

= Eppa Rixey =

Eppa Rixey Jr . (May 3 , 1891 ? February 28 , 1963) , nicknamed " Jephtha " , was an American left @-@ handed pitcher who played 21 seasons for the Philadelphia Phillies and Cincinnati Reds in Major League Baseball from 1912 to 1933 . Rixey was best known as the National League 's leader in career victories for a left @-@ hander with 266 wins until Warren Spahn surpassed his total in 1959 .

Rixey attended the University of Virginia where he was a star pitcher . He was discovered by umpire Cy Rigler , who convinced him to sign directly with the Phillies , bypassing minor league baseball entirely . His time with the Phillies was marked by inconsistency . He won 22 games in 1916 , but also led the league in losses twice . In 1915 , the Phillies played in the World Series , and Rixey lost in his only appearance . After being traded to the Reds prior to the 1921 season , he won 20 or more games in a season three times , including a league @-@ leading 25 in 1922 , and posted eight consecutive winning seasons . His skills were declining by the 1929 season , when his record was 10 ? 13 with a 4 @.@ 16 earned run average . He pitched another four seasons before retiring after the 1933 season .

An intellectual who taught high school Latin during the off @-@ season , earning the nickname " Jephtha " for his southern drawl , Rixey was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1963 but died a month after his election .

= = Early life = =

Rixey was born on May 3 , 1891 in Culpeper , Virginia , and at the age of ten , his father , a banker , moved his family to Charlottesville , Virginia . His uncles were John Franklin Rixey a former congressman and Presley Marion Rixey the former Surgeon General of the United States Navy . He attended the University of Virginia , where he played basketball and baseball ; he was a member of Delta Tau Delta International Fraternity . His brother Bill also played baseball for Virginia . During the off @-@ season , umpire Cy Rigler worked as an assistant coach for the University . He recognized Rixey 's talent and tried to sign him to the Philadelphia Phillies . Rixey originally declined , saying he wanted to be a chemist , but Rigler insisted , even offering a substantial portion of the bonus he received for signing a player . With his family in financial trouble , Rixey accepted the deal . The National League , upon hearing of the deal , created a rule that prohibits umpires from signing players . Neither Rixey nor Rigler received any signing bonus .

= = Baseball career = =

= = = Philadelphia Phillies = = =

Rixey joined the Phillies for the 1912 season without playing a single game of minor league baseball . His time with the Phillies was marked by inconsistency . He went 10 @-@ 10 in his first year , with a 2 @.@ 50 earned run average (ERA) and 10 complete games in 23 games pitched . He had a three hit shutout against the Chicago Cubs on July 18 . Rixey was on the losing end of a no @-@ hitter by Jeff Tesreau on September 6 . After the season , the Chicago Cubs , under new manager Johnny Evers , offered a " huge sum " to the Phillies for Rixey , but manager Red Dooin declined the offer . Prior to the 1913 season , Rixey notified the Phillies of his desire to finish his studies at the University of Virginia and graduate in June ; however , after some negotiation , he decided to sign a contract and re @-@ joined the team shortly after the season began . That season , he appeared in 35 games , started 19 of them , winning nine games , and had a 3 @.@ 12 earned run average . In 1914 , his record worsened to 2 ? 11 , and his earned run average increased to 4 @.@ 37 . Rixey 's record improved to 11 ? 12 in 1915 , and his earned run average was 2 @.@ 39 as the Phillies won the National League pennant and played the Boston Red Sox in the 1915 World Series . During Game 5 of the series , Rixey replaced starter Erskine Mayer for the final six innings

of the game . He allowed three runs in the final two innings and lost 5 ? 4 .

Rixey went 22 ? 10 in 1916 with a 1 @.@ 85 ERA and a career high of 134 strikeouts . On June 29 , Rixey pitched a four @-@ hit shutout against the New York Giants , facing the minimum 27 batters , because of three double plays , and a player caught stealing . In 1917 , despite having a 2 @.@ 27 earned run average , Rixey led the league in pitching losses with 21 . He also handled 108 chances without a single error . Rixey hated losing and was known for destroying the team locker room , or disappearing for days at a time after a loss . He missed the 1918 season to serve in the Chemical Warfare Division of the United States army during the war effort . He struggled upon returning to baseball , going 6 ? 12 with a 3 @.@ 97 earned run average in 1919 , and again leading the league in losses with 22 in 1920 . Prior to the 1920 season , rumours circulated that his former manager , Pat Moran , now with the Cincinnati Reds , was interested in trading for Rixey . The relationship between Rixey and manager Gavvy Cravath was never good , and Cravath had made known his desire to trade him ; however , he stayed with the Phillies that season , working on his delivery with former pitcher Jesse Tannehill , who , Rixey admitted , helped with his pitching delivery . On November 22 , 1920 , Rixey was traded to the Cincinnati Reds in exchange for Jimmy Ring and Greasy Neale . His record during his eight seasons with the Phillies was 87 wins and 103 losses .

