

= Jack Chesbro =

John Dwight Chesbro ( June 5 , 1874 ? November 6 , 1931 ) was a Major League Baseball ( MLB ) pitcher . Nicknamed " Happy Jack " , Chesbro played for the Pittsburgh Pirates ( 1899 ? 1902 ) , the New York Highlanders ( 1903 ? 1909 ) , and the Boston Red Sox ( 1909 ) . Chesbro finished his career with a win @-@ loss record of 198 @-@ 132 , an earned run average of 2 @.@ 68 , and 1 @,@ 265 strikeouts . His 41 wins during the 1904 season remains an American League record . Though some pitchers have won more games in some seasons prior to 1901 , historians demarcating 1901 as the beginning of ' modern @-@ era ' major league baseball refer to and credit Jack Chesbro and his 1904 win @-@ total as the modern era major league record and its holder . Some view Chesbro 's 41 wins in a season as an unbreakable record .

Chesbro 's 1904 pitching totals of 51 games started and 48 complete games also fall into the same historical category as his 1904 wins total , as they are all @-@ time American League single @-@ season records . These 1904 single @-@ season totals for games started and complete games , as the wins total , are also the most recorded by a pitcher in either the American or National League , since the beginning of the twentieth century and the co @-@ existence of the American and National Leagues as major leagues . If one demarcates 1901 as the beginning of major league baseball 's modern era , Jack Chesbro holds the modern era major league historical single @-@ season records for wins by a pitcher ( 41 ) , games started by a pitcher ( 51 ) , and complete games pitched ( 48 ) .

Chesbro was elected to the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1946 by the Veterans Committee , though he had received little consideration from the Baseball Writers ' Association of America ( BBWAA ) . Some baseball historians consider the 1946 election a mistake , and believe that Chesbro was elected solely on the basis of his 1904 season .

= = Early life = =

He was born John D. Chesbro on June 5 , 1874 in Houghtonville , a village in North Adams , Massachusetts . He was the fourth of five children of Chad Brown Chesebrough , a shoemaker , and Martha Jane Fralensburgh .

In 1892 , Chesbro began playing for a sandlot ball team in Houghtonville . He worked in 1894 as an attendant at the Middletown State Homeopathic Hospital in Middletown , New York in order to play for the Asylums , the team representing the mental hospital . There , an inmate gave Chesbro the nickname " Happy Jack " , due to his pleasant demeanor .

= = Professional career = =

= = = Minor leagues ( 1895 ? 1899 ) = = =

Chesbro began his professional career in minor league baseball in 1895 . That year , he pitched for the Albany Senators of the New York State League until they folded , at which point he joined the Johnstown Buckskins . When the league disbanded during the season , he joined the Springfield Maroons of the Eastern League . In 1896 , Chesbro pitched for the Roanoke Magicians of the Virginia League , until it disbanded . He pitched the remainder of the 1896 season in Cooperstown , New York for the Cooperstown Athletics . There , the local newspaper shortened his last name to " Chesbro " so that it would fit in the box score .

Chesbro pitched for the Richmond Bluebirds of the Atlantic League from 1897 through 1899 . After the 1898 season , he was drafted by Ned Hanlon of the Baltimore Orioles . However , Hanlon took a job with the Brooklyn Superbas and the Orioles were nearly contracted , resulting in Chesbro not signing with Baltimore , as Hanlon allowed the option to lapse . He returned to Richmond for the 1899 season .

== = Major League Baseball ( 1899 ? 1909 ) == =

Chesbro was sold by Richmond to the Pittsburgh Pirates on July 7 , 1899 for \$ 1 @, @ 500 ( \$ 42 @, @ 666 in current dollar terms ) . He made his Major League Baseball ( MLB ) debut with the Pirates on July 12 , 1899 . He recorded a 6 ? 9 win ? loss record for the 1899 Pirates . After the season , on December 8 , 1899 , Chesbro was traded with George Fox , Art Madison , John O 'Brien , and \$ 25 @, @ 000 ( \$ 711 @, @ 100 in current dollar terms ) to the Louisville Colonels for Honus Wagner , Fred Clarke , Bert Cunningham , Mike Kelley , Tacks Latimer , Tommy Leach , Tom Messitt , Deacon Phillippe , Claude Ritchey , Rube Waddell , Jack Wadsworth , and Chief Zimmer . The Louisville club dissolved that offseason , and Chesbro , Fox , Madison and O 'Brien were assigned to Pittsburgh in March as the National League ( NL ) reduced from 12 to eight teams .

