

= Charlie Getzein =

Charles H. Getzein ( sometimes spelled Getzien ) ( February 14 , 1864 ? June 19 , 1932 ) was an American professional baseball player from 1883 to 1891 . He played all or parts of nine seasons in Major League Baseball with four different National League teams from 1884 to 1891 . He was the first German in MLB history

Getzein was known by the nickname " Pretzels " . Sources conflict as to whether the nickname was derived from his German ethnicity or from the belief that he was able to throw a " double curve " following " the curves of a pretzel . " During nine major league seasons , Getzein compiled a 145 @-@ 139 win @-@ loss record and a 3 @.@ 46 earned run average ( ERA ) . He threw 277 complete games , a total that ranks 58th in major league history . Only three pitchers threw more complete games in major league careers shorter than Getzein 's nine @-@ year career .

Getzein had his most extensive playing time with the Detroit Wolverines , compiling records of 30 @-@ 11 and 29 @-@ 13 in 1886 and 1887 . In the 1887 World Series ( which Detroit won , 10 games to 5 ) , Getzein pitched six complete games and compiled a 4 @-@ 2 record with a 2 @.@ 48 ERA . He also won 23 games for the Boston Beaneaters in 1890 .

= = Early years = =

Getzein was born in 1864 , but sources are in conflict as to whether he was born in Chicago or Germany . Getzein began playing baseball as a boy in Chicago . He played as an amateur in the Chicago City League .

= = Professional baseball = =

= = = The " Pretzel Curve " = = =

During his career , Getzein 's drew acclaim for his curveball . Getzein 's version of the pitch was sometimes referred to as the " pretzel curve . " Sporting Life described Getzein 's unusual delivery as follows : " In delivering his ' pretzels ' ' Getz ' faces third base with one foot in either corner of the lower end of the box . Bending the left knee slightly , he draws his right arm well back . Then , straightening up quickly , he slides the left foot forward with a characteristic little skip , and , bringing his arm around with a swift overhand swing , drives the ball in at a lively pace . "

After a Getzein victory over the Kansas City Cowboys in 1886 , the Detroit Free Press wrote : " The Pretzel is all right . He went into the box to @-@ day and pitched one of his finest , his curves circling around in the form of the delicious pastry from which Getz takes his sobriquet . " However , the editor of the Grand Rapids World opined that Getzein 's " curved ball " was a fiction . He wrote :

" The baseball enthusiasts claim for Getzein that he is able to so pitch a ball that it will describe the arc of a circle on a horizontal plane before reaching the catcher , and that therein lies the secret of his marvelous pitching . . . Scientifically , this theory is utterly absurd . The forces that act upon a ball pitched by Getzein are not different from those which operate upon a projectile thrown from any other source , and the results must be the same , and governed by the same laws . The curves are in the imagination of Getzein 's admirers . When the ball leaves his hand it is beyond his control , and it moves forward from the impulse last given it as it leaves his hand . It is then controlled by the force of propulsion , the resistance of the atmosphere , and gravitation . . . . Getzein 's antic and deceptive motions may deceive the batter , so that he is unable to discover the exact course of the ball in time to strike it , but he cannot throw a ball so as to make a curve on the horizontal plane . "

The Scientific American magazine responded in July 1886 by publishing an article written by Henry Chadwick ( accompanied by several diagrams , two of which are reproduced above ) explaining the physics behind the curve ball pitch .

In 1891 , O. P. Caylor in Outing magazine examined " The Theory and Introduction of Curve Pitching " and noted that many " ignorant ball players " had believed that Getzein was capable of

throwing a " double curve . " Caylor deemed the " double curve " to be " an ocular delusion " , but claimed that Getzein 's nickname was based on the delusion : " [ W ] e have the nickname of ' the Pretzel Pitcher , ' given to Getzein by players who imagine the curve from his hands comes at them with the curves of a pretzel . "

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= = = Grand Rapids = = =

Getzein was listed at 5 feet , 10 inches , and 172 pounds , and he batted and threw right handed . In 1882 , Getzein made his professional baseball debut with the Grand Rapids , Michigan , team in the Northwestern League . According to an account published in The Sporting News , he " pitched his puzzling twisters and curves in the Northwestern League while that organization was in existence . "

During the 1884 season , Getzein started and completed 30 games , and threw 11 shutouts , for Grand Rapids , compiling a record of 27 ? 4 win ? loss record with a 0 @.@ 52 earned run average ( ERA ) .