= = = Cincinnati Reds = = =

Rixey was traded to the Reds prior to the 1921 season for Jimmy Ring and Greasy Neale . In his first season with the Reds , he won 19 games , and set a Major League record by allowing just one home run in 301 innings pitched . In three of the next four seasons , he had 20 or more victories each season , with a league @-@ leading total of 25 in 1922 . He also led the league in innings pitched and hits allowed in 1922 and shutouts with four in 1924 . In 1926 he had 14 wins , followed by seasons of 12 , 19 and 10 wins . Rixey 's production began to decline in 1930 , when he went 9 ? 13 with a 5 @.@ 10 ERA , and pitched fewer than 200 innings for the first time since 1919 . From 1931 through 1933 , Rixey pitched very little , and was used almost exclusively against the Pittsburgh Pirates . For the 1933 season , he was the only Reds pitcher with a winning record , at 6 @-@ 3 as the Reds finished last in the National League with a 58 @-@ 94 record . He retired prior to the 1934 season , stating " the manager wasn 't giving me enough work " . Rixey completed his career with 266 wins , 251 losses , and a 3 @.@ 15 ERA . He appeared in 692 games and completed 290 , and had 20 wins and 14 saves as a relief pitcher .

Bubbles Hargrave , former Cincinnati catcher , gave this testimonial : " Eppa was just great . He was great as a pitcher , fielder and competitor . I look on him as the most outstanding player I came in contact with in my entire career . "

Rixey 's approach to the game is exemplified by the following quote : " " How dumb can the hitters in this league get ? I 've been doing this for fifteen years . When they 're batting with the count two balls and no strikes , or three and one , they 're always looking for the fastball and they never get it . " ? Eppa Rixey (1927)

= = Legacy = =

Originally Rixey had trouble controlling his speed , but eventually became one of the most feared pitchers in baseball according to reporters . Rixey was considered a pitcher with an " peculiar motion " , who rarely walked a batter . Throughout his long career , the 210 @-@ pound Rixey charmed teammates and fans with his dry wit and big Southern drawl . His nonsensical nickname " Jephtha " seemed to capture his roots and amiable personality . Some writers thought " Jephtha " was a part of Rixey 's real name , but it was likely invented by a Philadelphia sportswriter . Rob Neyer called Rixey the fourth best pitcher in Reds history behind Bucky Walters , Paul Derringer and teammate Dolf Luque .

His 266 career victories was the record for most wins by a left @-@ handed pitcher in the National League until Warren Spahn broke it in 1959 , however his 251 losses are an all @-@ time record for left @-@ handed pitchers . He also held the longevity record for most seasons pitched by a National

League left @-@ hander until Steve Carlton broke it in 1986 . As time passed , support for Rixey to be inducted to the Baseball Hall of Fame grew . He was also inducted into the Cincinnati Reds Hall of Fame in 1958 . In 1960 , Rixey finished third in the balloting behind former teammate Edd Roush and Sam Rice (who was later inducted the same year as Rixey) . Upon his election to the Hall of Fame on January 27 , 1963 , he was quoted as saying " They 're really scraping the bottom of the barrel , aren 't they ? "

In 1969 , he was named by Reds fans as the greatest left @-@ handed pitcher in Reds history . The Reds Hall of Fame summed up his career : " He was the best left @-@ hander ever to pitch for the Reds with a 179 ? 148 record , 180 complete games , 23 shutouts and a 3 @. @ 33 ERA in his 13 seasons . "

In 1972 he was inducted into the first class of the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame and Museum .

Rixey 's childhood home in Culpeper still stands ; it suffered some damage in the 2011 Virginia earthquake .

= = Personal life = =

He was married to Dorothy Meyers of Cincinnati and had two children , Eppa Rixey III and Ann Rixey Sikes and five grandchildren , James Rixey , Eppa Rixey IV , Steve Sikes , Paige Sikes , and David Sikes . After his retirement from baseball , worked for his father @-@ in @-@ law 's successful insurance company in Cincinnati , eventually becoming president of the company . He died of a heart attack on February 28 , 1963 , one month after his election to the Hall of Fame , becoming the first player to die between election and induction to the Hall of Fame . He is interred at Greenlawn Cemetery in Milford , Ohio .

When Rixey started playing , he was considered an " anomaly " . He came from a well @-@ off family and was college @-@ educated , something that was rare during his era . He wrote poetry , and took graduate school classes in chemistry , mathematics and Latin . During the off @-@ season , he was a Latin teacher at Episcopal High School in Alexandria , Virginia . He was also considered among the best golfers among athletes during the time period . He was the subject of hazing in his first few years in the Majors . Eventually he teamed up with other college graduates , Joe Oeschger and Stan Baumgartner and the hazing lessened to a degree .