

= Paul Krichell =

Paul Bernard Krichell ( December 19 , 1882 ? June 4 , 1957 ) was a Major League Baseball catcher , best known for being the head scout for the New York Yankees for 37 years until his death . Krichell 's talent evaluations and signings played a key role in building up the Yankees ' run of success from the Murderers ' Row teams of the 1920s to the 1950s teams led by Casey Stengel .

Krichell began his professional career in the minor leagues , playing as the reserve catcher for the St. Louis Browns before a serious injury threatened his career . He continued to play in the minor leagues and began to move into coaching before Yankees manager Ed Barrow signed him as a scout in 1920 . Considered one of the greatest scouts in baseball history , Krichell signed over 200 players who later played professional baseball , including future Baseball Hall of Famers Lou Gehrig , Hank Greenberg , Phil Rizzuto , Whitey Ford , and Tony Lazzeri . His recommendation of Stengel as the Yankees manager was instrumental in Stengel 's appointment in 1948 . Barrow called Krichell " the best judge of baseball players he ever saw " .

= = Early life = =

Krichell was born in Paris , France , the son of a German cabinetmaker and youngest of nine children . He grew up in The Bronx , near Yankee Stadium . Krichell made his professional baseball debut in 1903 as a catcher with the Ossining , New York club in the Hudson River League 's inaugural season . He moved to the Hartford Senators of the Connecticut League in 1906 and spent most of the following three years with the Newark Indians of the Eastern League . For the latter part of the 1909 season and the whole of 1910 , Krichell played for the Montreal Royals at third base . In 1910 , he played 102 games for the team , achieving a batting average of .249 and hitting 14 doubles . Krichell began his long association with manager Ed Barrow that year when the latter took charge of the Royals .

= = Playing and managing career = =

In 1911 , Krichell joined the St. Louis Browns as a reserve catcher , playing 28 games with a .232 batting average , 19 hits and 8 runs batted in during 82 at bats . The following year , he managed 59 games while sharing catching duties with Jim Stephens . In 161 at bats , Krichell achieved 35 hits and a .217 batting average . His fielding percentage was .959 that season . Ty Cobb of the Detroit Tigers stole second , third , and home plate in the same inning of a game while Krichell was catching . In a later game , Krichell 's arm was almost detached from his shoulder when Cobb spiked his arm with his cleats during a play at home plate . The injury effectively ended Krichell 's major league career .

After the 1912 season , the Browns released Krichell , but after recovering from his injury , he played six seasons in the minor leagues . He was the starting catcher for the Buffalo Bisons in 1914 when Babe Ruth made his professional debut with the Baltimore Orioles , hitting a double and a single against his pitching . From 1917 to 1918 , Krichell served as manager for Bridgeport of the Eastern League , making several playing appearances over the two seasons . He resigned on June 27 , 1918 , after two wins were forfeited when he used a player not under contract . He worked in the shipyards during the First World War . During the offseason , Krichell became the owner of a saloon popular with players in the Bronx , before Prohibition forced Krichell to close and return to baseball . For the 1919 season , he coached the New York University baseball team , and after the season ended , he signed with Ed Barrow to become a coach and scout for the Boston Red Sox in the following season .

= = Scouting career = =

Prior to the 1921 season , Barrow was appointed general manager of the New York Yankees and requested that Krichell join him as a full @-@ time scout . At the time , the Yankees had a two @-@

man scouting rotation , and Barrow believed the appointment of Krichell would improve the scouting staff . The first player signed by Krichell was Hinky Haines , an outfielder from Penn State University . He signed catcher Benny Bengough from Buffalo of the International League , and Charlie Caldwell , a Princeton University graduate . Caldwell was used mainly as a batting practice pitcher , appearing in just three games in his major league career . During one practice , Caldwell fractured Wally Pipp 's skull with a high fastball , allowing Lou Gehrig to assume Pipp 's place in the starting lineup .

