

= Elmer Flick =

Elmer Harrison Flick (January 11 , 1876 ? January 9 , 1971) was an American major league baseball outfielder who played from 1898 to 1910 for the Philadelphia Phillies , Philadelphia Athletics , and Cleveland Bronchos / Naps . In 1 @,@ 483 career games Flick recorded a .313 batting average while accumulating 164 triples , 1 @,@ 752 hits , 330 stolen bases , and 756 runs batted in . He was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1963 .

Flick began his career in semi @-@ professional baseball and played in minor league baseball for two years . He was noticed by George Stallings , the manager of the Phillies , who signed Flick as a reserve outfielder . Flick was pressed into a starting role in 1898 when an injury forced another player to retire . He excelled as a starter . Flick jumped to the Athletics in 1902 , but an court injunction prevented him from playing in Pennsylvania . He joined the Naps , where he continued to play for the remainder of his major league career , which was curtailed by a stomach ailment .

Flick was known predominantly for his solid batting and speed . He led the National League in RBIs in 1900 , and led the American League in stolen bases in 1904 and 1906 , and in batting average in 1905 .

= = Early life = =

Flick was born on January 11 , 1876 , the third of five children of Zachary and Mary Flick , on the family farm in Bedford , Ohio . His father was a farmer and mechanic who had served in the American Civil War . Flick attended Bedford High School , where he played catcher on the school 's baseball team . He also played American football , wrestled , and boxed .

Flick entered semi @-@ professional baseball by chance . When he was 15 years old , he was at a train station to support the local baseball team as it left for a road trip . Only eight of the team 's players showed up at the station , so Flick was recruited to go on the trip with the team . Though Flick did not have a uniform or shoes , he hit well in both games of the doubleheader , though Bedford lost both games . He joined the Bedford team on a regular basis , and he continued to play semi @-@ pro baseball throughout his teenage years .

= = Professional career = =

= = = Minor league baseball = = =

In 1896 , the manager of the Youngstown Puddlers of the Interstate League signed Flick . Because the team had an established catcher , Flick played in the outfield , where he struggled to learn the position . In 31 games , Flick had a .826 fielding percentage . However , Flick had a strong performance offensively . Using his father 's lathe , Flick crafted his own baseball bat , which he used to hit for a .438 batting average .

The next year , Flick played for the Dayton Old Soldiers , also in the Interstate League , as their regular left fielder . His defense improved , as he compiled a .921 fielding percentage , and he batted .386 . He also led the league with 20 triples and 295 total bases .

= = = Major League Baseball = = =

George Stallings , the manager of the Philadelphia Phillies of the National League (NL) , noticed Flick while he played for Dayton . Stallings signed Flick to the Phillies to serve as a reserve outfielder for the team in the 1898 season . Starting outfielder Sam Thompson injured his back after six games , forcing Stallings to play Flick . In his debut game , Flick went 2 @-@ for @-@ 3 with two singles against Fred Klobedanz . Thompson returned to the team briefly , but reinjured his back and announced his retirement in May , allowing Flick to play regularly . Flick proved himself a capable big leaguer , batting .302 with eight home runs , 13 triples and 81 runs batted in (RBIs) . In the

1899 season , he batted .342 , with 98 runs scored and 98 RBIs . However , he suffered a serious knee injury in August , and reinjured the knee when he returned to the game too quickly .

Before the 1900 season , Philadelphia stars Napoleon Lajoie and Ed Delahanty held out of renewing their contracts with the team . Other members of the team had grown disgruntled . Amid talk of a revival of the American Association , Flick and several other players began to talk about not returning to the team the next year . The Philadelphia Inquirer reported that Flick 's father was in the chair business in Cleveland and that he might require Flick 's help with the business . Flick agreed to a contract extension before the season started .

That year , he led the NL with 110 RBIs . He finished second in the NL with a .367 batting average , a .545 slugging percentage , 11 home runs , 59 extra @-@ base hits , and 297 total bases . He also engaged in a fistfight with Lajoie that caused Lajoie to miss five weeks due to a broken thumb . The race for the batting title came down to the end of the season . The title winner , Honus Wagner , later said , " I 've had a lot of thrills , but don 't think I was ever happier than in 1900 when I won after battling Elmer Flick to the last day of the season for the title . "

Flick was one of many star NL players who jumped to the fledgling American League (AL) after the 1901 season , playing for the crosstown Philadelphia Athletics . Flick played in 11 games for the Athletics , before the Phillies obtained an injunction from the Pennsylvania Supreme Court prohibiting any player under contract with the Phillies from playing for another team . Though this injunction named Lajoie , Bill Bernhard , and Chick Fraser only , it still applied to Flick as well . As a recourse , Flick and teammate Lajoie signed instead with the Cleveland Naps , as the Pennsylvania injunction could not be enforced in Ohio . The two players often traveled separately from their teammates for the next year , never setting foot in Pennsylvania in order to avoid a subpoena . Flick spent the remainder of his career in Cleveland , and the contract dispute was resolved when the leagues made peace in September 1903 with the National Agreement .

On July 6 , 1902 , Flick hit three triples in one game . Between 1900 and 2010 , 49 players accomplished that feat . By early 1904 , Flick did not want to re @-@ sign with Cleveland for the offered \$ 2 @, @ 500 (\$ 65 @, @ 843 in current dollar terms) . Plans were being made to run a railroad through a corner of Flick 's farm and Flick hoped to hire some of his horses to the construction team . " After July 4 , my farm work will be along so that I will be able to give considerable attention to independent ball " , he said .

