

= Wally Pipp =

Walter Clement Pipp ( February 17 , 1893 ? January 11 , 1965 ) was an American professional baseball player . A first baseman , Pipp played in Major League Baseball ( MLB ) for the Detroit Tigers , New York Yankees , and Cincinnati Reds between 1913 and 1928 .

After appearing in 12 games for the Tigers in 1913 and playing in the minor leagues in 1914 , he was purchased by the Yankees before the 1915 season . They made him their starting first baseman . He and Home Run Baker led an improved Yankee lineup that led the league in home runs . He led the American League in home runs in 1916 and 1917 . With Babe Ruth , Bob Meusel , Joe Dugan , and Waite Hoyt , the Yankees won three consecutive American League pennants from 1921 through 1923 , and won the 1923 World Series . In 1925 , he lost his starting role to Lou Gehrig , after which he finished his major league career with Cincinnati .

Pipp is considered to be one of the best power hitters of the dead ball era . Pipp is now best remembered as the man who lost his starting role to Lou Gehrig at the beginning of Gehrig 's streak of 2 @, @ 130 consecutive games . According to a popular legend , Pipp asked to sit due to a headache .

= = Early life = =

Walter Clement Pipp was born on February 17 , 1893 , in Chicago , Illinois , to Pauline ( née Stroeber ) and William H. Pipp . He was raised as a Roman Catholic , and different sources describe him as being of Irish or German ancestry . He was raised in Grand Rapids , Michigan . As a child , Pipp said that he was hit in the head with a hockey puck , which resulted in headaches throughout his life .

Pipp enrolled at the Catholic University of America in Washington , D.C. , where he studied architecture and played baseball for the Catholic University Cardinals . Pipp graduated in 1913 .

= = Baseball career = =

= = = Early career = = =

In 1912 , Pipp made his debut in professional baseball with the Kalamazoo Celery Champs of the Class D Southern Michigan League . In 68 games played , he had a .270 batting average . The Detroit Tigers of the American League purchased his contract late in the 1912 season . Pipp attempted to hold out from the Tigers , demanding a portion of the purchase price , and threatened to return to college .

After graduating from college , Pipp ended his holdout without receiving a share of the purchase price . Pipp made his major league debut with the Tigers on June 29 , 1913 . After playing 12 games for Detroit , batting .161 , the Tigers reassigned Pipp to the Providence Grays of the Class AA International League . He committed seven errors in 14 games for Providence , and was demoted to the Scranton Miners of the Class B New York State League , where he only batted .220 .

In 1914 , Pipp played for the Rochester Hustlers of the International League . Pipp had a .314 batting average and 27 triples . He led all batters in the league with 15 home runs , a .526 slugging percentage , and 290 total bases .

= = = New York Yankees = = =

In January 1915 , Jacob Ruppert and Tillinghast L 'Hommedieu Huston agreed to purchase the New York Yankees of the American League . As part of the agreement , the other team owners in the American League agreed to help the Yankees restock their system with prospects . One of the deals Ruppert and Huston negotiated was their purchase of Pipp . After the purchase was completed , all owners , with the exception of Frank Navin , the owner of the Tigers , broke their

word . On February 4 , 1915 , the Tigers sold Pipp and outfielder Hugh High to the Yankees , receiving \$ 5 @ , @ 000 for each player ( \$ 116 @ , @ 957 in current dollar terms ) .

The Yankees had struggled prior to Ruppert and Huston 's purchase , having only one winning record in their previous eight seasons . They made Pipp their starting first baseman in time for Opening Day of the 1915 season . The Yankees added Home Run Baker in 1916 , and they formed the center of the Yankees ' batting order . Pipp led the American League in home runs with 12 in 1916 ; Baker finished second with 10 . Pipp hit nine home runs in 1917 , again leading the league .

