

GEORGE "REGGIE" RAWLINGS

BLUE RIDGE LEAGUE'S ALL-TIME MVP

By Mark C. Zeigler

Throughout the history of the Class D, Blue Ridge league, one player consistently stood among any other player who wore a baseball uniform in the league. George Rawlings, known throughout his playing career by his nickname, "Reggie" Rawlings, became the most successful and feared batters in the league.

Born in Washington, D.C. on June 13, 1891, Rawlings was one of the original member's of the Blue Ridge League, playing for the William "Country" Morris' Martinsburg Champions in 1915. He played 13 seasons in the Class D, Blue Ridge League, playing longer than any other player who played in the league. The only years he did not play in the league was the war torn 1918 season, when he was serving military duty in the U.S. Army, and the league's final season, 1930. Only Frederick (MD) pitcher Bill King came close to Rawlings' accomplishments, also spending 12 seasons toiling in the Blue Ridge League. Rawlings holds many of the league's all-time statistical marks, including games played, at bats, runs, hits, total bases and home runs.

Rawlings was an All-Star caliber player, who had the potential to play in the Major Leagues, but never did. In 1921, when his manager, Joe Ward, was fired after four games, Rawlings took over the club for the remainder of the season, managing his team to a close second place finish, behind the Frederick Hustlers. After the 1921 season, he married the sister of one of his former teammates, Harriet Beatrice Westenhaver from Martinsburg, West Virginia and decided to start a family and settle in the area. On several occasions, Rawlings tried to play for the other clubs and leagues, but missed his family and the friendly confines of his "adopted" hometown, and always returned to play for the Martinsburg club. His homesickness caused some controversy. Prior to the 1922 season, Rawlings former' mentor, William "Country" Morris convinced Rawlings to sign with his Waynesboro (PA) club, but he soon became homesick, and wanted to return to the Martinsburg club to be closer to his family. Morris soon relented to his friend and traded him for a player named Ross Peddicord a few days before the season opened. Peddicord never panned out, and was released before he played a game, while Rawlings had a monster season, leading the league with a .371 batting average, while hitting 26 home runs, and knocking in a record 108 runs, which caused the Waynesboro club to protest the trade to no avail. In 1925, Rawlings got his closest taste to the big leagues when he signed with the Portland (OR) club in the Pacific Coast League, but never made it past spring training before requesting his release to return back to the Martinsburg club in late March.



Rawlings
1924

Rawlings was named to many end of the season Blue Ridge League All-Star teams, and was referred to by many league newspapers as the league's best player in the 1922, '23, and '24 seasons. Rawlings was a major factor in the Blue Sox' three consecutive league pennants those three seasons. He led the league in home runs three times, and held the third and fourth highest single season home run totals accomplished in the league (26 in 1922, and 25 in 1923). Rawlings also holds the distinction of being the only player in the league in score over 100 runs in one season, when he crossed the plate 104 times during the 1923 season. When Martinsburg affiliated with the Philadelphia Athletics prior to the 1929 season, Rawlings was released, and packed his bags to play for the neighboring independent Hagerstown (MD) Hubs. Rawlings helped lead the Hubs to the 1929 league pennant to finish out his minor league career at the age of 38.

After baseball, Rawlings worked at the Dunn Woolen Mill in Martinsburg for many years. He died at 63, from complications of tuberculosis on July 6, 1954 in Martinsburg, WV. He and his wife are buried at Rosedale Cemetery in Martinsburg.

Listed below is a breakdown of "Reggie" Rawlings' Minor League record in the Class D, Blue Ridge League for the Martinsburg (WV) club, and Hagerstown (MD) Hubs between 1915-1930.

BATTING

| Year | Club | Pos | AVG | G | AB | R | H | TB | 2B | 3B | HR | RBI* | SAC | SB | BB | .SLG |
|---------------------------------|-------------|-----|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-----------|------------|------|------------|----|----|-------------|
| 1915 | MARTINSBURG | of | .325 | 71 | 280 | 49 | 91 | 123 | 16 | 5 | 2 | | 9 | 13 | na | .439 |
| 1916 | MARTINSBURG | of | .279 | 102 | 366 | 62 | 102 | 152 | 17 | 6 | 7 | | 8 | na | na | .415 |
| 1917 | MARTINSBURG | of | .303 | 99 | 390 | 64 | 118 | 177 | 21 | 4 | 10 | | 8 | na | na | .454 |
| 1920 | MARTINSBURG | of | .303 | 98 | 366 | 49 | 111 | 160 | 18 | 2 | 9 | 61 | 9 | 9 | 20 | .437 |
| 1921 | MARTINSBURG | of | .355 | 95 | 361 | 77 | 128 | 208 | 23 | 3 | 17 | | 12 | 15 | na | .576 |
| 1922 | MARTINSBURG | of | .371 | 99 | 394 | 82 | 146 | 251 | 19 | 4 | 26 | 108 | 6 | 17 | 18 | .637 |
| 1923 | MARTINSBURG | of | .376 | 96 | 386 | 104 | 145 | 260 | 28 | 6 | 25 | | 10 | 16 | 31 | .674 |
| 1924 | MARTINSBURG | of | .379 | 99 | 401 | 78 | 152 | 248 | 31 | 1 | 21 | | 1 | 17 | 26 | .618 |
| 1925 | MARTINSBURG | of | .335 | 90 | 337 | 65 | 113 | 190 | 21 | 1 | 18 | | 3 | 11 | 39 | .564 |
| 1926 | MARTINSBURG | of | .320 | 96 | 366 | 68 | 117 | 196 | 16 | 3 | 19 | | 18 | 12 | 45 | .536 |
| 1927 | MARTINSBURG | of | .351 | 95 | 350 | 75 | 123 | 190 | 17 | 7 | 12 | | 14 | 10 | 36 | .543 |
| 1928 | MARTINSBURG | of | .258 | 90 | 322 | 37 | 83 | 122 | 19 | 1 | 6 | | 14 | 10 | 38 | .379 |
| 1929 | HAGERSTOWN | of | .321 | 112 | 408 | 77 | 131 | 194 | 22 | 4 | 11 | | 24 | 17 | 46 | .475 |
| BLUE RIDGE LEAGUE TOTALS | | | .330 | 1242 | 4727 | 887 | 1560 | 2471 | 268 | 47 | 183 | | 136 | | | .523 |

*Unofficial. Runs Batted In were not official statistics compiled by the Class D, Blue Ridge League. Statistics compiled through Reach and Spalding Baseball Guides from 1916 through 1930, and author's research.

O U T F I E L D E R

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