



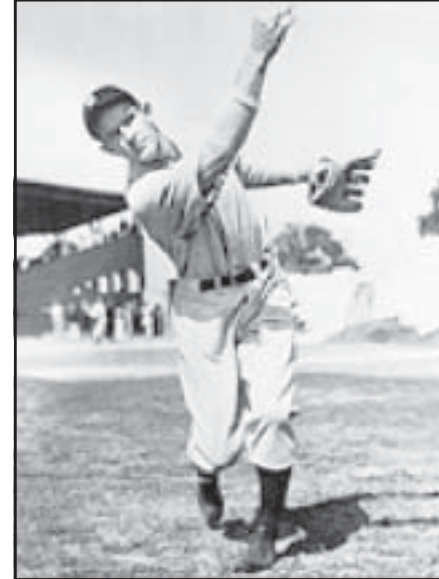
Elden Auker

K-State gets three outstanding seasons

By DR. RODNEY D. and JEANNE MERKLE
This focuses on Elden Auker's pitching at Kansas State. The researchers combed through the archives of the Manhattan Mercury at the Manhattan Public Library. The data available is sketchy as budgets were tight and travel was minimal for sports coverage in newspapers at the time.

The Big Six Conference lasted from 1928-1947 and had Iowa State, the University of Kansas, Kansas State, Missouri, Nebraska, and Oklahoma.

Sophomore Season — 1930
 April 21 — His varsity debut got off to an auspicious start as the underhanded slinging sophomore one-hit the St. Mary College Knights. He fanned four and walked one for a complete game as K-State beat St. Mary's, 1-0.



Elden Auker pitches for college team

May 16 — There were three senior pitchers on the 1930 team; thus, Auker did not have much opportunity to start as a pitcher in a conference game.

He seized an opportunity when K-State traveled to Ames to play Iowa State. Pitching like a veteran, the sophomore held the Cyclones to six hits and struck out three to win his first Big Six game, 7 to 1.

May 20 — In his next start, the right-hander bested the Oklahoma Sooners 9 to 7 in Manhattan.

May 23 — The sophomore was on the mound to face the University of Nebraska. He shut down the Cornhuskers by yielding just three hits and one run in a complete game 3 to 1 victory.

May 27 — He continued his pitching mastery in the Big Six as the K-State Aggies (now the Wildcats) journeyed to Lawrence. Auker subdued the Jayhawks 8 to 2 in the opening game. He won his fourth conference game in less than two weeks allowing seven

hits. Besides pitching, he cracked a home run and singled in two at bats. K-State decided the Kansas Jayhawks in the final game of the two-game set which enabled K-State to tie Oklahoma for the 1930 Big Six Conference Championship with 9-3 in league action.

Junior Season — 1931
 April 10 — Auker lost the season opener to Haskell Indian Institute as K-State was whipped 17 to 5. The K-State team made 3 errors in the opening inning and 10 in the game.

April 17 — The Kansas State Wildcats defeated the University of Missouri in Columbia 6 to 4 in 10 innings to open the Big Six Conference season. Auker went the distance as he allowed five hits and struck out 11.

April 27 — K-State traveled to Lawrence and defeated the University of Kansas 4 to 3. Auker allowed five hits, pitching the entire 9 innings.

May 4 — K-State traveled to Norman to battle the Oklahoma Sooners. Oklahoma defeated Kansas State 4-3 in 10 innings as the Wildcats committed six errors. Auker was the hard-luck loser going the distance.

May 15 — K-State and Kansas played a three-hour contest in which Kansas outscored K-State 22 to 16. The slugfest produced 32 base hits (20 for Kansas and 12 for K-State). Six of the 12 K-State hits were home runs, one by Auker.

Auker didn't have his best stuff as he allowed eight walks and was tagged with the loss.

May 17 — Auker pitched the last three innings in relief as K-State defeated Kansas 8 to 7 in 10 innings. He helped himself in the victory as K-State plated two runs in the 9th with Auker singling and scoring the tying run to knot the score at 7. K-State used a squeeze

play in the decisive 10th to push across the winning run. Auker earned the victory.

May 26 — The University of Nebraska came to Manhattan and Auker single-handedly beat the Cornhuskers 20-4. He pitched the entire nine innings holding the Huskers to four base hits. He also connected for four base hits in five trips to the plate. Two of the hits went for home runs and another was a double.

In 1931 K-State played 14 games, winning seven and losing seven. In conference action the college was 4-4 and finished third. Auker won all four, league contests while losing twice.

K-State was 4-2 at home and 3-5 on the road. Auker was 4-3 on the mound.

Senior Season — 1932
 Auker started off with the senior being unable to compete because of a sore arm and finger.

April 26 — In his first mound duty, K-State beat Big Six Conference opponent Oklahoma 5-0 in Manhattan. The right-hander allowed only 5 hits.

April 29 — K-State hosted Missouri and the Tigers romped to victory winning 14 to 5. Perhaps feeling the effects of early season victory or pitching on two days rest, Auker was not effective. He walked eight and allowed 13 to reach base. K-State also committed five errors in the contest.

