

= Prince Oana =

Henry " Hank " Kawaihoa " Prince " Oana , Jr . ( January 22 , 1910 ? June 19 , 1976 ) was a professional baseball player for 23 years from 1929 to 1951 . He played portions of three seasons in Major League Baseball as an outfielder for the Philadelphia Phillies in 1934 , and as a pinch hitter and pitcher for Detroit Tigers in 1943 and 1945 . When Oana debuted with the Phillies , he became the fourth Hawaiian player to appear in the major leagues . He compiled a .308 batting average and a 3 @. @ 77 earned run average ( ERA ) in three major league seasons .

Born in Hawaii , Oana played five sports in high school , and took up baseball professionally after he was noticed by Ty Cobb . He spent a few seasons in the minor leagues before joining the Phillies , who sent him back to the minors after six games in 1934 . For the next decade , he played for various minor league teams , where his Hawaiian heritage proved to be both a selling point for teams and a hindrance to him making the majors , until the outbreak of World War II . Facing a shortage of active players , the Tigers signed him , and Oana played parts of 1943 and 1945 with the team . After 1945 , he was sold to the Dallas Rebels , and he finished his professional career in 1951 . He later operated a lakeside fishing business until his death in 1976 .

= = Early years = =

Oana was born at Waipahu , Hawaii , the site of the former Oahu Sugar Company plantation , in 1910 . His father , Henry Kawaihoa Oana , Sr. , was a Native Hawaiian from Waialua and a 1896 graduate of Kamehameha School , who later worked as a bookkeeper at the sugarcane plantation and as a station agent at the local railroad depot . His mother Mary was of Portuguese descent .

Oana attended Saint Louis School in Honolulu where he had the nickname " Nutsky , " and was " a five @- @ sport star " in baseball , football , basketball , track and swimming . He was a running back in football and was twice ( 1926 and 1927 ) selected for the Interscholastic League of Honolulu all @- @ star team .

= = Baseball career = =

= = = Pacific Coast League = = =

In his youth , Oana played for a Hawaiian " Aratani " baseball team that went on a tour of Japan in 1928 . While barnstorming in Japan , Ty Cobb saw Oana playing and suggested he play professionally in the United States , and recommended Oana to the San Francisco Seals of the Pacific Coast League . Oana heeded Cobb 's advice and traveled to California in the winter of 1929 to try out with the Seals .

He spent the 1929 season with the Globe Bears , San Francisco 's affiliate in the Class D Arizona State League . Oana compiled a .374 batting average with the Bears in his first year of professional play . He compiled a .413 average in 79 games for the Globe Bears at the start of the 1930 season , and was promoted to San Francisco . He joined the Seals organization with the ability to pitch or play in the infield or the outfield . Ultimately , " [ h ] e found himself as an outfielder being blessed with a powerful throwing arm , great speed and an ability to whack the ball to the far reaches of the parks . "

Oana spent the next several seasons as an outfielder for the Seals ( 1929 ? 1932 ) and the Portland Beavers ( 1933 ? 1934 ) , also in the Pacific Coast League . Oana compiled batting averages of .326 in 1930 , .345 in 1931 , and .332 in 1933 . He also totaled 29 home runs , 63 doubles , and 11 triples in 686 at bats during the 1933 season , and led the Pacific Coast League with 163 RBIs .

= = = Philadelphia Phillies = = =

In November 1933 , the Philadelphia Phillies acquired Oana from Portland in exchange for cash , Frank Ragland , Jimmy McLeod , and a player to be named later . Portland manager Spencer Abbott noted that the deal required the Phillies to pay " \$ 2500 for a look " and \$ 20 @, @ 000 if he was retained for the years . " Oana made his major league debut on April 22 , 1934 , becoming the fourth Hawaiian player to play Major League Baseball . He appeared in only six games for the Phillies , four as the starting left fielder . He compiled a .238 batting average with one double and three RBIs in 21 at bats . On May 1 , 1934 the Phillies sent Oana back to Portland after less than 10 days in the big leagues .

= = = Hawaiian heritage and nickname = = =

Oana 's Hawaiian heritage was both a selling point for Pacific Coast League promoters and a handicap in terms of Oana 's ability to make it to the major leagues . When Oana signed with the San Francisco Seals , team owner Charlie Graham advertised Oana as " a Hawaiian prince . " Graham claimed that , while vacationing in Honolulu , he discovered Oana playing baseball in bare feet . With the popularity of swimmer Duke Kahanamoku , The Sporting News noted : " If Kahanamoku , the great swimmer , could be listed as a duke , Graham figured Oana should be at least a prince . " Portland manager Spencer Abbott also boasted that he was the one who had invested Oana " with the halo of Hawaiian royalty . "

Oana 's Hawaiian heritage was also a handicap in an era before racial integration of Major League Baseball . In January 1934 , shortly after Oana had been acquired by the Phillies , The Sporting News wrote a feature story about Oana under the headline , " ' Prince ' Oana Pops Into the Big League Melting Pot : Adding Dash of Hawaii to Cuban and Indian Spice . " Author Daniel M. Daniel offered Oana 's promotion to the Phillies as evidence that , " while baseball is as American as America itself , it is also as cosmopolitan as our national population . " Daniel wrote that , without going into the justice of the color line , the color line in baseball " is adhered to most strictly . " Daniel wrote that , despite Oana 's batting record , San Francisco owner Charlie Graham had difficulty selling Oana to a major league club , as some suggested that a full @-@ blooded " Kanaka " may " not be welcome in the ranks of the big leagues . " When the Seals signed Oana , he was rated as " an ' important money ' prospect " who would likely draw five figures in a sale to a big league club .

