

E A R L M A C K C O N N I E ' S L E G A C Y i n T H E M I N O R S

Son of the legendary Philadelphia Athletics magnate Connie Mack, Earle spent three seasons as player-manager for the Moline Plowboys. He then spent the greater part three decades acting as assistant manager during his father's 50-year run as the A's skipper. With Connie Mack's senility evident by the late 1940s, Earle and brothers Roy and Connie, Jr. proved inadequate to the enormous task of restoring financial health to the once-fabled organization. Poor decision by all three "Mack Men," as well as family squabbling, hastened the club's demise and eventual move to Kansas City.



Of the three sons, Earle was the only one to play in the big leagues, although his baseball career was less-than-stellar. On October 5, 1910, Earle made his Major League debut when his father inserted him into the lineup as catcher. The younger Mack smacked a single and a triple (the only two hits of his Major League career) in a 7-4 loss to the New York Highlanders. The following year he appeared in two late season games, and his big league career ended with two similar appearances in 1914. Still, his playing days were far from over, and Mack returned to the minor leagues to act as a player-manager.

From 1913 through 1915, Mack managed Raleigh of the Class D North Carolina State League. During Mack's three seasons at the helm, the Capitals won 175 and lost 178, finishing no better than third in the six-team circuit. In 1917, he returned to the N.C.S.L., managing Charlotte until the league folded May 30. He finished the year leading the Hanover (PA) Raiders of the Blue Ridge League, another Class D circuit, replacing John "Rabbit" Agnew as player/manager mid-way through the season.

In 1920, Earle Mack joined Moline of the Illinois-Indiana-Iowa League. During his first season as player-manager, the Plowboys and the Cedar Rapids Rabbits tied for fourth place in the eight-team loop. The following year Moline captured the pennant with a 78-55 record. As a team, the Plowboys led the league in most offensive categories, including batting average (.285), runs scored (760), total bases (1,862), doubles (239), and home runs (70).

Although Moline finished the 1921 season 23 games above .500, there were few legitimate big league prospects on the pennant-winning roster. The exception was pitcher Fred "Lefty" Heimach, who led the Class B loop in wins (24) and ERA (2.38). Heimach would enjoy a decent Major League career, winning 62 games, mostly with the Athletics and Dodgers. Another right-hander, Jim Sullivan, recorded a league-leading 185 strikeouts. Like his teammate Heimach, Sullivan finished the year in Philadelphia, but his short-lived career consisted of 73-plus innings of work over three seasons for the A's and Indians. Outfielder Lee Gooch led the league with 36 doubles, and he too spent the end of the year with the A's, but he never again returned to the Majors.

Earle Mack was a competent fielder, and in 1920 and 1921 he led Three Eye first baseman in assists (87 and 105 respectively). He also demonstrated a knack for manufacturing runs. In 1921, he led the league with 47 sacrifice hits. The Plowboys followed up the championship season with a last-place performance, ending the season 40 games below .500. Mack finished his three-year tenure in Moline with 196 wins and 214 losses.

After three seasons in the Three Eye, Mack returned to the Blue Ridge League. In 1923, his Martinsburg (WV) Blue Sox won the league pennant with 67 wins and 30 losses. The following year he was back in Philadelphia, sitting next to his father as assistant manager of the American League's Athletics.

The senior Mack expected Earle to succeed him as manager, and Roy and Connie, Jr. to run the front office. Unfortunately, the senior Mack's deteriorating mental health and the organization's increasingly precarious financial condition cut short dreams of an enduring Mack dynasty. The 1950 season represented the 87-year-old Mack's fiftieth season as manager. Although Philadelphia celebrated the jubilee anniversary, there was little to cheer about. In the 19 years since the A's last pennant (1931), Philadelphia had lost 90 or more games 12 times.

In August of that year, Earle and Roy gained controlling interest of the A's, though at the expense of mortgaging much of the club to the Connecticut General Life Insurance Company. In 1951, Connie Mack stepped down to make way for Jimmy Dykes, and the A's, saddled with an unsustainable debt load, limped along for several seasons. In 1954, Philadelphia finished last in the A.L. with 51 wins and 103 losses, 60 games behind the pennant-winning Indians. The following season the storied franchise relocated to Kansas City.

EARL MACK
CONNIE'S LEGACY i n THE MINORS



**1923 Martinsburg Blue Sox
Class D, Blue Ridge League
League Champions**

Earle Mack, Player/Manager (*bottom row, far left*).

Other noted players include
infielder Joe Brehaney (*bottom row, fourth from left*);
outfielder George "Reggie" Rawlings (*top row, second from left*).

*Photo courtesy of Aaron Z. Snyder of Chesnut Hill, MA
Original Photo Taken by Clowes Studio, Martinsburg, WV*