

Honoring and Preserving the Sports History of Chautauqua County

Chautauqua Sports Hall of Fame

15 West Third Street - Jamestown, NY 14701

August 2019

CHAUTAUQUA SPORTS HALL OF FAME MEMBERS' PICNIC



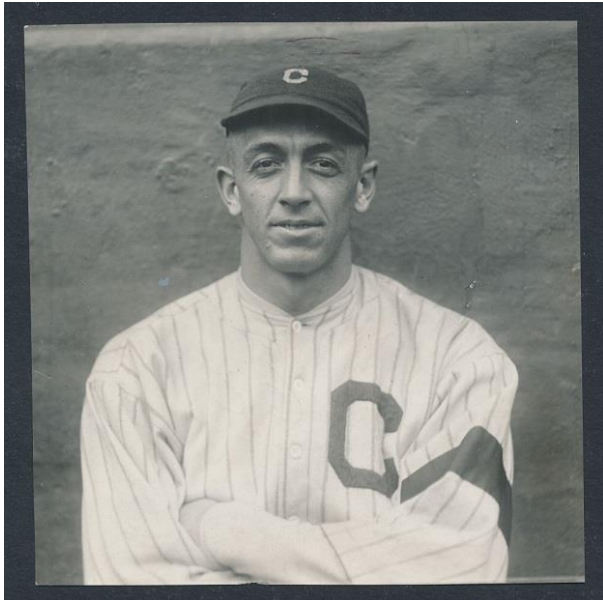
Monday, August 12
Lakewood Rod & Gun Club
social hour @ 5:00, dinner @ 6:00

FREE to CSHOF members and one guest

reservations required to Randy Anderson by August 5
randy28b@netsync.net or 716-640-6219

100 Years Ago Cleveland Indians Pitcher Ray Caldwell Was Struck By Lightning But Finished the Game!

Can you imagine a major league baseball player being knocked down by a lightning bolt, picking himself up, and finishing the game? Well, CSHOF inductee Ray Caldwell did it, 100 years this month. Read the amazing story as written by Frank Hyde in The Post-Journal on August 12, 1954.



This being the 35th anniversary of one of baseball's most unusual incidents in which my old friend Ray Caldwell was the key figure, it is fitting that we "turn back the pages of history" as the poets say. Caldwell, the elongated and illustrious citizen of Onoville, was pitching for the Cleveland Indians against the Philadelphia A's in League Park in Cleveland when a bolt of lightning laid the big fellow flatter than a week old waffle.

Ray was making his debut with the Indians that August 12, 1919 afternoon, and what a greeting from Old Jove, himself. But they always said the giant

right hander feared nothing that walked or crawled, so why make an exception of a plain old bolt of lightning. Ray just got up, shook his head a couple of times, like a steer that has been kissed by a locomotive, and barked at Ray Chapman - the ill-fated Ray Chapman - "Give me that danged ball and turn me toward the plate."

As dramatic as the bolt was the game setting. It was the ninth inning. Cleveland had a 2-1 lead. The A's had two out and Jumping Joe Dugan was the batter. Raymond Benjamin Caldwell, born at nearby Corydon, PA on April 26, 1888, was sometimes called "Rube" in those days. Sometimes they referred to him as "Slim." Anyway, Rube or Slim stood out there, the raindrops gathering on his brow, thunder ripping the skies, the fans in a near panic in the stands fearing another strike from the blue, and glared at Jumping Joe.



Ray had been with Boston and earlier the New York Highlanders, forerunners of the famed Yanks as your kids and mine know them today. Cleveland had acquired him for exactly nothing. Boston feared a sore arm would never regain its swift, but Tris Speaker, the old Silver Eagle who was then managing the Indians, thought otherwise.



Henry P. Edwards of the Cleveland Plain Dealer wrote that they met one day and Spoke said: "How about it, Ray, are you through?" Ray grinned wryly and answered: "Not me, Spoke, give me a chance with Cleveland and I'll make good." Tris told Ray to get in shape and report. So the day Ray reported, the old flipper was working as smooth as a mother-in-law's jaw. Spoke decided to shunt him against the A's. Roline Naylor was on the hill for the White Elephants. He was a determined cuss, too, so he and Ray matched pitch for pitch under the glowering skies until the fourth. Then Chapman and Speaker walked, Joe Harris sacrificed, Willie Gardner grounded out, Chapman scoring, Dugan threw Bill Wambsganss' grounder wide and Speaker scored.