= = = Discovery of Gehrig = = =

Early in the 1923 season , while traveling to New Brunswick , New Jersey for a baseball game between Columbia University and Rutgers University , Krichell shared a train with the manager of the Columbia squad , Andy Coakley . They discussed Lou Gehrig , a left @-@ handed pitcher on his squad who could also hit , and later that day , Gehrig hit two home runs in three at @-@ bats . Following the game , Krichell spoke with Barrow , saying he had found the " next Babe Ruth " . Skeptical , Barrow sent Krichell to watch Columbia 's next game against New York University , where Gehrig hit a home run that reportedly went out of the stadium . After the game , Krichell persuaded Gehrig to sign for the Yankees for \$ 2 @,@ 000 ( \$ 30 @,@ 000 in 2010 ) for the remainder of 1923 , with a \$ 1 @,@ 500 bonus ( \$ 20 @,@ 000 in 2010 ) . Krichell also asked Gehrig to give up pitching to focus on being a hitter .

After joining up with the team for batting practice in June 1923 , Gehrig was sent by Yankees manager Miller Huggins to the Hartford Senators . After a good start , Gehrig went through a long slump and suffered depression which led him to consider quitting baseball . Upon hearing this , Krichell was sent to Hartford to speak with the star player . He discovered that Gehrig was drinking , boosted his confidence and gave him batting advice , including one of Ty Cobb 's batting tricks . Gehrig started hitting again , and eventually joined the Yankees .

= = Later signings = =

= = = 1920s = = =

Before the 1925 New York Yankees season , Babe Ruth collapsed at a train station in Asheville , North Carolina . Krichell 's actions may have saved Ruth 's life . On the instructions of Huggins , Krichell drove Ruth to hospital , before traveling with Ruth by train to New York , where Ruth had emergency surgery for an " intestinal abscess " that left him hospitalized for six weeks .

The same year , Krichell went to Hartford , Connecticut to sign shortstop Leo Durocher for a \$ 7 @,@ 500 bonus ( \$ 90 @,@ 000 in 2010 ) . When the deal was concluded , Barrow sent Krichell to Salt Lake City to watch young second baseman Tony Lazzeri , who played for the Salt Lake Bees of the Pacific Coast League and hit 60 home runs and achieved over 200 RBIs the previous season . The Bees were asking for \$ 50 @,@ 000 ( \$ 620 @,@ 000 in 2010 ) , but several scouts placed his value ten times lower . The Chicago Cubs were given the option to sign him for a discounted rate , but declined because he had epilepsy . Krichell saw promise in the player and convinced Barrow to buy him . Around the same time , he helped acquire shortstop Mark Koenig from the Minneapolis Millers . These Krichell signings formed part of the 1927 New York Yankees team , considered by many to be the greatest team ever assembled . Four of the starters in this squad were signed by Krichell , including three @-@ quarters of its infield and Mike Gazella , its main backup , who signed for \$ 500 in 1923 ( \$ 10 @,@ 000 in 2010 ) . The Yankees took just four games to defeat the Pittsburgh Pirates and win the 1927 World Series .

To assist at practice for the 1927 season , Krichell signed Billy Werber from Duke University . He left the team after a month , but re @-@ signed after graduating in 1930 . During that time , Krichell was involved in what is considered one of the worst deals from the era . Barrow asked him to travel to Durham , North Carolina to negotiate with the Durham Bulls for an outfielder named Dusty Cooke

. Neither Krichell nor Barrow had seen Cooke ; he was believed to be a great hitter , even though he had hardly played for the Bulls . The Yankees signed him for \$ 15 @,@ 000 ( \$ 200 @,@ 000 in 2010 ) , beating the Cleveland Indians ' offer of \$ 12 @,@ 500 ( \$ 160 @,@ 000 in 2010 ) and an unnamed player in exchange . Cooke turned out to be an injury @-@ prone backup outfielder , and the Yankees gave up on both Cooke and Werber . After the 1933 season , the two were traded to the Boston Red Sox for cash considerations .

