

BASEBALL HISTORY

by
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Frank “Noodles” Hahn

Baseball is rife with great baseball nicknames, especially some from the opening years of the 20th century – “Wagon-Tongue” Adams, “Eaglebeak” Beck, “The Connecticut Moistballer” Sherman, “The Gallatin Squash” Perdue, and “The Freshest Man on Earth” Latham – just to name a few. After noticing one such name – Frank “Noodles” Hahn – I decided to find out more about him.

It turns out that Noodles made his major league debut on April 18, 1899, eleven days shy of his 20th birthday. The young lefthander quickly became the ace of the Cincinnati Reds staff by compiling a 23 – 8 record in his rookie campaign. The Reds, however, struggled to a 6th place finish.

In 1900, Noodles would gain baseball immortality when he hurled the first no-hitter of the 20th century. He fashioned his 4 – 0 gem on July 12, 1900 versus the Phillies. In an unusual display of wildness, he walked five batters that day. For his career he would allow just 1.69 free passes per nine innings, good for 39th place on the all-time list.

Another record setting day for Noodles occurred on May 22, 1901 when he fanned 16 Boston Braves in a complete game victory. This team standard would remain unmatched until 1963 when fireballing Jim Maloney would equal it. Despite Hahn’s heroics and 22 – 19 record, the Reds brought up the rear, finishing 38 games out of first place. His 22 wins represented 42% of his teams’ victories. Only one other hurler winning 20 games for a last place squad would surpass this. Hall-of-Famer Steve Carlton’s 27 wins in 1972 accounted for 46% of the success of the lowly Phillies.

The following table lists the nine pitchers who won twenty games or more while with losing teams:

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Year	Name	Record	Team	Team Wins	Pct.
1972	Steve Carleton	27 – 10	Phillies	59	46%
1901	Frank Hahn	22 – 19	Reds	52	42%
1918	Scott Perry	21 – 19	Phil. A's	52	40%
1951	Ned Garver	20 – 12	Browns	52	38%
1923	Howard Ehmke	20 – 17	Red Sox	61	33%
1974	Nolan Ryan	22 – 16	Angels	68	32%
1979	Phil Niekro	21 – 20	Braves	66	32%
1924	Sloppy Thurston	20 – 14	White Sox	66	30%
1997	Roger Clemens	21 – 7	Blue Jays	76	28%

Hahn was the team ERA leader from 1899 – 1904 as well as finishing in the top ten for the league in those same years. His 2.55 career ERA ranks as the 46th best in major league history.

In his first six seasons, Noodles had amassed four 20-game winning seasons, 122 victories and 3 strikeout crowns and seemed well on his way to a Hall of Fame career. Unfortunately, he had also averaged 318 innings per season during the same period..

In 1905 he developed a sore arm and, after being picked up on waivers in April of 1906 by the New York Highlanders (Yankees), appeared in his final major league game on June 7, 1906. He was just 27 years old.

Year	Team	Age	W	L	IP	ERA	Finish
1899	CIN (NL)	20	23	8	309	2.68	6 th
1900	CIN (NL)	21	16	20	311	3.27	7 th
1901	CIN (NL)	22	22	19	375	2.71	8 th
1902	CIN (NL)	23	23	12	321	1.77	4 th
1903	CIN (NL)	24	22	12	296	2.52	4 th
1904	CIN (NL)	25	16	18	298	2.05	3 rd
1905	CIN (NL)	26	5	3	77	2.81	5 th
1906	NY (AL)	27	3	2	42	3.86	2 nd

130 94 2,029 2.55

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