So Ray had a cushion - two runs - but he wasn't in the clear. Rain clouds scurried in and huddled and boiled over the drama being enacted below. Came the fifth and Ray hit George (Tioga) Burns, Dugan singled to left and Burns hauled up at second. Fred Thomas dumped a bunt. Cy Perkins cracked a grounder that Wambsganss grabbed behind second but Burns scored. Bob Allen fanned to end the inning.

Now it was the ninth. Rain fell softly as if reluctant to interfere. The A's were making their dying gasp. Tilly Walker popped to Chapman. Burns fouled out to Steve O'Neill, and then up came Dugan.

That's when it happened!

The skies ripped open as if angered over puny man's ability to stage his own dramatics. Lightning struck the iron rail in front of the press box, seared its way down the steel posts and furrowed across the infield as it traveled to the mound like a line drive. Caldwell went down. Chapman gasped and staggered. Bedlam reigned throughout the stands. Then as quickly as the terror came it passed. Caldwell lay on the mound, his stunned face turned to the skies, arms outflung. Players rushed to his side, but already he was stirring, sitting up.

Caldwell Felled by Bolt from Sky; Finishes Game

Cleveland, O., Aug. 24.—Ray Caldwell pitched his first game for Cleveland and defeated Philadelphia, 2 to 1. While Dugan, last man up, was at bat, a terrific thunderbolt broke, throwing spectators and players into a momentary panic. Pitcher Caldwell was felled, but recovered quickly and resumed pitching. Score: .

Phila.	AB	R	H	E	Cleveland	AB	R	H	E
Burrus, 1b.	4	0	0	0	Graney, lf.	4	0	2	0
Witt, 2b.	4	0	1	1	Chap'n, ss.	2	1	0	0
Walker, lf.	4	0	0	0	Speaker, cf.	2	1	0	0
Burns, rf.	3	1	1	0	Harris, 1b.	2	0	0	0
Dugan, ss.	3	0	1	1	Gardner, 3b.	2	0	0	0
Thomas, 3b.	2	0	0	0	Wambs, 2b.	3	0	0	0
Perkins, c.	3	0	0	0	Smith, rf.	3	0	0	0
Allen, cf.	2	0	0	1	O'Neill, c.	2	0	0	0
Naylor, p.	3	0	1	0	Caldwell, p.	3	0	1	0
Totals	28	1	4	3	Totals	23	2	8	0
Philadelphia	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Cleveland	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2

Bases on balls—Naylor, 4; Caldwell, 2.
Struck out—Naylor, 2; Caldwell, 3.

Umpires Brick Owens and Billy Evans huddled around. Slowly the lean Caldwell uncoiled to his height. "Give me the ball," he rumbled as he reached toward Chapman. Minutes passed and now they were ready again - Caldwell like a bull at bay glaring through the rain-laden gloom, Dugan squared off at the plate, poised, ready to batter the first pitch delivered by a lightning-shocked man. Caldwell kicked and threw. Jumping Joe



lashed savagely at the ball, hit it cleanly, and it shot in a sizzling, bounding wave toward third and Willie Gardner, who beat it down, grabbed, threw and the game was over.

Ray had won his comeback. The Spoke's judgment had been substantiated. And it led to the glory road for the man who had toiled so effectively so long for the futile Highlanders. Ray won 20 in 1920 and was a key man as the Indians won the pennant and beat Brooklyn in what was probably the most colorful and history-making

classic of them all. It was the last World Series played under the old National Commission. That autumn marked the birth of the Kenesaw Mountain Landis era. And, as if to bow out of the old regime in grand style, Wambsganss was to make the only unassisted triple play in all World Series history, and Elmer Smith of Cleveland was to hit the classic's first grand slam home run.

But there's a sad note, too, and it came almost a year to the day after Ray's joust with a bolt of lightning. Chapman was to become the only major league player killed on the diamond. He was hit in the temple by Carl Mays on August 17, 1920 and died a few hours later.

Showing no lasting effects, Caldwell threw a no-hitter for the Indians against the Yankees on Sept. 10, 1919. And in 1920 he won 20 games for Cleveland as they won the World Series.

<http://www.chautauquasportshalloffame.org/raycaldwell.php>

