

Pinch Hits, "George Ely, One-Armed Wonder"

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Despite the handicap of having only one arm, Los Angeles native **George Ely** establishes a reputation of being one of the fastest semipro players on the West Coast.

Not only is Ely a "hard and timely hitter," but he is "lightning-fast fielder." Baseball scribes opine that Ely can show the average player who is in "possession of his full quota of hands," several things of value when it comes to how the game should be played.

Born George Alphonso Ely on April 28, 1888, to Joseph and Kate Swain in Glendale, California. When he is three years old, he steals a ride on a beer delivery truck when he loses his balance and falls between the truck's wheels, crushing his right arm, eventually causing its amputation.

Ely first gains notice when he stars on the Los Angeles high school team as pitcher and second baseman, making good at all stages of the game.

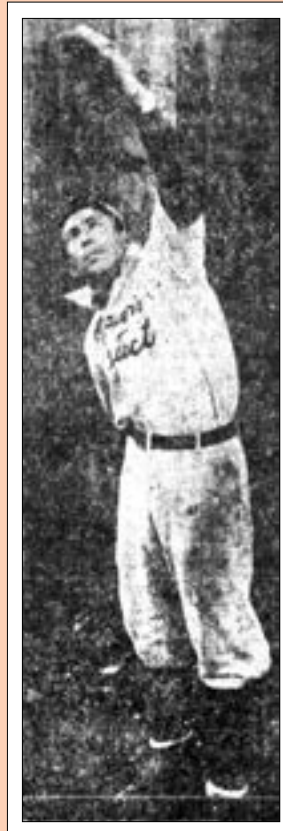
When the Sioux Indians, a travelling semipro team, make their way to Los Angeles during the winter of 1906, a 17-year-old Ely joins the team, traveling through the country with them for a salary of \$50 per month. He sends \$40 to his mother and keeps \$10, which he uses for expenses.

In 1908, Ely is holding down second base on Sundays for the Salt Lake Railroad team company in the semipro Pacific League when it's noted that Ely is "quite handy" with a gun, despite having only one arm. The only one-arm player in Southern California, Ely has "good habits." During his spare moments he takes a course in telegraphy in the dispatcher's office at Salt Lake.

His play with the negro-based Los Angeles Giants and the Maiers' team of Los Angeles is so good that in May 1909, he signs with a team in Caldwell, Idaho, to play second base. While in Caldwell he draws the highest salary ever paid to a semipro player in the State League. One of his Caldwell teammates is pitcher Jess Buckles, who will eventually play for the New York Yankees in 1916.

In 1908 he signs with the Salt Lakes of the California Winter League, which wins two pennants with Ely on the roster, one in the Southern State League and the other in the last Summer league, and was a runner-up in the California Winter League series. His salary is so good, that he is able to turn down more lucrative offers from East Coast teams.

**MAN WITH ONE ARM
CAN PLAY BASEBALL**
—
**RIGHT-ARMED TWIRLER WHO
KNOWS THE GAME**



1909 - The Maiers' Baseball Club



Top Row (Left to Right): James Wilson, substitute; Art Hensling, pitcher; Doug Hoffman, catcher; Frank Benkert, manager; George Ely, second base. **Front row:** Jake Wilson, right field; Kelley, third base; Koeller, first base; Hugh Garrity, centerfield; Leonard, left field; Gus Nast, captain and shortstop.

In 1913 and 1914, Ely plays with the Maiers team of the California Winter League, and is one of the leading hitters on the team with a .321 batting average.

In 1914, in a game against the San Diego Pantages, champion of the California Winter league, Ely is 3-for-4 with a single, a triple and a home run against Pantages' pitcher Franz Hosp, a 20-game winner for the PCL's Los Angeles Angels in 1908.

In February 1916, Ely is one of seven infielders listed on the Oakland Oaks' pre-season roster.

A telegraph operator for the Union Pacific Railroad, George Ely dies in 1967 in Newport Beach, California.