

Portsmouth Fans Rely On Pitler

Pittsburgh Jewish Athlete Manager Of Ohio Team

By BOB LEWIS

When the Middle Atlantic League, one of the two thriving minor leagues operating in this section of the Tri-State district, pried off the lid of its pennant race last Wednesday, a prominent Jewish athlete and a native Pittsburgher was in charge of the Portsmouth Club, a new entry in the circuit.



Jake Pitler, a former major league second baseman with Detroit in the American League and Pittsburgh in the National League, is the popular manager of the Portsmouth Club and those who are familiar with his ability as a field general are looking for him to land his team among the leaders in the league. headed by Elmer Daily of minor league fame.

Pitler hails from a family of athletes, being a brother of Dave Pitler, former Fifth Avenue High School and University of Pittsburgh quarterback, and Hutch Pitler, who, during the heyday of his fighting career, stood out with the best lightweights in the country.

Most Successful

Athletically speaking, Jake apparently was the most successful of the three brothers, who started their sports career while residing in the vicinity of Pride Street.

The Portsmouth manager first gained recognition as a baseball player during his days with the Chattanooga Club of the Southern Association. It was while he was playing second base for the Lookouts that he attracted the attention of major league scouts, among them being one from the Pittsburgh Pirates and another from the Detroit Tigers.

Barney Dreyfuss, the late owner of the Pittsburgh Pirates, thought he had obtained the services of Pitler for the Corsairs, but after announcing that he had purchased the native Pittsburgher, lo and behold, the National Commission, which at that time ruled the activities of the major leagues in same manner as the present-day Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis, decided that Pitler was the property of the Detroit Tigers and Pittsburgh was forced to abandon its claim to the second sacker.

Demanded "New Deal"

The ruling of the National Commission, at that time headed by the late Garry Herrmann, former owner of the Cincinnati Reds, thus again incurred the enmity of the Pittsburgh owner, who led the fight to establish a "new deal" in major league baseball, a fight which brought about the disruption of the National Commission and the establishment of the present-day setup with Judge Landis the supreme dictator in the big leagues.

The awarding of Pitler to the Detroit Tigers was not the first time the Pittsburgh Club had been deprived of the services of a first-class player by the old National Commission.

Years before the Pitler decision was handed down, the Pirates claimed the services of George Sisler, former University of Michigan star pitcher and one of the greatest sluggers of all

time, but the Browns, representing St. Louis in the American League, also claimed him and after a lot of bickering, the National Commission ruled that he was the property of the St. Louis Club.

Starting out as a pitcher (and he was rated among the best college moundsmen ever developed) Sisler was turned into a first baseman because of his ability to hit consistently. He enjoyed a brilliant career with the Browns and near the close of his playing days was named manager of the team.

Dreyfuss Led Fight

Barney Dreyfuss never did get over the decision handed down by the National Commission in the Sisler case and it started the late Pittsburgh magnate on a drive that finally led to the downfall of the powers-that-be in baseball.

The Pitler case, however, was different in some respects as the Pirates finally regained his services after he was awarded to the Detroit Tigers. Pitler played second base for the American Leaguers for several years. When the Tigers' management asked for waivers on Pitler, he was claimed by the Pittsburgh Club, at that time managed by Jimmy Callahan. Never a consistent slugger, Pitler had the knack of hitting when basehits meant runs and he gave the Pirates a lot of valuable service during the days the Corsairs were struggling to get out of the second division. Pitler was a smart baseball player and possessed the ability to diagnose the weakness of the opposition. Speaking on this phase of the game always brings back the time when Pitler crossed up his own manager and club.

The Pirates were engaged in a close game and needed a run to tie the score. Pitler came to bat with the tying run on third and the winning run on first base and only one out. He was ordered to lay one down on an attempted squeeze play, which, if it worked, would have tied the score and placed the winning run on second.

Strategy Fails

After missing the first pitch on the attempted bunt, Pitler noticed that the infield was playing in close and thought it was a good time to forget instructions and line one out to the outfield. He let go on all barrels on the next pitch and lined into a double play to snuff out the rally. What he was told by the late Manager Jimmy Callahan could not be printed. He also drew a salty fine for his attempt to become a hero!

After finishing his career with the Pittsburgh Club, Jake became identified with the old Oil City Club, which at that time was a member of the Two-Team League, which also included Franklin. Oil City and Franklin both were "raiding" the big league

ranks for star players in an effort to outdo each other in building powerful teams. Pitler was manager of the Oil City team during its brilliant career and many a great battle marked the meetings between the teams representing the neighboring towns.

During the winter season, Pitler made his home in Oil City and for a long period of years operated a pool room and bowling alley in the Venango County town.

Following the disruption of the Oil City and Franklin clubs, Pitler became affiliated with the New York-Pennsylvania League and managed several clubs in that circuit, among them being pennant winners.