Flick did return to Cleveland for the 1904 season . That year , Flick tied teammate Harry Bay for the league lead with 38 stolen bases . Flick was the AL batting champion in the 1905 season with a .308 average . Only Carl Yastrzemski , who won the batting title with a .301 average in the 1968 season , led the league with a lower average . Flick also led the league with a .462 slugging percentage and 18 triples in 1905 . His .383 on @-@ base percentage trailed only Topsy Hartsel . During a 1905 game , Cleveland fielders were charged with seven errors in a single inning , but Flick committed only one of the errors .

In the 1906 season , Flick played a league @-@ leading 157 games . He led the league with 700 plate appearances , 624 at @-@ bats , 98 runs scored , 22 triples , and 39 stolen bases (tied with John Anderson) . However , Flick was " said to be dissatisfied with the team " , and the Naps considered trading him to the Detroit Tigers for Matty McIntyre . Before the 1907 season , the Naps turned down a trade with the Tigers which would have exchanged Flick for the 21 @-@ year @-@ old Ty Cobb . Hughie Jennings , the Tigers ' manager , was tired of dealing with Cobb 's abrasive behavior . The Naps refused to part with Flick , even in exchange for Cobb . They countered with Bunk Congalton , but the Tigers declined . Flick had been holding out but he signed a few days after the proposed trade . After Cobb was nearly traded away , Jennings attempted to repair the difficult relationships between Cobb and the other Detroit players . " Cobb is too good a hitter to let get away , when a little diplomacy will get the boys together " , Jennings said . In the 1907 season , Flick again led the league with 18 triples .

However , baseball took its toll on Flick . Before the 1907 season , he considered retiring to pursue other business opportunities . By 1908 , he developed stomach problems . Cleveland personnel initially said that the illness was related to Flick 's overeating . He left training camp that year , complaining of " train sickness " , and returned home to Cleveland . He missed the majority of the

1908 season , playing in only nine games . He missed the beginning of the 1909 season as well , as a doctor recommended Flick have his appendix removed . Now weighing 130 pounds (59 kg) , Flick was afraid of a bad outcome from the surgery , which was a significant risk at the time . He kept his appendix and played in 66 games , batting .255 . He played in another 24 games in the 1910 season before he was again sidelined by his stomach ailment .

The Naps acquired Shoeless Joe Jackson from the Athletics in a trade and had him replace Flick in the lineup . In July 1910 , the Naps sold Flick to the Kansas City Blues of the American Association , but Flick refused to report to Kansas City , which cancelled the transaction .

= = = Later career = = =

In 1911 , Flick looked to continue his career . Unable to find a major league team willing to sign him , he returned to the minor leagues . The Toledo Mud Hens of the American Association purchased him from Cleveland . Flick played for Toledo in 1911 and 1912 . He batted .326 in the 1911 season and .262 in the 1912 season , but did not hit for power . The Mud Hens released him at the end of the 1912 season . He retired from professional baseball after being released by Toledo , though he briefly played as a second baseman for a local amateur team in Bedford in 1914 .

Flick retired without playing in a World Series . As of 2003 , there were six Hall of Famers without a World Series appearance who played most of their careers after 1903 ; three of them ? Flick , Lajoie and Addie Joss ? played together with Cleveland from 1902 to 1910 .

= = Later life = =

Returning to Bedford , Flick hunted , raised horses , built buildings , and became involved in selling real estate . He also scouted for Cleveland . Only four 19th century baseball players , including Flick , were still alive in 1970 . In his later years , Flick still answered requests for autographs from his fans . Proud of his longevity , Flick often completed autographs by writing the date and his age above or underneath his signature .

Flick was married to Rosa Ella (née Gates) . The couple had five daughters . Flick died in his hometown of Bedford in 1971 , at the age of 94 , of congestive heart failure . He also suffered from mycosis fungoides .

= = Honors = =

When Cobb died in 1961 , stories written about him mentioned the attempted trade between Cleveland and Detroit , which revived interest in Flick . Flick was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1963 after being unanimously elected by the Veterans Committee (VC) . When he received the call from Branch Rickey that he had been selected , Flick did not believe Rickey at first . He said that he did not even realize that he was being considered for election at the time . Flick 's family had to convince him that the call was real . He was the oldest living inductee in Hall of Fame history . At his induction , the 87 @-@ year @-@ old Flick said , " This is a bigger day than I 've ever had before . I 'm not going to find the words to explain how I feel . "

Subsequent to his induction , writers have questioned the validity of Flick 's Hall of Fame membership . James Vail characterized Flick and three other Hall of Famers as " some of the most dubious VC choices ever " . David Fleitz wrote that Rickey 's influence on the Veterans Committee led to Flick 's election , as Rickey was the only committee member who had seen Flick play . Author Robert E. Kelly pointed out that Flick 's career was relatively short and that stronger candidates from Flick 's era (such as Sherry Magee) had not been inducted .

Flick was enshrined in the Greater Cleveland Sports Hall of Fame in 1977 , and the Ohio Baseball Hall of Fame in 1987 . A statue of Flick 's likeness was created to be placed in Bedford ; it was funded by donations and was dedicated in September 2013 . Mike Hargrove was among the baseball figures who attended the ceremony .