To overcome the color line , Graham backed away from the story that Oana was a full @-@ blooded Hawaiian prince and noted that Oana 's mother was Portuguese . However , Graham could still not find a major league buyer for Oana . When Oana was acquired by the Phillies at the end of the 1933 season , The Sporting News published a front @-@ page story referring to Oana as a " full @-@ blooded Hawaiian " and a " dark @-@ skinned islander " who " comes from the royal stock of the old Hawaiian dynasty that ruled the islands before the United States took over the country . Hence , the title of prince , which he wears proudly . "

= = = Atlanta Crackers = = =

After his brief stint with the Phillies , Oana was returned to Portland and shortly thereafter sold to the Atlanta Crackers of the Southern Association . Spencer Abbott , who had previously managed Portland and was then the manager in Atlanta , offered to allow Portland to name its price for Oana . Abbott paid \$ 5 @, @ 000 for Oana and recalled Atlanta 's racially segregated bleachers furthered the rationale for acquiring Oana :

At Atlanta we needed a powerful right @-@ handed hitter who could hit the ball into those Negro bleachers in left field . We needed a hero for our colored citizens . Oana was the man .

Abbott agreed to fly Oana to Atlanta and asked him to dress sharply and wear a lei . Abbott arranged for press and photographers to meet Oana at the Atlanta airport . He later recalled : " I sold them on the Hawaiian royalty stuff . It was not far off the beam , either , for Hank comes from the best stock in the islands ? and he looked like a prince , tall , dark and handsome . " Oana spent most of the 1934 season with the Crackers , compiling a .289 batting average and 17 home runs in 480 at bats . Despite playing less than the full season in the Southern Association , he led the circuit

in home runs and finished second in the league with 100 RBIs . Finding no interest from major league clubs after his 1934 season in Atlanta , Oana reportedly expressed interest in pursuing a career as a professional wrestler , with one account indicating that he hoped to " cash in " on his " wrestling experience on the island with Japanese grapplers . "

= = = Later 1930s = = =

Oana spent the 1935 and 1936 seasons with the Syracuse Chiefs of the International League . He hit .300 with 21 doubles , 8 triples , and 12 home runs in 320 at bats during the 1935 season . Oana spent the 1937 season with Knoxville and Little Rock in the Southern Association , but an injury in Little Rock forced him to finish the season playing semipro ball in North Carolina . Oana next spent two years playing for the Jackson Senators in 1938 and 1939 . In 1938 , he hit .320 with 39 doubles and 26 home runs , and in 1939 , he hit .323 with 20 doubles , 12 triples , and a career @-@ high 39 home runs .

= = = Conversion to pitcher at Ft . Worth = = =

At the end of the 1939 season , the Jackson club sold Oana to the Fort Worth Cats in the Texas League . He continued to play as an outfielder for Fort Worth in 1940 and 1941 . However , his offensive production dropped with batting averages of .264 in 1940 and .253 in 1941 .

After the 1941 season , with his batting in decline , Oana worked as a pitcher during a barnstorming tour of Mexico . Rogers Hornsby took over as the manager at Fort Worth in 1942 , and Oana badgered Hornsby for a chance as a pitcher . According to one account , Hornsby was reportedly prepared to release Oana , who was not hitting well , and said to Oana , " Hank , you hit like a pitcher , " to which Oana replied , " I am a good pitcher . " Hornsby initially thought that Oana was joking about being a pitcher , but finally relented and allowed him to pitch in relief one day in Houston . In Oana 's first 76 innings as a pitcher in 1942 , he compiled a 0 @.@ 76 earned run average ( ERA ) , threw 50 consecutive innings without an earned run , and pitched a no @-@ hitter . In mid @-@ July 1942 , Oana 's scoreless streak became national news , and resulted in a feature story in The Sporting News . In a total of 25 games as a pitcher during the 1942 season , Oana compiled a 16 ? 5 record with a 1 @.@ 72 ERA .

= = = Detroit Tigers = = =

In 1943 , the Texas League disbanded due to the shortage of players during World War II . Oana was sold to the Milwaukee Brewers in February 1943 , and he appeared in 20 games for that team . However , baseball commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis ruled that Oana was a free agent since the Texas League had disbanded . In late June 1943 , Oana signed with the Detroit Tigers . In an introductory interview with the Detroit press , Oana had this to say about his supposed connection to Hawaiian royalty :

When I first joined the Seals , stories were published that I was a Hawaiian prince . The more I denied them , the more people believed them . I 'm plain plain Henry Oana . Just call me Hank .

