

= Bob Ferguson ( infielder ) =

Robert Vavasour Ferguson ( January 31 , 1845 ? May 3 , 1894 ) was an American infielder , league official , manager and umpire in the early days of baseball , playing both before and after baseball became a professional sport . In addition to playing and managing , he served as president of the National Association of Professional Base Ball Players from 1872 through 1875 , the sport 's first entirely professional league . His character and unquestioned honesty were highly regarded during a period in baseball history where the game 's reputation was badly damaged by gamblers and rowdy behavior by players and fans . However , his bad temper and stubbornness were traits that created trouble for him at times during his career , and caused him to be disliked by many . His nickname , " Death to Flying Things " , was derived from his greatness as a defensive player .

= = Early career = =

A native of Brooklyn , Ferguson played for two of New York 's earliest semi @-@ professional clubs in the late 1860s and early 1870s , the Atlantics and Mutuals . On June 14 , 1870 , Ferguson provided the hit that created the tying run and he later scored the winning run in a match against the famous Cincinnati Red Stockings , the first team that was composed entirely of professional players . This win brought to an end the Red Stockings ' 81 consecutive game winning streak . He is credited with being the first player to bat from both sides of home plate , known as switch @-@ hitting , but the practice was not popular at first . Among the explanations for this , it is claimed that , due to his personality , players did not want to emulate him . Managers , however , recognized the practice 's importance soon after , and began to play their players according to the opposing pitcher that day , known today as platooning , and the advantages that switch @-@ hitting posed would later become accepted strategic baseball philosophy , and many players began to experiment with the idea .

= = National Association = =

In 1871 , Ferguson took over the Mutual team as the player @-@ manager . In 33 games , he batted .241 , while the team finished with a 16 ? 17 record , which put them in fifth place at the season 's end . As manager , Ferguson insisted upon implicit obedience from his men , but was forced to leave following the season due to heavy rumors of gambling surrounding the team . For the 1872 season , Ferguson re @-@ joined his Atlantics team , which was now a member of the National Association as well , and he would stay there through the 1874 season . In 1872 , he was elected by the players to be the president of the National Association , an office he held through the 1875 season , the last season of the Association .

On September 1 , 1872 , Ferguson arranged a benefit game for Al Thake , a 22 @-@ year @-@ old left fielder for the Atlantics , who drowned during a fishing trip off Fort Hamilton , in New York Harbor . The old Brooklyn Atlantics and Members of the 1869 Cincinnati Red Stockings played against each other in the benefit game .

While serving as a substitute umpire during a game between the Baltimore Canaries and Mutuals on July 24 , 1873 , Ferguson received continuous , loud , verbal abuse from Mutuals catcher Nat Hicks . Ferguson and Hicks got into an altercation at the conclusion of the game , which Ferguson ended by hitting Hicks in the left arm with a bat , breaking his arm in two places . Ferguson required a police escort to leave the playing field , and Hicks refused to press charges and the two reconciled afterwards . During the final season of the Association , he played and managed the Hartford Dark Blues .

= = National League = =

When the Association dissolved , his Hartford team was accepted into the National League for its inaugural season in 1876 , and Ferguson became a League Director . As a league official , he was

involved in a landmark decision that season . The case involved Jim Devlin , pitcher for the Louisville Grays . Devlin wanted to be released from his contract , claiming that Louisville had failed to fulfill the terms of his contract . Surrounding Devlin were rumors that he took money from gamblers to throw games , known in the day as " hippodroming " . Ferguson , along with fellow league directors , ruled in favor of the Grays ' Vice @-@ President Charles Chase , and Devlin was ordered to remain with the Grays . The following season , Devlin and three other teammates , SS / 2B Bill Craver , OF George Hall and 3B Al Nichols would receive life suspensions for throwing games . Devlin attempted to gain reinstatement for a number of years , but this was never granted .