In 1918 , Pipp hit only two home runs , but batted .304 . He missed playing time under the nation 's " work or fight " rule during World War I ; he worked as a naval aviation cadet at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology . He batted .275 with seven home runs in 1919 , as Babe Ruth surpassed him as the best power hitter in the American League . The Yankees moved to strengthen their team after the 1919 season , adding Ruth and fellow outfielder Bob Meusel and third baseman Joe Dugan . Between 1920 and 1924 , Pipp had a .301 average , with season averages of 29 doubles , 94 runs scored , and 97 runs batted in ( RBI ) per season . Led by their strong lineup and additions to the pitching staff , such as Waite Hoyt , the Yankees finished in second place in 1920 . Pipp became the cleanup hitter , behind Ruth in the batting order . Pipp hit .296 in 1921 , and the Yankees won the American League pennant . However , they lost the 1921 World Series to the crosstown rival New York Giants of the National League .

On July 26 , 1922 , Pipp bobbled a ball during the fifth inning of a game against the St. Louis Browns . When the Yankees returned to the dugout , Ruth criticized Pipp 's fielding . Pipp attacked Ruth , and the two were separated by teammates . Though Ruth insisted they 'd " settle this after the game " , Ruth and Pipp led the Yankees to a victory with their hitting , and when Pipp approached Ruth after the game , ready to fight , Ruth opted against it . Pipp said this resulted in reduced tension among the Yankees , which he attributed to their improved play from that point forward . Pipp batted .329 in 1922 and the Yankees again won the American League pennant . In a rematch , the Giants again defeated the Yankees in the 1922 World Series . Meanwhile , Pipp scouted Lou Gehrig , who was playing college baseball for Columbia University , and suggested to Miller Huggins , the Yankees ' manager , that he should sign Gehrig . Pipp personally helped develop Gehrig after he signed . Pipp had a strong 1923 season , but he injured his right ankle while stepping off of a train in Boston late in the year . The Yankees used Gehrig , whom they promoted from the minor leagues , to play the Yankees ' final four games . Though Huggins initially thought Pipp would not be able to play in the 1923 World Series , Pipp recovered sufficiently in time to play . The Yankees won the series in six games over the Giants . The Yankees finished in second place in the American League in 1924 , and Pipp led the American league with 114 RBIs and 19 triples .

= = = = 1925 : Removal from the Yankees ' starting lineup = = = =

The Yankees began the 1925 season struggling , and Huggins began to replace players in his lineup in response . Huggins benched starting shortstop Everett Scott on May 6 , replacing him with Pee Wee Wanninger . At the time , Scott had the longest streak of consecutive games played , with 1 @ , @ 307 . The Yankees continued to struggle . The Yankees entered play on June 2 on a five @ - @ game losing streak . Their 15 ? 26 win @ - @ loss record had them in seventh place out of the eight teams in the American League , half a game better than the last place team , and 13 1 ? 2 games out of first place in the standings . Before their game against the Washington Senators , Huggins replaced Pipp in the Yankees ' lineup with Gehrig , and benched second baseman Aaron Ward and catcher Wally Schang as well . Pipp was batting .244 with only three home runs and 23 RBIs , and had a .181 batting average over the previous three weeks . This was the first game of Gehrig 's then @ - @ record 2 @ , @ 130 consecutive games played , which lasted for 14 seasons .

According to the most popular version of the story , Pipp showed up at Yankee Stadium that day with a severe headache , and asked the team 's trainer for two aspirin . Miller Huggins , the Yankees ' manager , noticed this , and said " Wally , take the day off . We 'll try that kid Gehrig at first today and get you back in there tomorrow . " Gehrig played well and became the Yankees ' new starting first baseman . This story first appeared in a 1939 New York World @ - @ Telegram on Gehrig 's

career , in which Pipp was interviewed . Pipp was later quoted to have said , " I took the two most expensive aspirin in history . "

According to The Pride of the Yankees , the 1942 film about Gehrig 's life , Pipp asked out of the game because he was experiencing double vision from being hit in the head two days prior . By 1953 , Pipp reported to The New York Times that he was taken out of the lineup due to being hit in the head by a pitch thrown by Charlie Caldwell during batting practice . However , while Pipp was hit in the head by a pitch from Caldwell and was hospitalized , this event occurred on July 2 , a month after Pipp 's benching .

