

= Stan Coveleski =

Stanley Anthony Coveleski (born Stanislaus Kowalewski , July 13 , 1889 ? March 20 , 1984) was an American Major League Baseball pitcher during the 1910s and 1920s who primarily threw the spitball . In 14 seasons in the American League (AL) , Coveleski pitched for the Philadelphia Athletics , Cleveland Indians , Washington Senators and New York Yankees . In 450 career games , Coveleski pitched 3 @, @ 082 innings and posted a win ? loss record of 215 ? 142 , with 224 complete games , 38 shutouts , and a 2 @. @ 89 earned run average (ERA) . He was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1969 .

Born in Shamokin , Pennsylvania , Coveleski began playing professional baseball in 1908 , following in the footsteps of his brother , Harry Coveleski . He played mostly for the Lancaster Red Roses until he made his major league debut with the Athletics in 1912 . Following three more seasons in the minor leagues , he stayed in the major leagues after signing with the Indians in 1916 . During his nine seasons with the Indians , his accomplishments included winning three games during the 1920 World Series .

After his time with the Indians ended , Coveleski spent three seasons with the Senators and one with the Yankees before retiring after the 1928 season . He retired to South Bend , Indiana , where he died in 1984 . A starting pitcher , Coveleski specialized in throwing the spitball , a pitch where the ball is altered with a foreign substance such as chewing tobacco . It was legal when his career began and outlawed in 1920 , but he was one of 17 pitchers permitted to continue throwing the pitch .

= = Early years = =

Stanislaus Anthony Kowalewski was the youngest of five baseball @-@ playing brothers in the coal @-@ mining community of Shamokin , Pennsylvania . His oldest brother Jacob died serving in the Spanish ? American War ; his other brothers Frank and John also played baseball , but never reached the major leagues . His older brother , Harry Coveleski , later won 20 games in a season on three occasions during his major league career .

Like many his age in the Shamokin area , Coveleski began work as a " breaker boy " at a local colliery at the age of 12 . In return for 72 hours of labor per week , Coveleski received \$ 3 @. @ 75 , or about five cents an hour . " There was nothing strange in those days about a twelve @-@ year @-@ old Polish kid working in the mines for 72 hours a week at a nickel an hour " , he later recalled . " What was strange is that I ever got out of there " . Coveleski was rarely able to play baseball as a child due to his work schedule .

Nevertheless , he worked on his pitching skills during the evenings , when he threw stones at a tin can placed 50 feet away . When he was 18 years old , Coveleski 's abilities caught the attention of the local semi @-@ professional ball club , which invited him to pitch for them . " When it came to throwing a baseball , why it was easy to pitch " , Coveleski recalled . " After all , the plate 's a lot bigger than a tin can to throw at " . His baseball career in Shamokin was short @-@ lived ; after five games , Coveleski relocated to Lancaster , Pennsylvania .

= = Philadelphia Athletics and minor leagues = =

Coveleski signed his first professional contract in 1909 with the minor league Lancaster Red Roses , a club affiliated with the Tri @-@ State League . Originally reluctant to sign for the club , he only agreed to do so if his older brother John also joined ; at that time he anglicized his name , changing it to Coveleskie , which it would remain throughout his professional career . During his first trip to Lancaster , he recalled that it was " the first time I ever rode on a train " , and he added that he " was too shy to eat in the hotel with the rest of the team " . In 272 innings of work his first season , Coveleski had a 23 ? 11 win @-@ loss record with an earned run average of 1 @. @ 95 . He pitched two more seasons for Lancaster , earning a record of 53 ? 38 in 109 appearances through three seasons .

In 1912 , he pitched for the relocated Lancaster team , the Atlantic City Lanks , where he had a 20 ? 14 record with a 2 @.@ 53 ERA in 40 appearances , 30 of them starts . In September 1912 , manager Connie Mack signed him to a contract with the Philadelphia Athletics and brought him to the major leagues , where he made his debut for the Athletics on September 10 . Coveleski pitched in five games for the Athletics that season , starting two of them and finishing the season with a 2 ? 1 record and a 3 @.@ 43 ERA . After the season ended , Mack felt that Coveleski needed more seasoning , and sent him to the Spokane Indians of the Northwestern League . Coveleski finished the 1913 season with a 17 ? 20 record and a 2 @.@ 82 ERA . Around that time , he married Mary Stivetts , and the following season he went 20 ? 15 , pitched over 300 innings , and led the league in strikeouts .

