

BASEBALL HISTORY

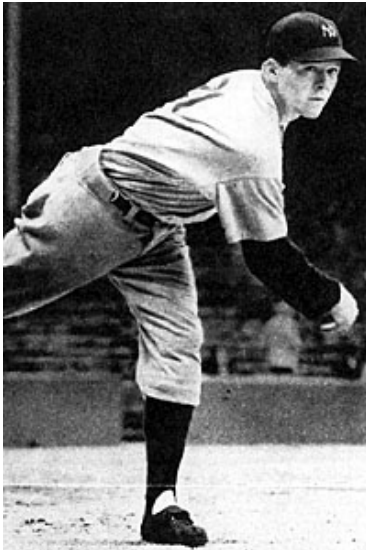
by
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Spud Chandler

Most baseball fans have more than a passing knowledge of the greats of the game – the Hall of Famers and/or superstars from certain eras. And with the passage of time, more and more attention is paid to such players and less and less to a merely “great” player from the past.



One former star who falls into the latter category is New York Yankee pitcher Spurgeon Ferdinand “Spud” Chandler.

The Commerce, GA native was born on September 12, 1907 and was a 1932 graduate of the University of Georgia where he starred in football and track and field as well as baseball. Upon graduation he signed his first contract and then toiled for seven different teams in five minor league seasons. His minor league statistics did not foretell the success he would have at the major league level.

Finally, in 1937, at the age of 29, he left spring training as a full-fledged member of the pinstripers and would remain so through the 1947 season. Spud was armed for the baseball wars with a 90 mph fastball, curve ball, forkball, screwball (his change-up), and a slider that he learned from teammate Red Ruffing in the early 1940s. He also threw an overhand sinker and an occasional knuckleball.

While not a strikeout artist, Spud was efficient with his control and quite stingy when it came to allowing base hits – finishing with a career WHIP (walks plus hits per inning) of 1.21.

The high water mark of his career occurred in 1943 when the right-hander led the American League in wins (20), ERA (1.64 – the lowest season ERA for a Yankee starting pitcher ever), winning percentage (.833), WHIP (0.99), complete games (20), and shut-outs (5). For his outstanding accomplishment, he was named the American League’s Most Valuable Player, the only Yankee moundsman to date to be so honored.

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His career totals seem even more remarkable when you consider that Chandler was limited by a variety of injuries from 1938 through 1941 (including a broken ankle suffered while training for the 1939 campaign) and that he made only five total appearances in 1944 – 1945 due to military service. Also, in 1947 he sustained a career-ending injury.

Despite these setbacks, he was a model of consistency – that is, he never had a losing record and when he finally hung up his spikes for good, he possessed the highest winning percentage (.717) of all pitchers with 100 or more victories. This mark had not been seriously threatened until the coming of Pedro Martinez, who for now has surpassed Spud's record.

And yet, although he hurled for some of the greatest Yankee squads, won twenty games twice, and appeared in four All-Star games, perhaps his highest accolade came from Hall of Famer and native Louisianian Bill Dickey. Dickey, longtime catcher and batterymate of Red Ruffing, Waite Hoyt, Lefty Gomez, Herb Pennock, Burleigh Grimes, Wes Ferrall, and Stan Coveleski, simply said that Spud Chandler was "the best pitcher I ever caught."

Spud Chandler													
	W	L	Pct	SV	G	GS	CG	IP	H	BB	SO	SH	ERA
1937	7	4	.636	0	12	10	6	82	79	20	31	2	2.85
1938	14	5	.737	0	23	23	14	172	183	47	36	2	4.03
1939	3	0	1.00	0	11	0	0	19	26	9	4	0	2.84
1940	8	7	.533	0	27	24	6	172	184	60	56	1	4.60
1941	10	4	.714	4	28	20	11	164	146	60	60	4	3.18
1942	16	5	.762	0	24	24	17	201	176	74	74	3	2.37
1943	20	4	.833	0	30	30	20	253	197	54	134	5	1.64
1944	0	0	.000	0	1	1	0	6	6	1	1	0	4.50
1945	2	1	.667	0	4	4	2	31	30	7	12	1	4.65
1946	20	8	.714	2	34	32	20	257	200	90	138	6	2.10
1947	9	5	.643	0	17	16	13	128	100	41	68	2	2.46
Total	109	43	.717	6	211	184	109	1485	1327	483	614	26	2.84

This article previously appeared in the Bleacher Creature.

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