

= Orator Shafer =

George W. Shafer [sometimes spelled Shaffer or Schaefer] (October 1851 ? January 21 , 1922) was an outfielder in Major League Baseball . Nicknamed " Orator " , because he was an avid speaker , Shafer played for 10 teams in four different major leagues between 1874 and 1890 . Though he was a good hitter who batted over .300 three times , Shafer was best known for his defensive abilities . He led the National League 's outfielders in assists four times . In 1879 , he set an MLB single @-@ season record with 50 outfield assists , which is a mark that has stood for over 130 years . He was considered by some to be the greatest right fielder of his era .

Shafer was 5 feet 9 inches (1 @. @ 75 m) tall and weighed 165 pounds (75 kg) .

= = Background = =

Shafer was born in Philadelphia , Pennsylvania , in 1851 . He was a " promising young Philadelphia amateur " before starting his professional baseball career in 1874 in the National Association . That year , he played in nine games for the Hartford Dark Blues and in one game for the New York Mutuels , with a cumulative batting average of .225 . His fielding percentage was a career @-@ low .710 . The following season , he played 19 games for the Philadelphia Whites and batted .243 .

Shafer was known during his playing career by the nickname " Orator " . According to Alfred Henry Spink , founder of The Sporting News , he received the nickname because he " was a great stickler for his rights and talked to himself when not talking to the Umpire . " Another player of the era , future Baseball Hall of Fame inductee Orator Jim O 'Rourke , shared the same nickname .

= = Major league regular = =

Shafer joined the National League 's Louisville Grays in 1877 . He earned a job as the team 's starting right fielder , and he led the league in games played (61) , outfield assists (21) , and outfield errors (28) . He also batted .285 and had the second @-@ most home runs in the league with three . (Lip Pike had four homers .) In 1878 , Shafer had one of his best seasons at the plate for the Indianapolis Blues . He batted .338 to finish sixth in the batting race and also ranked among the league leaders in on @-@ base percentage (third) , slugging percentage (third) , and total bases (fourth) . His OPS + total of 186 led the league , and his 3 @. @ 8 wins above replacement was the highest among all position players . Shafer also had 28 assists in the outfield .

In 1879 , Shafer signed with Cap Anson 's Chicago White Stockings . However , he had left Indianapolis the previous year with some unpaid debts . The White Stockings traveled to Indianapolis to play an exhibition game in June , and the local sheriff was waiting for both him and teammate Silver Flint . After the game , Shafer and Flint escaped the ballpark in a horse @-@ drawn carriage to avoid arrest , and only their manager , Anson , was taken to jail .

Shafer batted .304 for Chicago in 1879 and also set a career high by getting 50 assists . The 50 outfield assists was 20 more than any other NL player and established a major league record that has never been broken .

In 1880 , Shafer joined the Cleveland Blues and was their regular right fielder for the next three seasons . He continued his good hitting and fielding during his first year with the club , batting .266 with an OPS + of 125 and leading the league again with 35 assists . However , his batting average dropped to .257 the following season and then to .214 in 1882 . His fielding percentage dropped as well , from .901 in 1880 (fourth in the league) to .805 in 1882 .

Shafer played for the Buffalo Bisons in 1883 . He batted .292 and led the NL in outfield assists for the fourth and final time , with 41 . He then signed with the St. Louis Maroons in the new Union Association for the 1884 season . Playing in a career @-@ high 106 games in 1884 , Shafer also batted a career @-@ high .360 and was one of the best hitters in the UA . He led the league with 40 doubles , and he finished second only to teammate Fred Dunlap in several other offensive categories , including batting average , on @-@ base percentage (.398) , slugging percentage (.501) , runs scored (130) , hits (168) , and total bases (234) . The Maroons went 94 ? 19 and

finished first in the Union Association .

= = Later career = =

Shafer stayed with St. Louis as they moved to the National League in 1885 ; his batting average fell to .195 . The following season , he played 21 games for the American Association 's Philadelphia Athletics , hit .268 , and then spent the next few years in the minor leagues . In 1887 , he played for Lincoln of the Western League until he was suspended in September for punching an umpire in the face . Shafer moved on to the Western Association 's Des Moines team in 1888 , and he played well , batting .338 and leading the league in hits . In 1889 , he was the captain of the Detroit Wolverines , which won the International League championship .

Shafer then rejoined the Philadelphia Athletics in 1890 . In his final major league season , he played in 100 games , batted .282 , and led the AA 's outfielders with a .958 fielding percentage . He was the second @-@ oldest player in the league , at 38 years old . Shafer 's younger brother , Taylor , also played for the 1890 Athletics .

= = Legacy = =

Over his 13 @-@ season Major League Baseball career , Orator Shafer played a total of 871 games . He had 1 @,@ 000 hits in 3 @,@ 552 at bats , a .282 batting average , 11 home runs , 601 runs scored , and 317 runs batted in . He also had 290 career outfield assists , which is the 10th highest total in MLB history .

Shafer was an outstanding fielder . Fellow major league right fielder Paul Radford , when writing about how to play the position , said : " I always considered ' Orator ' Shaffer a splendid right fielder , because of his skill in throwing out men at the initial bag . I know he threw me out thus in two successive games at Buffalo . " According to The Sporting Life , Shafer " was for years considered the best man in his position . " In 2001 , statistician Bill James ranked Shafer as the 99th greatest right fielder of all @-@ time .

After his baseball career ended , Shafer worked at a race track as a book @-@ writer . He died in Philadelphia in 1922 and was buried in West Laurel Hill Cemetery in Bala Cynwyd , Pennsylvania .