

= Ed Blake =

Edward James Blake (December 23 , 1925 ? April 15 , 2009) was an American right @-@ handed pitcher in Major League Baseball who played four seasons with the Cincinnati Reds and the Kansas City Athletics . In eight career games , Blake pitched 8 ? innings and had an 8 @.@ 31 earned run average (ERA) .

After graduating high school in East St. Louis , Blake played in the farm system of the nearby St. Louis Cardinals before enlisting in the army . He returned to baseball after being wounded in the military service , pitching in the minors for five years before making his major league debut for the Cincinnati Reds . He pitched for them on and off for three years , then spent the next six years pitching for the Toronto Maple Leafs . His last major league appearance was a stint with the Athletics in 1957 , and two years later his professional baseball career ended . After retirement he became a plumber , and died in 2009 .

= = Early life = =

Born in St. Louis , Missouri to Edward and Katherine Blake , he attended Central Catholic High School in East St. Louis , where he was a baseball teammate of Hank Bauer , and graduated in 1943 . Blake pitched batting practice for the St. Louis Cardinals during the 1943 World Series after his high school graduation , in what he considered to be the highlight of his professional career . He signed with the Cardinals in 1944 and spent the season with three different minor league teams : the Columbus Red Birds of the American Association , the Allentown Cardinals of the Interstate League and the Mobile Bears of the Southern Association .

= = Military service and 1940s career = =

After the 1944 season ended , Blake enlisted in the Army and fought with the 40th Infantry Division in the Pacific Theater of Operations . While in the Philippines , Blake was wounded , and was out of action for nine months as he recovered . As the 1946 season began , he rejoined the Cardinals , now fully recovered , and spent the season with the Columbus Cardinals . Blake started the season losing his first three starts , but then won 13 straight and finished the season with a 16 wins , eight losses , and a 3 @.@ 51 earned run average . In February 1947 , Blake was among a group of 92 Cardinals players invited to a dinner for Cardinals minor leaguers , where accusations in regards to Cardinals players being paid poorly were brought up and discussed . He spent the following season playing for both Columbus teams , playing 29 games in total and finishing the season with a combined 4 @.@ 46 ERA . Before the 1948 season began , Blake was promoted to the Rochester Red Wings of the International League . He had a 7 ? 6 record and a 3 @.@ 88 ERA in 34 games , seven of them starts . In 1949 , Blake spent most of the season playing for Rochester . On August 9 , 1949 he was traded by the Cardinals to the Cincinnati Reds in exchange for Mike Schultz , ending his career with the Cardinals . Blake finished the season with the Syracuse Chiefs and finished the season with a combined 5 ? 4 record and a 4 @.@ 78 ERA .

= = Minor leagues and Reds career = =

Blake began the 1950 season with Syracuse Chiefs and spent most of the season as a starting pitcher instead of a reliever . He started in 23 games and finished the season with a 12 ? 8 record and an ERA of 3 @.@ 51 . In 1951 , Blake was considered to have a small chance to make the major league roster . Nonetheless , Blake got his first taste of the major leagues that season . He made his major league debut on May 1 , 1951 against the Philadelphia Phillies . Blake played three games during his time on the Reds in 1951 , and finished two of those games . He pitched four innings , allowing five runs and three home runs , finishing the season with an ERA of 11 @.@ 25 . While on the Reds in 1951 , he was part of a Reds " bullpen union " led by Jim Blackburn , which drew up a series of humorous requests including a smoking lounge and sandwiches between

double headers . He spent most of the 1951 season with the Columbus Red Birds , playing in 27 games for them . In 27 pitching appearances , 23 of them starts , Blake went 7 ? 15 with a 5 @.@ 91 ERA . Despite the record , Blake led the Red Birds in innings pitched and finished tied for second in wins , though he did also lead the team , which went 53 ? 101 , in losses .

Blake spent most of 1952 with the Milwaukee Brewers of the American Association , but he also pitched a few games for the Reds during the 1952 Cincinnati Reds season . He pitched in two games for the Reds in 1952 , coming in to finish both games for the Reds . He pitched three shutout innings , allowing three hits in these two games . During his time with the Brewers , he pitched in 21 games . He started 19 of the 21 games , won ten and lost three , and had a 3 @.@ 96 ERA . As the 1953 season began , Blake again had a stint with Cincinnati , but spent most of the season with the Indianapolis Indians . He pitched in one game for the Reds on April 17 , 1953 against the Milwaukee Brewers , allowing two earned runs on a hit and a walk without getting a batter out . During his time with the Indianapolis Indians , he pitched in 29 games , and was the workhorse of the Indians ' squad . He finished the season with a 14 ? 7 record , a 3 @.@ 76 ERA , and 208 innings pitched , and led the team in wins , innings pitched , and starting appearances .

= = Maple Leafs and Athletics career = =

The 1953 season marked Blake 's last appearance with the Reds . On February 1 , 1954 , Blake was purchased from the Reds by the Toronto Maple Leafs , an unaffiliated team of the American Association . He played for the Maple Leafs for a total of six seasons , where he had some of his best professional career seasons . In 1954 , he teamed with Connie Johnson to lead the Maple Leafs to a 97 @-@ 57 record . He finished the 1954 season with a 15 ? 9 record , a 3 @.@ 92 ERA , 30 games started , and 209 innings pitched , leading the team in the latter two categories . The following season , he combined with Johnson and Jack Crimian to help Toronto win 94 games . On July 10 , Blake was the first pitcher in the International League to win 13 games when he beat the Columbus squad 7 ? 4 . He finished the season with 17 wins , 13 losses , and a 3 @.@ 94 ERA . In 1956 , Blake was a member of the " big three " for the Maple Leafs , along with Don Johnson and International League Most Valuable Player Lynn Lovenguth . The three combined for 750 innings pitched and 57 complete games while often working on two days ' rest . He finished the season with 17 wins , 11 losses , and a 2 @.@ 61 ERA . He also led the team in shutouts with six .

Blake was drafted at the end of the 1956 season by the Kansas City Athletics in the rule 5 draft . The day after being drafted , the Athletics planned to include him in an eight @-@ player deal with the Detroit Tigers involving Virgil Trucks and others , but his inclusion in the trade was vetoed by Commissioner Ford Frick , claiming his inclusion was " against the spirit of the draft . " Blake was replaced in the trade by former Toronto teammate Jack Crimian . While he spent most of the 1957 season with Toronto , he had one final major league stint with the Athletics , pitching in two games in April . His 1957 stint in Toronto was not as successful as previous seasons , as he finished with eight wins , nine losses , and a 5 @.@ 54 ERA . He spent five weeks of the 1958 season unable to play due to injury . Despite this , he was still able to pitch in 23 games , winning nine and bringing his ERA down to 3 @.@ 54 . In 1959 , Blake split time between Toronto and the Houston Buffs , winning three games and losing ten in his final professional season of baseball .

= = Personal and later life = =

After his playing career ended , Blake went on to become a plumber . He spent nearly 50 years in the plumbing business and was formerly the president of Plumbers Local 360 . Blake was married to his wife , Carol Jean , for 47 years before her death . With Carol , he had a son , Ed , and a daughter , Peggy . His son , also named Ed Blake , was a former pitcher who played in the Baltimore Orioles ' farm system from 1970 to 1973 , playing for the AA affiliate Asheville Orioles at the peak of his career . His grandson , Ed Blake III , has continued in the footsteps of his father and grandfather as a pitcher in high school . Blake died in Swansea , Illinois at the age of 83 after a long illness , and is interred at Mount Carmel Cemetery in Belleville , Illinois .

