

= Jocko Thompson =

John Samuel " Jocko " Thompson ( January 17 , 1917 ? February 3 , 1988 ) was a professional baseball pitcher . He played all or part of four seasons for the Philadelphia Phillies of Major League Baseball from 1948 to 1951 . He also served in the Army of the United States as a first lieutenant in the European theater during World War II . Thompson played in Major League Baseball during the Whiz Kids era during a career which spanned 12 seasons ( 1940 ? 1941 , 1946 ? 1955 ) . After attending Northeastern University , Thompson appeared as a situational pitcher and spot starter during the 1948 , 1949 , and 1950 seasons with the Phillies , and went 4 ? 8 in his only season as a regular member of the team 's starting rotation . After demotion to the minors in 1952 , Thompson retired from baseball after the 1955 season .

Before his major league career , Thompson entered the military and participated in Operation Market Garden , where he led a platoon to secure a bridge over the Maas River . He served in the Army from 1941 to 1945 . In 2004 , the bridge that his platoon captured was renamed in his honor .

= = Early career = =

Described as a " fast ball specialist " , Thompson played three seasons for the baseball team at Northeastern University , one of six Major League Baseball players to attend the school . During his tenure ( 1938 ? 1940 ) , the Huskies won 31 games and lost 14 , accumulating a .689 winning percentage . After the 1940 college season , Thompson was signed by Major League Baseball 's Boston Red Sox as an amateur free agent . The Red Sox assigned Thompson to their D @-@ level affiliate , the Centreville Red Sox , where he posted an 18 ? 5 record and a 1 @.@ 56 earned run average ( ERA ) in 27 games . He also played in seven games for the Canton Terriers , winning one and losing one and compiling a 3 @.@ 41 ERA . Under manager Heinie Manush , Thompson played for the Greensboro Red Sox in the Piedmont League during the 1941 season ; he amassed an 8 ? 13 record and a 3 @.@ 56 ERA in 162 innings pitched .

= = Military service = =

Thompson entered the Army of the United States in 1941 and was assigned to the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment , a part of the 82nd Airborne Division . In 1944 , as a first lieutenant , Thompson led his men during an air raid as part of Operation Market Garden . The light in the jump bay of the platoon 's C @-@ 47 Skytrain was later than expected , moving their landing zone from its intended location near Grave , Netherlands ; the plane was passing over buildings when the paratroopers were signalled to leave the aircraft , and Thompson decided to wait until reaching several approaching fields .

Thompson led his platoon in an attack against the nearby bridge spanning the Maas River , which was defended by German forces supplemented by two 20 mm flak guns , one on the close side of the bridge and one across the river . The platoon opened fire on the German forces , killing four . Two trucks of German soldiers arrived on the scene , but they " showed no desire to fight ... [ and ] ran away " . Thompson 's platoon destroyed " electrical equipment and cables that they expected were hooked up to demolitions " , and their bazooka operator destroyed the nearer flak gun , permitting the establishment of a roadblock on the bridge while waiting for the remainder of the 82nd Airborne . After the battle at the Maas bridge , Thompson also participated in the Battle of the Bulge , where he was given a field commission , and during the Allied occupation of Berlin , where he served as an aide to General James M. Gavin .

Thompson was wounded twice during the war , for which he received two Purple Hearts ; fellow pitcher Robin Roberts later wrote that his Phillies teammates " understood that Jocko still carried around a considerable amount of shrapnel in his body " . Other decorations included the Bronze Star with cluster , the Silver Star , and various awards from the Belgian , French , and Dutch governments .

= = Return to baseball = =

Thompson returned to baseball with the Scranton Red Sox of the Eastern League for the 1946 season . He was second on the team in innings pitched ( 180 ) and finished with a 13 ? 7 record in 26 games ( 20 starts ) . For the season , Thompson allowed 164 hits ? the most on the team ? and 97 walks . The following year , he was promoted to the Toronto Maple Leafs , one of Boston 's two Triple @-@ A @-@ level affiliates . After he posted a 6 ? 12 record ? the team 's worst mark among starters with 30 or more appearances ? the Red Sox did not retain Thompson 's rights when their working agreement with the Maple Leafs ended . He remained with Toronto and his rights became the property of the Philadelphia Phillies when those two teams established a new agreement .

In 1948 , Thompson went 12 ? 8 for the Maple Leafs , the second @-@ best win ? loss record among the team 's regular starting pitchers ( 20 or more starts ) . He was third on the team with 161 innings pitched , allowed the most earned runs ( 91 ) , and posted a 5 @.@ 09 ERA . At the end of the season , manager Eddie Sawyer called Thompson and Jim Konstanty up to the major league level . As per the working agreement between the teams , the major league club paid Toronto for the rights to each Maple Leafs player it called up : \$ 25 @,@ 000 ( \$ 246 @,@ 000 in current terms ) for the first player , and \$ 5 @,@ 000 ( \$ 49 @,@ 000 currently ) for each player thereafter . Sawyer recalled that Pete Campbell , Toronto 's owner , and Konstanty " didn 't get along ... [ because ] they were both the same " . Although Campbell was " glad to get rid of Konstanty " , he told Sawyer to take Thompson as the \$ 25 @,@ 000 player because he did not want Konstanty to think he was worth the larger fee .

= = Major league career = =

= = = 1948 ? 1949 = = =

Thompson made his major league debut in the second game of a doubleheader on September 21 , 1948 . He pitched a complete game against the Cincinnati Reds , allowing one run on five hits , striking out five , and walking five batters to collect the first win of his major league career . He appeared in one other game during the 1948 season , pitching four innings in the second game of a doubleheader against the New York Giants on September 28 , allowing three runs in a 6 ? 3 Philadelphia victory . Thompson wore the uniform number 9 during his brief call @-@ up .