The Dark Blues had turned to Ferguson to play for and manage the team because of his reputation as the most authoritarian captain in the game . He was an honest and upstanding citizen in a time when not many ballplayers could say the same . However , he was also a domineering , dictatorial captain with a violent streak . Team discipline did improve in his first season , but his overbearing ways proved divisive , causing the team to bicker amongst themselves . Ferguson 's temper would flare up often , even when the team was winning . The Chicago Tribune reported that if anyone on the Hartford nine committed an error , " Ferguson [ would ] swear until everything looks blue . " He was particularly rough on second baseman Jack Burdock , who on more than one occasion heard his captain publicly threaten " to ram his fist down Burdock 's throat . " Some players tolerated his behavior ; others , however , refused to comply . Shortstop Tom Carey and center fielder Jack Remsen did not hesitate to yell back , while Burdock and pitcher Candy Cummings , on the other hand , often sulked . The situation in Hartford came to a head after a tough loss to the Red Stockings , a game in which Ferguson had committed several errors . Hartford 's main pitcher , Tommy Bond , suggested that Ferguson was " crooked " . Ferguson denied the charge , and Bond quickly retracted his statement , claiming that he said it in anger . Bond then requested that he be able to leave the team because he could not play for Ferguson , a request that was granted by league president Morgan Bulkeley , a former owner of the Dark Blues .

Hartford finished third in both of its two seasons in the National League , and when the team folded , Ferguson became the new Chicago White Stockings player @-@ manager . It would be his only season in Chicago . Al Spalding had hired Ferguson to captain his Chicago team because of his reputation , openly saying that he admired Ferguson 's style and leadership that made the Hartford teams successful . Ferguson personally had his most successful season as a player that season , as he batted .351 , which was third in the league , led the league in on @-@ base percentage , tied for fourth in runs batted in , and ranked fourth in hits . Unfortunately , the White Stockings finished at .500 , and in Spalding 's memoirs he called Ferguson " tactless " and hopelessly lacking any knowledge " of the subtle science of handling men by strategy rather than by force . " Cap Anson would eventually take over that role in 1879 .

Ferguson again moved on , this time accepting the player @-@ manager role with the new Troy Trojans team who began their time in the National League in 1879 , and would stay in that role until the team folded after the 1882 season . In 1883 , he became the first manager in the history of the Philadelphia Phillies franchise , which was known at the time as the Quakers , but was relieved of command when the team won only four of its first 17 games . On August 21 of that season , his Quakers traveled to Providence , Rhode Island to play the Grays . To increase ticket sales , he gave the day 's pitching duty to Rhode Island native Art Hagan in hopes that Hagan 's appearance would attract more locals to come watch the game . The strategy worked , but Hagan surrendered 28 runs and the Quakers made 20 errors behind him and did not score a run . Financially sound decision as it was , a bad decision for public relations as Ferguson was labeled a sadist for not relieving Hagen .

= = American Association = =

Ferguson 's last two managerial positions were in the American Association . He was player @-@ manager for the Pittsburgh Alleghenys , who later became the Pittsburgh Pirates , in 1884 and later took over the managerial role for parts of two seasons with the New York Metropolitans . Overall , as manager , his teams won 417 games and lost 516 , for a winning percentage of .447 , and never

finished higher than the third @-@ place finishes his Trojans achieved . The totals reflect his time in the National Association as well as the National League and American Association .

= = Umpiring career = =

Ferguson had , on numerous occasions during his playing and managerial career , served as a substitute umpire , but did not start doing it full @-@ time until after his departure from Philadelphia . In 1888 , he became a full @-@ time professional umpire , working in the American Association , and later in the Players ' League in 1890 . By the end of the 1890 season he had passed Kick Kelly to take over the record for career games as an umpire with 650 ; John Gaffney surpassed his final total of 786 in 1893 . Ferguson officially umpired 804 games if his National Association games are taken into account , and his career came to a close after the 1891 season . On his umpiring philosophy , he once stated " Umpiring always came as easy to me " , he said , " as sleeping on a featherbed . Never change a decision , never stop to talk to a man . Make ' em play ball and keep their mouths shut , and never fear but the people will be on your side and you 'll be called the king of umpires . "

= = Post @-@ career = =

Ferguson died in Brooklyn of apoplexy at the age of 49 . Initially buried in the Cemetery of the Evergreens in Brooklyn , he was later reinterred in Cypress Hills Cemetery , also in the borough of Brooklyn . Despite his career that was filled with incidents of turmoil between him and his players and other baseball people , his funeral , which was held at his home , was quickly crowded , as was the front stoop . Eventually , they had to turn people away .