In the summer of 1929 , Krichell discovered Hank Greenberg while on a scouting trip in Massachusetts . Krichell believed Greenberg would be the next Lou Gehrig . Krichell offered Greenberg a \$ 10 @,@ 000 contract ( \$ 130 @,@ 000 in 2010 ) on the spot based on his potential and knowing the Yankees were looking for Jewish players to increase their Jewish fanbase . Greenberg discussed the deal with his father but declined it because he knew his opportunities would be limited by the presence of Gehrig as first baseman . Subsequently , he signed with the Detroit Tigers .

== = 1930s == =

In the early 1930s , Krichell focused on Ivy League pitchers , saying he preferred signing pitchers who could think . From Harvard University , he signed Charlie Devens later saying he could have been great had he continued to play baseball , and from Yale University , he scouted pitcher Johnny Broaca who seemed to be heading for stardom after winning 12 games in his first three seasons with the Yankees , but suddenly retired to become a professional boxer . In 1935 , a local scout who worked with Krichell placed Long Island University pitcher Marius Russo in a semi @-@ professional team . When Krichell deemed Russo ready , he signed with the Yankees for \$ 750 , twice becoming a 14 @-@ game winner and being an All @-@ Star in 1941 before injuring his arm . Other Krichell signings from this period included Johnny Murphy , Hank Borowy and Johnny Allen . Murphy , a relief pitcher and four time saves leader , was signed while still in high school in the Bronx and at Krichell 's behest , the Yankees followed Murphy 's education at Fordham University , where he gained baseball experience . Krichell signed Borowy from Fordham University for \$ 8 @,@ 500 and the player later became the ace for the Yankees during the wartime era . Krichell supposedly discovered Allen by a chance encounter when Allen worked as a desk clerk at a Sanford hotel . The story said he recognized Krichell as a scout , told him that he was a pitcher , and that he wanted to try out . Krichell agreed , and impressed by Allen 's ability , signed him to a minor league contract . However , in an interview with J. G. Taylor Spink of The Sporting News , Krichell said while he signed Allen , he did not discover him .

Aside from his Ivy League pitcher focus , Krichell also unearthed several position players . He signed Charlie Keller , a highly touted prospect playing for the University of Maryland . To encourage Keller to sign , Krichell met and had dinner with his family . In 1937 , Krichell signed shortstop Phil Rizzuto , who had tried out with the Brooklyn Dodgers and the New York Giants , but was dismissed by them on the grounds that he was too small . Even so , Krichell decided to look at the infielder and was impressed by the way Rizzuto accomplished double plays ; his technique reminded Krichell of Leo Durocher , one of his favorite players . He signed Rizzuto for \$ 75 a month and sent him to the Yankees ' farm club in Bassett , Virginia .

== = 1940s ? 1950s == =

Krichell 's next target was second baseman Snuffy Stirnweiss from the University of North Carolina . He initially tried to convince him to bypass football for baseball , but the player refused until his father 's death soon after his college graduation altered his priorities , leaving him as the sole supporter of his mother and younger brother . Krichell signed him to a contract soon afterwards . In a mass tryout for the Yankees team , Krichell scouted first baseman Whitey Ford . Krichell realised Ford had a strong arm , and recommended he tried pitching . Developing an effective fast curveball , Ford helped his team win the New York City sandlot ball championship , and was signed by Krichell for \$ 7 @,@ 000 in 1947 ( \$ 70 @,@ 000 in 2010 ) . Ford later became a Hall of Famer and an ace

of the Yankees for most of the 1950s and 1960s .

Krichell played a factor in signing future All @-@ Star Tommy Byrne . He was referred by one of his scouts , Gene McCann , to see Byrne pitch for Wake Forest University . Impressed with what he saw , Krichell signed him for \$ 10 @,@ 000 ( \$ 160 @,@ 000 in 2010 ) . He also signed Red Rolfe and Vic Raschi . Krichell oversaw the expansion of the New York Yankees scouting staff from two men to more than twenty part @-@ time scouts by 1957 . Among the scouts he hired for the Yankees were former players Babe Herman , Atley Donald , Jake Flowers and Johnny Neun . As he hired more scouts , Krichell reduced his own role , becoming the chief scout and regional scout for the New England area .

