

= Elmer Stricklett =

Elmer Griffin Stricklett (August 29 , 1876 ? June 7 , 1964) was an American professional baseball pitcher . He pitched in Major League Baseball for the Chicago White Sox and Brooklyn Superbas from 1904 through 1907 . Including his time in minor league baseball , Stricklett pitched professionally from 1897 through 1912 .

Stricklett is considered one of the pioneers of the spitball . He learned the pitch while playing in the minor leagues . He later taught the spitball to Ed Walsh and Jack Chesbro , both of whom were elected to the National Baseball Hall of Fame .

= = Career = =

Stricklett attended Santa Clara University , where he played college baseball for the Santa Clara Broncos baseball team . He began his professional career in minor league baseball with the Topeka Colts of the Kansas State League in 1897 . In 1898 , he pitched for the Salina Blues and Atchison Huskers of the Kansas State League , before joining the Dallas Colts of the Class @-@ C Texas League later that year . He pitched for the Rock Island ? Moline Islanders of the Class @-@ B Western Association and Kansas City Blues of the Class @-@ A Western League in 1899 . Despite pitching to a 14 ? 1 win ? loss record in 1899 , Kansas City released Stricklett to the Wheeling Stogies of the Class @-@ B Interstate League in 1900 .

Stricklett split the 1900 season with Wheeling and the Toledo Mud Hens , also of the Interstate League , pitching to a 13 @-@ 8 record . In 1901 , Stricklett pitched for the Toledo Swamp Angels of the Western Association and Sacramento Senators of the California League , compiling a 27 @-@ 22 record . In 1902 , he pitched for the Newark Sailors of the Class @-@ A Eastern League and the Sacramento Gilt Edges of the California League , finishing the season with a 23 @-@ 22 record . While pitching for Sacramento , Stricklett mastered the spitball . In 1903 , Stricklett pitched for Los Angeles and the Seattle Chinooks of the Pacific National League , going 24 @-@ 8 .

The Chicago White Sox of the American League (AL) invited Stricklett to spring training in 1904 , where he roomed with Ed Walsh . Stricklett taught Walsh the spitball . After pitching in one game for the White Sox , allowing eight earned runs in seven IP , he received his release , and pitched for the Milwaukee Brewers of the Class @-@ A American Association for the remainder of the season , where he pitched to a 24 @-@ 11 record in 267 innings pitched (IP) . The Boston Americans of the AL purchased the rights to Stricklett in August 1904 , but allowed him to remain in Milwaukee .

The Brooklyn Superbas of the National League (NL) chose Stricklett from Milwaukee after the 1904 season in the Rule 5 draft . He debuted with the Superbas in the 1905 season , pitching to a 9 ? 18 record and a 3 @. @ 34 earned run average (ERA) in 237 1 ? 3 IP . His 18 losses were ninth most in the league . Among NL pitchers , only Stricklett and Deacon Phillippe allowed no home runs that season . In 1906 , Stricklett went 14 ? 18 with a 2 @. @ 72 ERA in 291 2 ? 3 IP , the ninth most losses and IP in the NL that season . He appeared in 41 games , tied for fifth in the NL with Vic Willis and Jake Weimer , and his 28 complete games and five shutouts were both tied for tenth most in the NL . However , he also allowed 88 earned runs , sixth most in the league .

Stricklett pitched on Opening Day for the Superbas in 1907 , a game the Superbas lost . That year , Stricklett had a 12 ? 14 record and a 2 @. @ 27 ERA in 229 2 ? 3 IP . His 25 complete games were eighth best in the NL , while his four shutouts tied for tenth . In four MLB seasons , Stricklett went 35 ? 51 with a 2 @. @ 84 ERA and 10 shutouts .

After the 1907 season , Stricklett returned to the California League to pitch for the San Jose Prune Prickers and Sacramento Sacts , and refused to report to Brooklyn in 1908 as his wife wanted him to remain closer to their California home . As the California League was not recognized in organized baseball at this time , Stricklett was banned by MLB for four years . Though he applied for reinstatement , his banishment was upheld . Stricklett continued to pitch for San Jose through 1910 , pitching to a 23 @-@ 12 record in 1909 and a 19 @-@ 14 record in 1910 .

After the 1910 season , Stricklett he retired from baseball . However , he applied for reinstatement in 1912 , which was granted by the National Commission . Stricklett was fined \$ 100 (\$ 2 @, @ 452

in current dollar terms) for playing outside organized baseball for the previous three years . The Superbas sold his rights to the Binghamton Bingoes of the New York State League , and he pitched for the team . In minor league baseball , Stricklett won 20 games in a season at least five times , compiling a 169 @-@ 99 record across nine seasons .

= = = Spitball = = =

Stricklett denied inventing the spitball , though he claimed to be the first pitcher to master the spitball and to feature it exclusively . To achieve the pitch , he would moisten the ball with a spot the size of two of his fingers . The pitch would act " exactly the same way as reverse English does on a billiard ball " .

Stricklett learned the spitball from minor league teammate George Hildebrand in 1902 , who learned about it from Frank Corridon . Stricklett played an important role in popularizing the spitball . Stricklett taught the spitball to Jack Chesbro , who saw him use the pitch while pitching in minor league baseball . Though Chesbro had experimented with the pitch in the minor leagues , Stricklett showed him how to master it in 1904 . Stricklett taught it to Ed Walsh while they roomed together with the White Sox .

= = Later life = =

Stricklett retired to Mountain View , California , where he grew apricots on a ranch . He died in Santa Cruz , California , at the age of 87 .