

“ F A R M E R B I L L ” K I N G A N D H I S U N D E R A R M D E L I V E R Y

A farmer's son from rural Frederick County, Maryland, William Jesse King used to throw a taped up baseball against the side of the barn as a youngster. As a lanky teenager, the righthander from Feagaville, MD would have crowds of people to watch him pitch his unusual underarm delivery for the Boys High School team in nearby Frederick, drawing the attention of respected Minor League Baseball Manager, Jack Dunn of the Baltimore Orioles.

When the Federal League took over Dunn's team in Baltimore in 1914, he moved his International League team to Richmond, Virginia. King, despite still attending high school, signed to play for Dunn in Richmond, but never reported before the season ended. The following spring, King was back pitching for the Frederick Boys High School team, dominating opposing teams to the point he once fanned 21 batters in a seven-inning game. Controversy soon aroused over King's eligibility to play baseball for the high school team, when it was reported he only attended classes on the days a baseball game was scheduled.

That season, the Class D, Blue Ridge League was forming, and Frederick Hustlers Manager, Jack Morrison heard about the local pitcher with the unusual delivery. Upon finding out that King had little or no interest in reporting to Richmond after his high school season ended, Frederick Baseball Association director, Frank K. Schmidt stepped in, and negotiated King's release from his Richmond contract with Dunn, and quickly convinced Manager Jack Morrison to sign the young man from nearby Jefferson to a Frederick Hustlers contract.

King soon paid big dividends for the Schmidt and the Hustlers, helping led them to the league's first pennant in 1915 by winning 17 of 21 decisions, completing 19 games, including five shutouts. King soon became the mainstay on all but two of Frederick's future Blue Ridge League teams throughout the club's history, until he retired after the 1929 season, at the age of 37.

Injuries curtailed his second season in Frederick, as he went 11-7 in 1916, while the team faltered to fourth place. King rebounded in 1917, but the "hard luck" southpaw led the league with 16 losses (12-16 overall), despite completing 27 games in over 245 innings of work. King was a workhorse, tossing a one-hitter, 2 two-hitters, and a three-hitter, but tired near the end of the season giving up 23 hits and 16 runs in a game late in the season. After the 1917 season, King was drafted into the U.S. Army, stationed primarily at Fort Meade, MD, where he served for over two years.

In 1920, when the Blue Ridge league resumed play, the Frederick directors were eager to bring back King to pitch for the Hustlers. Despite a losing record, King still drew the attention of the hometown fans, who were ready to see baseball again.

1921 was one of King's best seasons, as he won 23 games, winning percentage (.793, 23-6), and tied Waynesboro's "Lefty" Clarke for games pitched with 34. King helped lead the Hustlers to their second, and last pennant, in a hotly contested league race with Hanover and Waynesboro. In addition, "Farmer Bill" won the final and deciding game in the Maryland Little World Series best-of-seven series, as Frederick defeated Princess Anne of the Eastern Shore League in Baltimore, to win the series, four games to one.

King holds many career pitching records in the Blue Ridge League, including wins, losses, walks, strikeouts, games pitched, and inning pitched. His greatest exploits included pitching two games against Hall of Famer, "Lefty" Grove.

After Frederick, King also pitched briefly for Portsmouth in the Virginia League, Princess Anne in the Eastern Shore League, and Macon (GA) in the South Atlantic League, before returning home for good to pitch for the Cleveland Indians affiliate, Frederick Warriors in 1929, before retiring after that season.

After baseball, King, a carpenter by trade, lived at 201 Jefferson Street in Frederick, across from McCurdy Field, where King used to pitch for the Hustlers in the 20's. Ironically, King lied about his age as a youngster, as his tombstone listed he was born on December 15, 1892, which would have made him 22 years old while he was still pitching in high school. He died at 84, from heart failure on October 23, 1977 at a Frederick, Maryland nursing home. He and his wife, Fannie (*nee* Abrecht), who were married for 55 years until her death on May 17, 1976, are buried at Mount Olivet Cemetery in Frederick, Maryland.

Listed below is a breakdown of "Farmer Bill" King's Minor League record in the Class D, Blue Ridge League for the Frederick (MD) club between 1915-1929.

PITCHING

Year	Club	Pos	W-L	Pct	G	GS	CG	ShO	IP	AB	H	R	ER*	HbP	HR	BB	SO	WP	ERA*
1915	FREDERICK	p	17-4	.810	22	19	19	5	185 1/3	672	114	39	24	9	1	49	140	5	1.17
1916	FREDERICK	p	11-7	.611	22	20	17	3	188	645	136	63	44	13	5	51	89	0	2.11
1917	FREDERICK	p	12-16	.429	29	28	27	3	245 2/3	942	250	110	76	15	5	67	115	4	2.78
1920	FREDERICK	p	11-16	.407	28				230	852	222	107	11		59	129	1		
1921	FREDERICK	p	23-9	.793	34				231	943	234	103	5		55	146	4		
1922	FREDERICK	p	14-11	.560	31				228	888	232	90	12		54	139	0		
1923	FREDERICK	p	13-8	.619	34		13		212	849	170	120	8		53	83	4		
1924	FREDERICK	p																	
1925	FREDERICK	p																	
1926	FREDERICK	p																	
1927	FREDERICK	p																	
1928	FREDERICK	p																	
1929	FREDERICK	p																	
BLUE RIDGE LEAGUE TOTALS																			

*Unofficial. Earned Runs and Earned Run Averages were not official statistics compiled by the Class D, Blue Ridge League.

F R E D E R I C K
C l a s s D, B l u e R i d g e L e a g u e
1915-17, 1920-29