In 1948 , Krichell was involved in a minor scandal . Harry Nicolas was a high school baseball star in Long Island . The Yankees sent Krichell to scout him and offered him a contract with a blank check , being willing pay up to \$ 20 @,@ 000 for his services . As Nicolas was still in high school , the Yankees were fined \$ 500 by Happy Chandler , the Commissioner of Baseball . Nicolas never reached the Majors . However , Krichell 's recommendation of Casey Stengel for manager of the Yankees in 1948 was instrumental in their front office hiring him .

= = Final days = =

In 1954 , Krichell was honored by the Baseball Writers ' Association of America ( BBWAA ) with the William J. Slocum Memorial Award . Named after the former head sportswriter of the New York Journal American and president of the BBWAA , the award honored his longevity in baseball . The final players Krichell signed were two bonus babies : infielder Tom Carroll from Notre Dame University and Frank Leja , an 18 @-@ year @-@ old first baseman . Krichell advised the Yankees staff to sign Carroll for \$ 30 @,@ 000 ( \$ 240 @,@ 000 in 2010 ) and he thought Leja could be the next Gehrig , but both flopped . By the time he retired , he was the most experienced employee still working for the Yankees .

Krichell died on June 4 , 1957 at his home in the Bronx after a lengthy illness . He had surgery for Crohn 's disease in 1955 after losing 60 pounds in 60 days . His wife of 50 years , Mary , died earlier in the year . He had one daughter , Caroline , and four grandchildren at the time of his death .

= = Scouting style = =

When he first started his scouting career , Krichell followed the example of early baseball scouts . He traveled with the Yankees for spring training to view his signees playing baseball . When the Yankees traveled north to begin their season , Krichell usually followed . He also scouted the local newspapers to look for games in which potential prospects were playing .

Later , his style of scouting was used as a blueprint by scouts to evaluate players . He usually ignored the obvious tools such as ability to hit , size , speed , and human power , saying that " any dope " could see it . When he scouted a prospect , his top priority was checking that the subject could handle the pressure of playing Major League Baseball . When he got word of a promising player , he went to see him play . If Krichell liked what he saw , he discussed the player 's goals and motivation with him and his family . He decided whether the player was ready for the Yankees or one of their farm teams to use . He tended to take a risk with players passed by other teams . He discounted some of a player 's weaknesses if their remaining skills were up to par , for example with Tony Lazzeri , who was a poor fielder . Krichell also was one of the first to notice that intelligence mattered in a game filled with uneducated people . Most of his signings were college graduates who Krichell believed could take advantage of their ability to think .

At other times , Krichell collected some of the best prospects in an area , normally 300 or more , and put them through a four @-@ day workout . It normally consisted of practice in the morning and a full game in the afternoon . There , Krichell and his staff sorted though players they believed could become useful in the organization , and dropped those they thought lacked motivation . The few players who survived the workout were assigned by Krichell to the Yankees Minor League hierarchy .

= = Legacy = =

Krichell is considered one of the greatest scouts in baseball history . Birdie Tebbetts , a member of the Veterans Committee in the 1980s , led a campaign to have Krichell , along with fellow scouts Charlie Barrett and Hugh Alexander , inducted to the Baseball Hall of Fame . Under Hall of Fame rules , scouts are not eligible for induction . Tibbets appealed to the Hall of Fame Board of Directors every year from 1981 to 1986 to make the three scouts members of the Hall of Fame , but with no success . In The Bill James Historical Baseball Abstract , James awards the Paul Krichell Talent Scout Award to an example of a team that has a good chance of signing a player who later becomes a star , who they end up passing on as the result of poor scouting .