After going 15 ? 13 for the 1900 Pirates , Chesbro won 21 games for the 1901 Pirates , while leading the NL with six shutouts . He went 28 ? 6 with a 2 @. @ 17 earned run average ( ERA ) for the 1902 Pirates , leading the NL in wins and shutouts . The Pirates won the National League pennant in 1901 and 1902 .

At the end of the 1902 season , the upstart American League ( AL ) began to entice NL stars to join their league by offering competitive salaries . Chesbro agreed to sign with a new AL franchise , the New York Highlanders ( presently known as the New York Yankees ) , for the 1903 season , for a \$ 1 @, @ 000 bonus ( \$ 27 @, @ 350 in current dollar terms ) to join the AL . The news broke when Jesse Tannehill , who also agreed to join the Highlanders , told Pirates owner Barney Dreyfuss about the planned defection while under the influence of pain medication . When he refused to participate in a postseason series , Dreyfuss released Chesbro from the Pirates .

Chesbro pitched the Highlanders ' first game . He finished the 1903 season with a 21 ? 15 record . Chesbro began throwing a spitball in the 1904 season , which he learned from Elmer Stricklett , the inventor of the spitball . Chesbro also began working on a " slow ball " . That year , he started 51 games and finished 48 while posting a 1 @. @ 82 ERA , striking out 239 batters , and recording 41 wins and 48 complete games over 454 2 ? 3 innings pitched , setting MLB records for wins , complete games , and innings pitched in a season . That year , no other pitcher in the league won more than 26 . Chesbro won 14 straight games from May 14 through July 4 , a New York franchise record that stood until Roger Clemens broke it in 2001 . His 239 strikeouts remained a team record until Ron Guidry struck out 248 in 1978 . On the last day of the season , in a game against the Boston Americans ( now known as the Boston Red Sox ) , he threw a wild pitch in the top of the ninth inning , allowing the winning run to score from third base and causing the Highlanders to lose the pennant to Boston . The ruling on this play was controversial . Even after Chesbro 's death in 1931 , his widow , with the support of former Highlanders manager Clark Griffith , continued to claim that the pitch was a passed ball , and blamed the winning run on catcher Red Kleinow .

Before the 1905 season , Chesbro announced that he had created a pitch he called the " jump ball " . He struggled in the 1905 season , registering a 19 @- @ 15 record . During the 1905 season , Chesbro was involved in the first squeeze play in baseball . At third base , Chesbro mistakenly thought he had received a steal sign from manager Clark Griffith , while Willie Keeler bunted for a hit . As Chesbro scored , Griffith made a note of the play and taught it in spring training the following season .

Many baseball observers expected Chesbro to return to form in 1906 . That season , Chesbro registered a 23 ? 17 record while leading the AL in earned runs allowed . He was removed from his starts sixteen times , the most in the AL .

Chesbro announced he would work on keeping his weight down prior to the 1907 season , but announced his intentions to retire in February 1907 . In March 1907 , he announced he would return , but not at a pay cut . He signed a new contract two weeks into the 1907 season , in which he went 10 ? 10 .

After the 1907 season , Chesbro announced that he was giving up the experimental spitball , intending to return to the " old style of pitching " in 1908 . He finished the 1908 season with a 14 ? 20 record .

Prior to the 1909 season , Chesbro was assigned to the Indianapolis Indians of the American

Association , a minor league affiliate of the Highlanders . However , Chesbro threatened to retire if transferred there , and did not report to the Highlanders at first . Chesbro made nine appearances for the Highlanders in 1909 , before he was waived and claimed by the Boston Red Sox in September 1909 . Chesbro pitched one game for the Red Sox , the season finale against the Yankees . The Red Sox returned Chesbro to the Highlanders prior to the 1910 season , but he was placed on the ineligible list after he refused to report to the minor leagues .