May 6 — The 13-man baseball squad traveled to Ames to battle the Iowa State Cyclones. Auker

tossed a five-hit complete game to shut out Iowa State as K-State prevailed 1-0.

May 12 — K-State defeated the College of Emporia (Emporia State University) 12-1 as Auker garnered the victory.

May 17 — K-State traveled to Lawrence to battle state rivals, the Kansas Jayhawks. Auker pitched K-State to a 12-1 win. He allowed only three hits and fanned 13 batters and issued just one walk. He also laced three base hits in the contest, one for a triple.

May 18 — Pitching his second game in as many days, Auker led K-State to an 8-4 victory over Kansas. The senior right-hander struck out nine, allowed six hits and one walk. He had two base hits in four times at bat, one for a home run.

This game was the conclusion of his college career.

Auker's career as a college pitcher ended with four straight victories: Iowa State (1-0), College of Emporia (12-1) and Kansas (12-1 and 8-4). S

It is interesting to note that during Auker's three seasons at K-State, the school played only 44 baseball games: 17 in 1930, 14 in 1931 and 13 in 1932.

During his three years as a varsity member, K-State compiled a record of 27-16-1 and Auker was 14-4 in the regular season. In conference action, K-State compiled a record of 18 wins and 11 losses while Auker earned 11 wins and lost only three games.

Park named after sports legend

From THE OBERLIN HERALD Wednesday, May 31, 2000

It was the 22-year-old rookie's first time in New York, and in Yankee Stadium.

It was also the first time he had stood face to face with the legendary George Herman Ruth. He with a ball, the Babe with a bat.

The crowd roared, the catcher gave the sign, another player yelled in the background. Then everything got quiet and a tiny bead of sweat trickled down the young pitcher's face.

He was a long way from his quiet little hometown of Norcat. After wiping his hand on his gray Detroit Tigers road jersey, Elden Auker palmed the ball and delivered his usual submarine-style pitch.

"Strike one!" The umpire yelled.

Maybe the Babe had been confused by the young man's underhanded style or maybe it was just Elden's lucky day.

He swung his arm again, and the umpire yelled, "Strike two."

And then, "Strike three."

"You're out."

The Babe walked away with his head down. Elden Auker didn't have much time to celebrate because the next man to step up to the plate was Lou Gehrig. The Yankee lineup, the famed Murders' Row, had earned its reputation.

Mr. Auker, who has been called the greatest all-around athlete in Kansas history, told his Babe Ruth story to a crowd gathered around him on Main Street in Norcat Saturday afternoon.

They were there for the dedication of the Elden Auker park — named after Norcat's most famous native. Mr. Auker, who hadn't been to his hometown since 1983 when his mother died, came to Norcat this weekend to see the park and attend an alumni banquet. "I have had several honors," said the 89-year-old as tears filled his eyes, "but this is one of the best."

Sixty-eight years later, Mr. Auker says, he doesn't remember thinking much of striking out Babe Ruth, the Bambino, the Sultan of Swat. He can't recall today whether he got Gehrig. He was just doing his job.

He remembers the day more, he said, because of an outrageous comment the Yankee third base coach made.

"Hey Bush," Mr. Auker said the coach, Art Fletcher, yelled at him. "He used to call me Bush," Mr. Auker said, "when he wanted to get my attention."

"Hey Bush," the coach screamed, "you've got the Bam all upset."

"He said he's been struck out a lot of times, but that's the first time a damn woman ever struck him out."

Mr. Auker said he was one of two pitchers at that time who used

a "submarine" throwing motion, more common in women's softball.

He didn't know about the other guy, but Mr. Auker said he learned that style of pitching after injuring his arm playing football.

During his college career at K-State, he earned nine varsity letters — in baseball, basketball and football — and was the first athlete to achieve All-American status in three sports from College Humor Magazine. He was all-Big Six in all three.

The Norcat Park Committee built the park where Keith's Market stood years ago, using thousands of dollars in donations and help from prisoners at the Norton Correctional Facility.

Jim and Glenn Olsen, Norcat natives who donated a majority of the money in memory of their parents, asked that it be named after Mr. Auker.

The former ballplayer, who now lives in Florida, pitched from 1932 to 1942 in the American League with the Detroit Tigers, Boston Red Sox and St. Louis Browns. With a lifetime earned run average of 4.53, the hometown hero has been inducted into the Kansas Sports Hall of Fame, the Kansas State University Sports Hall of Fame and the St. Louis Browns Hall of Fame. His major league record is 130 wins, 101 losses and 128 complete games.

The park is not completely finished, and gusts of wind picked dust of the bare ground and flung it at Mr. Auker and the audience. Some of his words were lost as the wind whistled in the microphone, but the man's mind was sharp and he continued to speak.

After the dedication, he hung around for three hours to autograph baseball cards, baseballs and anything else people brought to the table. He told more of his baseball stories.

The Babe became his golfing buddy in later years, Mr. Auker said, and he remembers seeing

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