= = = Detroit Wolverines = = =

On August 9 , 1884 , the Grand Rapids team was dropped from the Northwestern League and disbanded . Jack Chapman , manager of the Detroit Wolverines , seized the opportunity to sign five former Grand Rapids players , including " what is known as the ' G ' battery -- Getzein and Gastfield . " The Detroit Free Press reported that Getzein " has been a formidable man to face in the Northwestern League , in one instance striking out sixteen batters . "

Getzein made his major league debut at Detroit 's Recreation Park on August 13 , 1884 . Getzein faced Cleveland and did not allow an earned run . The Detroit Free Press took note of Getzein 's performance :

" Getzien caused the Cleveland batters to pound the air thirty @-@ seven times , and eleven more strikes were called . It is a great record , and one that is seldom equaled . He had great speed at the outset , and struck out six of the first eight men who came to the bat . He could not maintain the pace , however , and was not so effective in the latter portion of the game , but was sufficiently so to prevent any one from earning a run . "

Despite Getzein 's pitching performance , Detroit lost the game by a 1 ? 0 score as Cleveland scored an unearned run . Getzein went on to start ( and complete ) 17 games for the Wolverines during the remaining two months of the 1883 season . He posted a 5 ? 12 record for a Detroit team that finished in last place in the National League with a 28 ? 84 record , 56 games out of contention . Getzein provided one of the few highlights for the 1884 Wolverines , pitching a six @-@ inning no @-@ hitter against the Philadelphia Phillies on October 1 , 1884 . The Detroit Free Press reported on Getzein 's no @-@ hitter as follows :

" When Spalding compiles the history of remarkable games for his Guide for 1885 , it will embrace the fact that in the Detroit @-@ Philadelphia game of October 1 Getzien , the Detroit pitcher , was not batted for a base ? a feat seldom accomplished . It should contain further fact that of eighteen men at bat he struck out ten , and of the other eight but one hit the ball beyond the diamond ? Purcell , in the first inning , a fly to Weidman . Of the other seven , only three hit to the diamond , or a total of four balls struck inside the foul lines . Of the eighteen , [ Detroit catcher ] Gastfield put out eleven and threw out three others , Bennett , Scott and Weidman each had a fly , and Jones threw one out at first . "

Getzein finished the 1884 season with a 1 @.@ 95 ERA , third best in the National League behind Old Hoss Radbourn ( 1 @.@ 38 ) and Charlie Sweeney ( 1 @.@ 95 ) , both of whom played for the league champion Providence Grays .

Over the course of the full 1884 season , pitching for both Grand Rapids and Detroit , Getzein

started and completed 47 games and pitched 423 @-@ 1 / 3 innings .

In 1885 , Getzein compiled a 12 ? 25 record as his ERA jumped to 3 @.@ 03 . His record in 1885 was again impacted by playing with an noncompetitive team . The 1885 Wolverines finished the season in sixth place with a 41 ? 67 record .

In 1886 , Getzein and the Wolverines saw their fortunes rise as the Wolverines assembled one of the best hitting teams in National League history featuring , among others , Dan Brouthers , Sam Thompson , Hardy Richardson , and Jack Rowe . Despite having a 3 @.@ 03 ERA ( precisely the same as his 1885 performance ) , Getzein won a career @-@ high 30 victories against 11 losses . Getzein was not the Wolverines ' leading pitcher in 1886 , as teammate Lady Baldwin led the National League with 42 wins . The 1886 Wolverines finished in second place , 2 ½ games behind the Chicago White Stockings , with an 87 ? 36 record and a .707 winning percentage .

In 1887 , Getzein was the leading pitcher on a Detroit Wolverines team that won the National League pennant and then defeated the St. Louis Browns in the 1887 World Series . Getzein compiled a 29 ? 13 record and a 3 @.@ 73 ERA , leading the league in winning percentage ( .690 ) but also in home runs allowed ( 24 ) . In September 1887 , a group of influential fans in Detroit contributed money to purchase " an elegant two hundred dollar gold watch and chain " for Getzein to express their admiration for Getzein 's " magnificent work for the club . "

In the 1887 World Series ( which Detroit won , 10 games to 5 ) , Getzein pitched six complete games and compiled a 4 ? 2 record with a 2 @.@ 48 ERA . On October 17 , 1887 , Getzein pitched a no @-@ hitter through the first eight innings in Game 10 of the World Series played before 10 @,@ 000 spectators at the Polo Grounds in New York . The Detroit Free Press wrote : " Getzien made a remarkable showing . Up to and including the eighth inning only twenty @-@ seven men went to the bat and not a clean hit had been scored . Not till the ninth did the world beaters succeed in getting a hit , and then they failed to score the much desired run . "