= = Post @-@ MLB career = =

Chesbro returned to Massachusetts during the 1910 Major League Baseball season , where he worked on a farm in Conway , Massachusetts that he purchased a decade prior . He pitched for a semi @-@ professional baseball team in nearby Whitinsville , Massachusetts , leading them to a championship . Chesbro coached for Massachusetts Agricultural College ( presently known as the University of Massachusetts Amherst ) in 1911 and continued to pitch for semipro clubs in Massachusetts .

Chesbro met with Highlanders owner Frank J. Farrell and new manager Harry Wolverton in February 1912 about attempting a comeback . Wolverton agreed to give Chesbro a chance at pitching for the Highlanders . However , before leaving for camp he reconsidered and released Chesbro . Chesbro 's request for reinstatement as a free agent was granted in March , while the Highlanders granted him his unconditional release . Chesbro decided to travel to Hot Springs , Arkansas , where teams participated in spring training , in an attempt to find a team willing to give him a chance at a comeback . He worked out with Brooklyn and Pittsburgh , but both teams passed on him .

Chesbro appeared in an old @-@ timers game at Braves Field , sponsored by The Boston Post to benefit Boston Children 's Hospital , on September 11 , 1922 . He served as a Washington Senators coach in 1924 , which were managed by his former Highlanders manager , Clark Griffith . However , he and Ben Egan were let go when the Senators hired Al Schacht on June 1 . In 1927 , he managed a minor league team in South Deerfield , Massachusetts , pitching for the team on occasion .

= = Legacy = =

Chesbro was inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1946 balloting by the Veterans Committee , which considers individuals who are eligible for the Hall of Fame , but no longer eligible to be elected by the Baseball Writers ' Association of America ( BBWAA ) . That year , the Veterans Committee elected eleven players : Chesbro , Jesse Burkett , Frank Chance , Johnny Evers , Clark Griffith , Tommy McCarthy , Joe McGinnity , Eddie Plank , Joe Tinker , Rube Waddell , and Ed Walsh . During years where Chesbro was eligible on the BBWAA ballot , Chesbro received zero votes in the 1936 balloting , one vote in the 1937 balloting , two votes in the 1938 balloting , and six votes in the 1939 balloting , zero votes in the 1942 balloting , and zero votes in the 1945 balloting .

Chesbro 's 1904 record for games won in a season ( 41 wins ) has stood for over a century ? one of the oldest major records in baseball , or in any other sport . Under current playing practices , his record is unbreakable . Chesbro started 51 games that season ( plus 4 relief appearances ) and pitched 48 complete games , for a record of 41 ? 12 . Today , it is uncommon for a pitcher to start even 35 games in a season and complete games are a rarity . The only other 40 @-@ win season since 1900 was 40 by Ed Walsh in 1908 , and only three other pitchers in the modern era have won as many as 35--Christy Mathewson ( 37 in 1908 ) , Walter Johnson ( 36 in 1913 ) and Joe McGinnity ( 35 in 1904 ) . Since the pitcher 's mound was lowered to its current height of 10 inches in 1969 , no pitcher has won more than 27 games in a season .

Tinker considered Chesbro one of the six toughest pitchers he faced in MLB . Dan Holmes , who runs the Hall of Fame 's website , called Chesbro " one of the best pitchers in the game at that time . "

However , Chesbro 's induction is considered dubious , as his overall career was overshadowed by his 1904 season . Baseball historian Bill James considers Chesbro to be undeserving of induction to

the Hall of Fame . In particular , James compared Chesbro 's statistics to those of former Pittsburgh Pirate teammates Deacon Phillippe ( 189 ? 109 , 2 @.@ 59 ) , Sam Leever ( 194 ? 100 , 2 @.@ 47 ) , and Jesse Tannehill ( 197 ? 117 , 2 @.@ 80 ) , none of whom are in the Hall of Fame . In his book The Politics of Glory , James charged that the induction of undeserving players created a " second tier " in the Hall of Fame . James claimed that Chesbro was inducted into the Hall of Fame solely on the basis of his 1904 season , even though other pitchers who did not make the Hall of Fame have similar career statistics .

= = Personal life = =

Chesbro married Mabel Suttleworth of Conway , Massachusetts , in 1896 . After his retirement , Chesbro farmed and raised poultry in Conway , where he died on November 6 , 1931 of a myocardial infarction ; he was buried at Howland Cemetery in Conway . Mabel died in 1940 .