The New York Sun reported that the benching was due to Pipp 's struggles against left @-@ handed pitchers , as southpaw George Mogridge was the scheduled starting pitcher for the Senators on June 2 . Other sources suggest Yankee manager Miller Huggins may have actually benched Pipp and other veterans in order to " shake up " the slumping lineup . According to another story , supported by Gehrig 's wife , Pipp was not at the game on June 2 because he was gambling on horse racing at a race track . His son Tom denied this rumor , stating that his father never bet on horses . When interviewed by Sports Illustrated , Pipp 's own children disagreed on the reason for their father 's benching , believing it was either due to Pipp being beamed , or struggling . One of his sons believes that Pipp told Huggins to play Gehrig in his place , as he knew that Gehrig had a future with the Yankees , while he likely did not .

= = = Later career = = =

Ruth had returned to the Yankees ' lineup on June 1 , the day before Pipp , Ward , and Schang were benched . Despite Ruth 's return and the strong play of Gehrig , who batted .295 with 20 home runs and 68 RBIs , the Yankees finished in seventh place . Pipp was hospitalized for a week after being hit in the head by Caldwell on July 2 , and he played sparingly during the remainder of the season . He ended the year with a .230 average , three home runs , and 24 RBIs .

Due to the team 's struggles , Huggins made personnel changes during the offseason . The Yankees attempted to trade Pipp to another American League team , but could not agree on the terms with any team . They put Pipp on waivers , and he was acquired by the Cincinnati Reds of the National League , who reportedly paid the Yankees a greater sum than the \$ 7 @, @ 500 waiver price . The Reds , who had not had a strong starting first baseman since Jake Daubert died in 1924 , had attempted to acquire Bill Terry from the Giants , but refused to part with Edd Roush in the transaction , and so acquired Pipp instead . Pipp again attempted to acquire a portion of the purchase price , but was rebuffed .

Pipp played 372 games for the Reds over the next three seasons . In 1926 , he had a .291 batting average , and his 99 RBIs and 15 triples were both fourth @-@ best in the National League . He batted .260 with 41 RBIs in 1927 , and .283 in 1928 .

With first baseman George Kelly also on their roster , the Reds released Pipp before the 1929 season . Pipp signed with the Newark Bears of the International League for the season . He earned \$ 40 @, @ 000 that year , more than he made during his major league career . He batted .312 for Newark , and retired after the season .

Pipp played 1 @, @ 872 games . He had three seasons with a .300 + batting average , and two seasons with 100 or more RBI . Pipp had a .281 career batting average . He led both the American and National leagues in fielding percentage . His 226 sacrifices as a Yankee remain a team record . Pipp was the first Yankee to lead the American League in home runs . Due to his famous replacement by Gehrig , players began to say they were " Wally Pipped " when replaced in a lineup , especially if it is due to a minor injury .

= = Later life = =

Pipp often attended Old @-@ Timers ' Day at Yankee Stadium and Tiger Stadium , playing in 12 Old @-@ Timers ' games . He was later hired by Sports Illustrated as one of the magazine 's first writers .

After retiring , Pipp invested in the stock market , but lost his wealth in the Wall Street Crash of 1929 . He authored a book , titled Buying Cheap and Selling Dear . He worked as a broadcaster on a pregame baseball show for the Tigers , wrote radio scripts , and worked in publishing . He organized baseball programs around his community for the National Youth Administration . He also spent time unemployed during the Great Depression . In 1940 , Pipp was on the verge of bankruptcy , but he managed to pay off his debts without going bankrupt .

During World War II , Pipp worked at the Willow Run manufacturing complex in Ypsilanti , building B @-@ 24 bombers . Following the war , Pipp worked for the Rockford Screw Products Corporation as a machine parts salesman , selling bolts and screws to automotive companies based in Detroit and Grand Rapids .

= = Personal life = =

Pipp and his wife , Nora , had four children : three sons ( Walter , Tom , and Wally Jr . ) and a daughter ( Dorothy ) . Pipp 's brother , the Reverend W.B. Pipp , was a Catholic priest and golfer .

The Pipp family moved to Lansing , Michigan , in 1949 . After suffering a number of strokes , Pipp moved to a nursing home in Grand Rapids in September 1963 . He died there on January 11 , 1965 , of a heart attack at the age of 71 . He is interred in Woodlawn Cemetery in Grand Rapids .