Thompson began the 1949 season in the Phillies ' starting rotation with Roberts , Ken Heintzleman , Russ Meyer , and Curt Simmons , and the Phillies " hoped for contributions " from him and some of his teammates , like Schoolboy Rowe and Blix Donnelly . However , Thompson lost his first two starts , both against the Boston Braves . He was sent down to Toronto , amassing a 14 ? 5 record there for the 1949 season , and was later described as the team 's " top pitcher " for that year . His 2 @.@ 73 ERA was second on the team to right @-@ handed starter Bubba Church ; Thompson allowed 44 earned runs in 145 innings . He made a spot start in midseason for the Phillies against the Brooklyn Dodgers , but the Phillies lost 8 ? 4 . Thompson did not get his first win in the majors that year until September 19 , when he defeated the St. Louis Cardinals behind Howie Pollet , 4 ? 3 . He made his final start of the season for the Phillies on September 24 , against Don Newcombe and the Dodgers ; the Phillies lost , 8 ? 1 . Thompson finished 1949 with a 1 ? 3 record at the major league level , with a career @-@ high ERA of 6 @.@ 89 , 12 strikeouts and 11 walks in 31 1 ? 3 innings . For his 1949 appearance , Thompson 's uniform number was 37 .

= = = 1950 ? 1951 = = =

Although Thompson was expected to contribute during the 1950 Phillies season and the Whiz Kids ' " improbable " run to the pennant , he spent most of the season with Toronto . On June 8 , he defeated the Jersey City Giants , 5 ? 3 , turning in a four @-@ hit performance and striking out eleven batters . He also took a late @-@ game loss in a doubleheader against the Baltimore Orioles

, as they staged a five @-@ run rally in the ninth inning to defeat Toronto . Again described as the team 's top pitcher , he amassed 10 wins and 14 losses , a 4 @.@ 57 ERA , and led the team with 201 innings pitched . As a batter , Thompson hit two doubles , two triples , and batted in nine runs . He was called up late in the season to reinforce a team that Roberts described as " depleted " ; within one week 's time , the Phillies had lost Church to injury , Simmons to military service , and Bob Miller to a recurring back injury . Thompson appeared in relief of Church after his return on September 15 , but the Phillies lost , 5 ? 0 , due in part to a Bobby Thomson inside @-@ the @-@ park grand slam . In his 1950 major league appearances , he played in two games , pitching four innings and allowing one run . Although Thompson was on the playoff roster , he made no postseason appearances with the team . His uniform number for the rest of his Phillies career was 33 .

1951 was Thompson 's only full season as a regular in the major leagues , when he beat out Leo Cristante in spring training to make the team . During the preseason , he and Ken Johnson combined for a 1 ? 0 shutout of the Cardinals . In the regular season , Thompson amassed a 4 ? 8 record in 14 starts . He made a total of 29 appearances on the season , notching a 3 @.@ 85 ERA . He won his first game of the year against the New York Giants , 8 ? 4 , on April 23 ; it was the Giants ' fifth straight loss . His first loss of the season came in April in the first game of a doubleheader against the Braves , losing 1 ? 0 though he held the Braves to two hits . At the plate , Thompson batted .103 with one double and one triple , the latter of which came on June 2 in a 7 ? 3 defeat of St. Louis . The Phillies and the Reds split a doubleheader in July , with Thompson earning the victory in the nightcap ; the Phillies won , 10 ? 0 . In August , Thompson entered in relief in the first inning of a game against the Pittsburgh Pirates after Russ Meyer was knocked out of the contest , staging a " respectable duel " with Mel Queen to the eighth inning in a 12 ? 7 Phillies victory ; later in the month , he shut out the Reds on three hits to complete a series sweep by the Phillies . Thompson also defeated St. Louis late in the pennant race when the Cardinals were battling the Dodgers for the top position in the league .

= = After the majors = =

= = = Minor leagues = = =

Thompson returned to the minor leagues for the 1952 season , playing for the Baltimore Orioles , now affiliated with Philadelphia . He led the Orioles in innings pitched ( 231 ) and strikeouts ( 119 ) as he compiled a 13 ? 14 record and a 2 @.@ 49 ERA , third @-@ best on the team . After the season , he played winter baseball in Havana , Cuba , pitching 14 1 ? 3 innings in 5 games . Thompson 's .714 winning percentage ( ten wins and four losses ) was best on the 1953 Orioles among pitchers who made 20 or more starts , and he pitched seven complete games . His 1953 ERA was 3 @.@ 80 , and he allowed 16 home runs in 154 innings . When the minor league Orioles moved to Richmond , Virginia , to make room for the transplanted St. Louis Browns of the American League , Thompson left the Phillies ' system and remained with the old franchise , the unaffiliated Richmond Virginians , who began play in the 1954 season .

Thompson posted an 8 ? 14 record for the Virginians in 1954 ; his ERA totaled 5 @.@ 00 in 29 starts and he placed third on the team in innings pitched ( 198 ) . His 112 strikeouts led Richmond , as did his 232 hits allowed . After a 6 ? 16 season and a 5 @.@ 17 ERA in 1955 , Thompson retired from baseball .

= = = Post @-@ baseball = = =

After his playing days ended , Thompson worked as a sales manager in Maryland . He died at age 71 on February 3 , 1988 , and was interred at the Gate of Heaven Cemetery in Silver Spring , Maryland . In 2004 , the bridge over the Maas River which Thompson 's platoon secured 60 years earlier was renamed the John S. Thompsonbrug ( " John S. Thompson Bridge " ) . Many veterans of

World War II , as well as Thompson 's wife , attended the ceremony .