In 1888 , Getzein compiled an 18 ? 22 record and a 3 @.@ 05 ERA . He started 46 games and completed 45 of them with 404 innings pitched . However , Getzein lost his role at the team 's leading pitcher , as Pete Conway compiled a 30 ? 14 record and a 2 @.@ 25 ERA for the 1888 Wolverines . After Getzein gave up 10 runs in an August 1888 game against Washington , the Detroit Free Press dubbed him the " Pulverized Pretzel . " The newspaper reported : " The Detroiters were defeated again to @-@ day ... simply because Getzein could not keep the ball away from the Senatorial bat . When he pitched high they hit it . When he delivered his famous drop , he was knocked out of the lot , and his in and out curves were as big as balloons to Ted Sullivan 's men . " As the 1888 season progressed , relations between Getzein and the Detroit manager became strained . After a game in which Getzein gave up 21 hits against Boston , The Sporting Life reported on speculation that Getzein may have intentionally thrown the game :

" The Getzein episode makes Detroiters weary . The Bostons have no license to make 21 hits off the Pretzel when he pitches his game . Either he was not in condition to pitch or he didn 't try to . . . . If the latter , and he repeated his performance against the Kansas Citys a few years ago , when he deliberately tossed the balls to the plate and permitted the Cowboys to make 13 runs in one inning , why no one here would mourn much if he was fined to the limit . What the merits of his quarrel with Watkins are of course are not known here . But Getzein is inclined to be very free with his tongue . Considering his fine treatment here it is time for him to get over his childish humors and do the best he knows how whenever called on . "

= = = Later years = = =

Getzein 's career with the Wolverines ended after the 1888 season . On March 5 , 1889 , he was sold by Detroit to the Indianapolis Hoosiers . During the 1889 season , he compiled an 18 ? 22 record and a 4 @.@ 54 ERA for the Hoosiers and led the National League in home runs allowed with 27 .

After a sub par season with the Hoosiers , Getzein was acquired by the Boston Beaneaters in March 1890 . He returned to good form in 1890 , compiling a 23 ? 17 record with a 3 @.@ 19 ERA for the fifth @-@ place Beaneaters . While pitching for Detroit in 1887 , Getzein was teamed up with

catcher Charlie Gangel , and the pair became known as the " Pretzel Battery " because of their shared German ethnicity . When Getzein signed with Boston in 1890 , he was reunited with Gangel . The Sporting Life reported : " The signing of Getzein by the Boston League Club re @-@ unites the famous ' Pretzel Battery , ' Getzein and Gangel , of the Detroit ex @-@ champions . "

Getzein began the 1891 season with Boston , but he was released by the team on July 16 , 1891 , after compiling a 4 ? 5 record in nine starts . He attempted a comeback with the Cleveland Spiders in August 1891 , but he appeared in only one game for the Spiders , allowing nine runs in nine innings . He concluded his major league career appearing in 13 games for the St. Louis Browns in 1892 .

In 1894 , Getzein was reported to be playing first base for a Chicago City League team .

= = = Career statistics = = =

During nine major league seasons , he compiled a 145 ? 139 record and a 3 @.@ 46 earned run average ( ERA ) in 296 games . He totaled 292 games started and threw 277 complete games , a total that ranks 58th in major league history . Only three pitchers in major league history ( Ed Morris , Mark Baldwin , and Hall of Famer Albert Spalding ) threw more complete games in careers shorter than Getzein 's nine @-@ year career .

Getzein 's record for complete games is based in part on the customs of the 1880s . In 1915 , Baseball Magazine reported that managers were not allowed to freely pull the starting pitcher from a game in the bygone era . It cited an incident involving Getzein to illustrate the old practice :

" The Nationals got onto Getzein in the fourth inning and batted him all over the field . In the fifth inning they kept up the slugging until Getzein said he was ill , and Manager Hanlon wanted the Nationals to allow Getzein to retire , claiming that he was too sick to play . Baker , captaining the home club , said he would call a doctor and have him examine Getzein , and if the latter was really sick he would probably allow the change to be made . Dr. Bond , who happened to be present , was called on , and he examined the pitcher , while the crowd guyed Getzein terribly . The doctor announced that he did not consider Getzein sick , only discouraged at the pounding he had received , and that he would be able to finish the game . "

= = Family and death = =

Getzien was married to Rose Dibble . He died in June 1932 after suffering a heart attack at his home in Chicago . He was buried at Concordia Cemetery in Forest Park , Illinois .