On July 3 , 1943 , Oana played a key role in a double @-@ header sweep of the New York Yankees that Detroit general manager Jack Zeller said brought " the greatest thrills of any game he witnessed . " In the second game of the double header , the Yankees led 5 ? 2 in the third inning . Detroit manager Steve O 'Neill brought in his newly acquired pitcher , Oana . O 'Neill reportedly concluded that " the game was lost and so why waste his good pitchers . " Oana gave up four more runs , and the Yankees led 9 ? 3 after seven innings . Oana then held the Yankees scoreless in the eighth inning and hit a three @-@ run home run in the bottom of the eighth inning . He held the Yankees scoreless again in the ninth inning , and the Tigers won the game with four runs in the bottom of the ninth . Oana was the winning pitcher and had his first major league home run in the same game . In all , Oana appeared in 10 games for the Tigers in 1943 , all as a reliever , compiling a 3 ? 2 record with a 4 @.@ 50 ERA in 34 innings pitched . Oana also compiled a .385 batting

average with two doubles , a triple , a home run , and seven RBIs in only 26 at bats for the 1943 Tigers .

Late in the 1943 season , Oana was returned to the Milwaukee Brewers , appearing in several games until he sustained a fractured wrist . In December 1943 , the Brewers sold Oana to the Buffalo Bisons of the International League . Oana compiled a 13 ? 13 record with a 3 @.@ 63 ERA in 38 games for the Bisons in 1944 . He also spent most of the 1945 season in Buffalo , compiling a 15 ? 14 record ( 4 @.@ 20 ERA ) in 31 games .

In August 1945 , on the recommendation of Buffalo manager Bucky Harris , the Tigers called him back up to the big leagues . With the Tigers were competing for the American League pennant , Oana appeared in three games , one as a starter . Oana compiled a 1 @.@ 59 ERA in 11 innings for the 1945 Tigers team that won the pennant and the 1945 World Series . His only major league game as a starting pitcher was on September 12 , 1945 , against the Philadelphia Athletics : Oana allowed one hit through the first eight innings , pitched 10 @-@ 2 / 3 innings and allowed only two runs , though the Tigers lost the game , 3 ? 2 , in the 16th inning .

= = = Final years in the minors = = =

After the 1945 season , Oana was sold to the Dallas Rebels of the Texas League . By July 1946 , he was ranked among the league 's top hitters and pitchers . He finished the 1946 season with a 24 ? 10 record , a 2 @.@ 54 ERA , a .303 batting average and seven home runs in 185 at bats .

Oana remained in Dallas for two years , 1946 and 1947 . He then played three years as a player @-@ manager for the Austin Pioneers of the Big State League from 1948 to 1950 . He concluded his career as the player @-@ manager for the Texarkana Bears in 1951 . He ended his minor league career with a .304 batting average with 2 @,@ 292 hits , including 428 doubles , 130 triples , and 261 home runs .

= = Personal and later life = =

During his playing career , Oana developed a " reputation as a playboy , " who " had too many extra @-@ curricular activities . " He was reported to have dressed like " a dandy " , been " the Beau Brummel of baseball , " and been idolized by fans for his " S @-@ S appeal , socks and sex . "

Oana was married multiple times . With his first wife , Arma Puninani Richardson , he had two sons , George ( born 1928 ) and Henry ( born 1929 ) . On October 1 , 1935 , he was married to Joyce Powell of Winter Haven , Florida . By 1942 , he had remarried to Patricia Hall of Atlanta . In 1946 , he was reported to be happily married to a Texas girl . He also had at least two marriages late in life , in 1968 to a woman named Cynthia , and in 1974 to Opal Gunn . Spencer Abbott , Oana 's minor league manager in Portland and Atlanta , recalled that Oana " worried hell out of me . " According to Abbott , Oana had friends in every town , and " it was tough for him to live anything resembling a Spartan life . " Abbott speculated that , despite having major league talent , Oana 's lifestyle may have held him back from becoming a star in the major leagues . In 1946 , Abbott opined : " If he had been a less handsome fellow with the same ability he might have been a ten @-@ year star now in the major leagues . "

Oana 's baseball career ended in 1951 , in part due to vision problems . In the spring of 1952 , Oana underwent surgery in Austin , Texas , to remove cataracts from his right eye . He reportedly underwent eye surgery five times over the next 10 years and lived and worked during the late 1950s and early 1960s in a rehabilitation center for the blind in Austin , Texas . He worked there as an instructor teaching crafts to the totally blind . In 1965 , the Associated Press reported that Oana 's vision had returned and that he hoped to secure a job as a baseball coach , which would enable him to reimburse the Travis Association for the Blind for the assistance it provided while his vision was substantially lost due to cataracts in both eyes .

In his later years , Oana regained much of his vision and continued living in Austin , Texas . He operated a lakeside fishing business and was also a captain with the Travis County Sheriff 's Department . Oana died of a heart attack in 1976 at his home in Austin , Texas at the age of 66 ,

and was buried at the Oakwood Cemetery Annex in Austin .