Successful Manager

Pitler has had a lot of success as manager of first-class baseball teams and Portsmouth fans are looking for him to give them a pennant their first season in the Middle Atlantic League.

Speaking of Jewish stars in organized baseball, the Boston Red Sox of the American League, managed by Joe Cronin, formerly of the Pittsburgh Pirates and who got his start in the Middle Atlantic League as a member of the Johnstown Club, has two of them on his roster.

Assisting Cronin in the capacity of coach and first lieutenant is none other than Al Schact, formerly a member of the baseball comedy team of Al Schact and Nick Altrock, of the Washington Senators. Schact and Altrock were known from coast to coast for their clever antics and a world series without their presence on the diamond was deprived of a lot of color.

Schact may have been a comedian when teamed up with Altrock, yet he is regarded by veteran major leaguers as one of the smartest men in the game. Had he decided to stick in the game as a pitcher, Schact would have been a consistent winner on the mound, according to close observers of the sport.

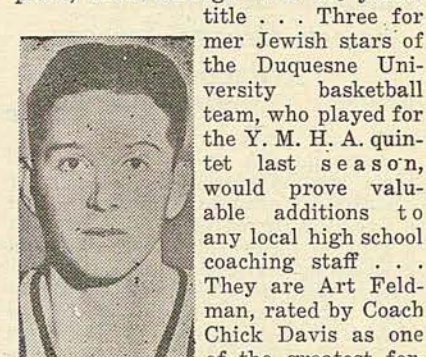
Another Jewish star, likewise a former member of the Washington Senators, is a member of the Boston Red Sox catching staff. He is Moe Berg, college graduate and linguist, who also saw service behind the bat for the Cleveland Indians. Berg, who has mastered seven languages fluently, has been unable to catch regularly for the Red Sox due to the fine work being turned in by Rick Ferrell, formerly with the St. Louis Browns and a brother of Wesley Ferrell, former Cleveland Indians' pitcher, who also is a member of the Cronin troupe.

SPORTS JOTTINGS

Speaking of former athletes who have made good in the business world, how about Harry Mates, former member of the Coffey Club, who, like Moy Marks, is the head of the basement department of a downtown store? . . .

Hails From Family Of Outstanding Sports Stars

Mates, while serving with the Ninth Infantry of the Second Division overseas, was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for heroism under fire . . . Harry is a brother of Butch Mates, who starred as a lineman on the Fifth Avenue High School football team . . . The Young Men's and Women's Hebrew Association will put on quite a program next Sunday in honor of winners in the various intramural leagues . . . Among the speakers will be Dr. H. C. Carlson, basketball coach at the University of Pittsburgh, and Izzy Weinstock, star fullback of the Panthers during the 1934 season . . . Weinstock, incidentally, will play for the Philadelphia Club in the National Professional League next season . . . Phil (Chappy) Goldstein, former lightweight boxer and boxing coach at the "Y," has completed plans to stage a boxing show in connection with the affair . . . Al Quail, promising middleweight managed by Phil Goldstein, will meet Vic Wickets in an exhibition . . . Mose Butch, popular Oakland scrapper, also will appear on the card . . . Shades of the old days featured the recent Maccabiad, staged in the Y. M. and W. H. A., when the Doc Gordons, formerly Allegheny Mountain Association basketball champions, came through with the junior



Art Feldman, former Jewish stars of the Duquesne University basketball team, who played for the Y. M. H. A. quintet last season, would prove valuable additions to any local high school coaching staff . . . They are Art Feldman, rated by Coach Chick Davis as one of the greatest forwards in the history of basketball at Duquesne; Marty Reiter, brilliant guard, and Irving Brenner, star center . . . They are not only good basketball players, but keen students of the game . . . Three members of the Gordons, named for the popular Center Avenue dentist, won places on the all-tournament team . . . They were Stark, Rosen and Reifer . . . The Doc Gordons are known not only for their ability to play basketball, but for the excellent manner in which they stage a banquet or dance . . . Their splendid affairs in the old days were something to remember . . . Congratulations are in order for the members of the Enoch Rauh Club for their splendid undertaking in not only offering a free membership in the Y. M. H. A. to boys unable to pay for it, but for their announcement that a scholarship to one of the three local universities will be given some worthy Jewish student . . . Jake Mintz, new boxing impresario at Hickey Park. Millvale, is back home after a sojourn in the East, during which trip he hobnobbed with Jack Dempsey and Max Waxman, the latter manager of Vince Dundee, former world's middleweight champion . . . Promoter Mintz is now engaged mapping out the program for his opening show on May 12 . . . While in the East, Mintz had his picture taken with Jack Dempsey, now a well-known owner of a restaurant in Gotham . . . Oscar Levin, the first basketball captain of the old Enoch Rauh team, was among those present at the recent running of the Kentucky Derby at Churchill Downs in Louisville.

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