At the time of his debut , the Philadelphia club retained several talented pitchers , including Eddie Plank , Chief Bender , and Jack Coombs . Coveleski admitted that he " [didn 't] know if I could have beat them out for a spot in the rotation . " After the 1914 season , the Portland Beavers of the Pacific Coast League wanted Coveleski , and traded five players to Spokane to acquire him . While Connie Mack had an agreement with Spokane that Coveleski would be promoted after playing there for a time , the Athletics fell under new ownership in 1913 and lost control of him due to the Athletics ' rights expiring . Coveleski spent his time in Portland learning to throw the spitball ; originally using chewing tobacco , he later used alum . In his lone season with Portland , he won and lost 17 games , and had a 2 @.@ 67 ERA . After the season ended , the Cleveland Indians purchased Coveleski from Portland , and he joined the major league squad in 1916 .

= = Cleveland Indians = =

When Coveleski was brought up to the majors , the original intention was to use him as a relief pitcher . Due to an injury to Ed Klepfer , the Indians used him as a starter early on in the season , and kept him in the role when he performed well . He was scheduled to pitch in the first week of the season against his brother Harry , but the matchup never took place at Harry 's behest . Coveleski fought health problems during the season , suffering from tonsillitis in the middle of the year and pitching one game with a fever of 102 ° F (39 ° C) . He finished the season with a 15 ? 13 record and a 3 @.@ 41 ERA in 45 games , 27 of them starts . Coveleski had lost 10 pounds due to illness during 1916 , but recovered during the offseason , gained 20 pounds , and appeared healthier by the time the season began .

Coveleski 's status as the ace of the staff was demonstrated when he was named the starter for Opening Day of the 1917 season ; he beat the Detroit Tigers 6 ? 4 on April 11 . He improved statistically during the 1917 season , winning 19 games and losing 14 with an ERA of 1 @.@ 81 and a career high 133 strikeouts . On September 19 , Coveleski pitched a one @-@ hitter against the New York Yankees ; the only hit came from Fritz Maisel in the seventh inning . Coveleski continued to improve during the war @-@ shortened 1918 season . His outings that year included pitching a complete game against the New York Yankees , where he pitched 19 innings , allowing two runs as the Indians won , 3 ? 2 . He finished the season with a 22 ? 13 record , a 1 @.@ 82 ERA , and 311 innings pitched in 38 games , 33 of them starts ; his wins and ERA were both second in the American League to Walter Johnson . In 1919 , Coveleski pitched in 43 games , starting 34 , and had a 24 ? 12 record and an ERA of 2 @.@ 61 .

At the beginning of the 1920 season , the spitball was banned by Major League Baseball . As a current spitball pitcher , Coveleski was grandfathered in , and was allowed to continue using the pitch until his retirement . He won his first seven starting appearances of the season , but on May 28 , his wife died suddenly , and he was given some time off to mourn , returning to pitching two weeks later . Nearly three months later , he was the starting pitcher against the New York Yankees on August 16 . In the game , Coveleski hit a sacrifice fly to help the Indians win , 4 ? 3 , but it was best remembered as the game where Yankees pitcher Carl Mays hit Ray Chapman , leading to the only death in MLB history from a pitch . He finished the 1920 regular season with 24 wins , 14 losses , a 2 @.@ 49 ERA , and 133 strikeouts ; he led the AL in strikeouts and finished second in ERA to Bob Shawkey .

Coveleski 's helped the Indians to win the AL pennant and play in the 1920 World Series against the Brooklyn Robins . Coveleski was the star of the 1920 World Series , in which he pitched three complete game victories . He pitched the first game against Rube Marquard , and allowed one run and five hits in a 3 ? 1 Cleveland victory . Four days later , he pitched game four , again allowing one run and five hits in a 5 ? 1 win . In game seven , the final one of the series , Coveleski threw a complete game shutout with five hits against fellow spitballer Burleigh Grimes ; the 3 ? 0 victory gave the Indians the first World Series championship in franchise history . Coveleski had an ERA of 0 @.@ 67 , which remains a World Series record .

After spending the offseason hunting with Smoky Joe Wood , Coveleski returned to the Indians in 1921 , and throughout the season , the Indians battled the Yankees for first in the American League . On September 26 , the two teams faced off , but Coveleski failed to make it past the third inning ; the Yankees won 8 ? 7 to ensure they won the pennant . Coveleski pitched 315 innings in 1921 , matching his career high from the year before , and had a 23 ? 13 record and a 3 @.@ 37 ERA . The following season , Coveleski married Frances Stivetts , the sister of his late wife . While he did cause the Yankees to move out of first place after winning an August 23 game against them , 4 ? 1 , it was his last game of the season . He finished the year with a 17 ? 14 record , the first time since 1917 he did not have 20 wins , and a 3 @.@ 32 ERA .

Early on in the 1923 season , Coveleski pitched 27 straight scoreless innings , winning three consecutive games during that time . However , he won less frequently as the season wore on , losing three straight games in mid @-@ August . His last game came on August 15 , with over a month left in the season . Coveleski finished the season with a 13 ? 14 record , his first season with a losing record . Despite that , he had an ERA of 2 @.@ 76 and five shutouts , both of which led the AL . In 1924 , Coveleski struggled , and at the end of May , he had four losses and an ERA of 6 @.@ 49 . By the end of the season , he had a 15 ? 16 record and a 4 @.@ 04 ERA . In December 1924 , after nine years pitching for Cleveland , Coveleski was traded to the Washington Senators for pitcher By Speece and outfielder Carr Smith .

