cabanatuan city dump in a grave reportedly marked by a cross." His remains have not been accounted for to this date.

Hooper Triplett [6 of 6]:

reported sales of 9,600 bottles of beer, 7,200 cokes and 1,680 bottles of other soft drinks ... Indianapolis' club secretary was so pleased with the crowd that he walked out into the grandstand and up to the man in the distant last row on the north corner of the stadium and gave him a season pass.

June 4, 1942

The Cardinals assign Triplett to the Houston Buffaloes for "additional seasoning."

June 5, 1942

In St. Louis to receive treatment for an arm injury, Triplett receives permission to return home to see his seriously ill mother.

June 10, 1942

The Rochester Red Wings acquire outfield Hooper Triplett ... Triplett had injured his arm earlier this spring and was hitting only .195 before having surgery.

June 21, 1942

Triplett is 4-for-7 in a doubleheader with Buffalo and reinjures his throwing arm and is replaced in left field by Escal Burnett.



WELCOME BACK—Manager Kemp Wicker of the Carolina team, has a few words of greeting for Hooper Triplett, who was the 1940 Sally League hitting champ at a Red Bird after the North Carolinian had reported to the locals from Columbus Ohio yesterday. Triplett will be ready for action at Golden Park this week-end. Staff Photo

"Hooper Triplett, the "Wings' latest addition to the outfield battalion, is a Carolina hill billy. Look for the colorful Southerner to do a handspring at the plate some day, then wind up and hit the ball out of the park."

- Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, June 24, 1942

"If Hooper Triplett new outfielder of the Rochester Red Wings ever attains the heights of major stardom his admirers won't have to expend any effort getting a town named after him to perpetuate his fame. There is one all ready and he was born in it. It's Triplett, North Carolina, is 'just a piece' down the road from Boone, home of Appalachian Teachers' College, where Hooper got a peek at higher education."

- The Bayonne (N.J.) Times, July 1, 1942

July 17, 1943

Triplett participates in the Army-Navy All-Star game played in Greensboro.

May 4, 1946

After being released by the Army, Triplett rejoins the Columbus Red Birds.

May 22, 1946

After only one at bat, the Red Birds send Triplett to the South Atlantic League Columbus Cardinals.

August 11, 1946

Triplett, who was suspended last week for what was announced then as an "infraction of club rules" is suspended indefinitely and fined \$500 by the Sally League for betting on the August 3 game between Columbus and the Columbia Reds ... Triplett had bet on Reds and plays three innings of the game before he is pulled by manager Kemp Wicker, who had been informed during the contest of Triplett's bet.

August 25, 1946

Hooper Triplett, under a lifetime ban by organized baseball for allegedly betting against his own club, today signed a contract to play the outfield for Neuvo Laredo of the Mexican League

August 26, 1946

Triplett faces a cold welcome at the Mexico border as Mexican League President Jorge Pasquel orders the Nuevo Laredo club to cancel its contract with Triplett, who has been barred permanently from organized baseball in the United States on a charge of betting against his own team.

April 12, 1988

Triplett dies of cancer on April 12, 1988, in Statesville, North Carolina, at the age of 68.