Despite Coveleski 's success in Cleveland , he was not a fan of playing there ; he stated that he " didn 't like the town . Now the people are all right , but I just didn 't like the town . " He also stated that it began to affect his performance on the mound , and that he began to get " lazy " from being with the club so long . He did , however , have praise for his catcher : " The best thing that happened to me there was pitching to Steve O 'Neill . He caught me for nine years in Cleveland and knew me so well he didn 't even need to give me a sign " .

= = Washington Senators and New York Yankees = =

Due to the acquisition of Coveleski , combined with winning the 1924 World Series , the Washington Senators were considered favorites to win the AL in 1925 . During his first season in Washington , Coveleski bounced back from his 1924 season , and by mid @-@ July , critics regarded his success as the biggest surprise in baseball ; Cleveland considered him to be past his best . He won 20 games and lost five that year , and his ERA of 2 @.@ 84 led the AL . Coveleski also finished 12th in MVP voting that year . The Senators won the AL and were to face the Pittsburgh Pirates in the 1925 World Series , but Coveleski suffered from sore back muscles late in the season . Coveleski pitched two games in the World Series . In game two , he faced Vic Aldridge in a pitcher 's duel ; the teams were tied at one apiece in the eighth inning , but a Pittsburgh home run led to a 3 ? 2 loss . Aldridge and Coveleski faced off again in game five , and Coveleski allowed four runs in under seven innings , leading to a 6 ? 3 Pirates win . The Senators lost the series in seven games , and he finished with a 3 @.@ 77 ERA , five walks , three strikeouts , and two of the Senators ' four losses .

Coveleski continued to pitch for Washington during the 1926 season . His performances that season included a 2 ? 0 victory against the Boston Red Sox on August 31 , in which the game was finished in only 78 minutes . Coveleski finished the season with 14 wins , 11 losses , 3 shutouts , and a 3 @.@ 12 ERA in 36 games . To start the 1927 season , due to an injury to Walter Johnson , Coveleski became the Senators ' Opening Day starter against the Red Sox ; he won the game 6 ? 2

. However , his performance declined due to " a chronically sore arm " , which limited his playing time that season . Due to his sore arm , the Senators released him unconditionally on June 17 , 1927 . He finished the season with a 2 ? 1 record and a 3 @.@ 14 ERA in five games .

On December 21 , 1927 , Coveleski signed with the New York Yankees in an attempt at a comeback . In his final season , he posted a 5 ? 1 record with a 5 @.@ 74 ERA in 12 appearances . Coveleski failed to regain his form , however , pitching his last game on August 3 , and after the signing of Tom Zachary , manager Miller Huggins released Coveleski . He retired from the game later that year .

= = Later life and legacy = =

In 1929 , after leaving major league baseball , Coveleski relocated to South Bend , Indiana . There , he ran Coveleski Service Station for a time , but closed the business during the Great Depression . He became a popular member of the community in South Bend , providing free pitching lessons to local youths in a field behind his garage . After his playing career ended , he dropped the " e " at the end of his name , as he never corrected anyone if his last name was incorrectly spelled . In 1969 , Coveleski was named to the Baseball Hall of Fame by the Veterans ' Committee alongside 1920s pitcher Waite Hoyt . Of his introduction into the Hall he said , " I figured I 'd make it sooner or later , and I just kept hoping each year would be the one . " His health declined in later years , and he was eventually admitted to a local nursing home , where he died on March 20 , 1984 at the age of 94 .

In addition to Coveleski 's induction into the Baseball Hall of Fame , he was inducted into the National Polish @-@ American Sports Hall of Fame in 1976 . In 1984 , the minor league baseball stadium in South Bend , Indiana , was named in his honor . Coveleski was interviewed by Lawrence Ritter for his 1966 book *The Glory of Their Times* , a series of interviews with players of the early 20th century . To fellow ballplayers , Coveleski was considered " taciturn and ornery " on days when he was scheduled to pitch , but was otherwise friendly with a lively sense of humor .

Coveleski had 216 wins and 142 losses with a 2 @.@ 89 ERA in 450 games , 385 of them starts in a 14 @-@ year career . He had 224 complete games , 38 shutouts , 981 strikeouts , and pitched 3 @,@ 082 total innings . His control was highly regarded . He never considered himself a strikeout pitcher , and it was not unusual for him to pitch a complete game having thrown 95 pitches or less . He once pitched seven innings of a game where every pitch was either a hit or a strike . In 2001 , baseball statistician Bill James ranked Coveleski 58th among the all @-@ time greatest major league pitchers .