

Jack Hurley

Hagerstown 1916-17, 1921-22

Manager/1st Baseman

Class D, Blue Ridge League

By Mark Zeigler

Considered one of the best all-around hitters, and among the most popular players in the early years of the Class D, Blue Ridge League, Jack Hurley left an impressionable mark in baseball circles in the Hagerstown, MD and Washington, D.C. region.

The eldest son of Patrick and Hannah B. Hurley, John L. Hurley was born on May 1, 1890 in Dedham, Massachusetts. His father was a second generation Irish immigrant, his mother a Wisconsin native.

He was an accomplished athlete and team captain of the baseball team at Dedham High School (MA), when on June 5, 1908, the high school junior jumped into a brook while still wearing his baseball uniform to save the life of 13-year old, Amos J. Webster.

When Jack was in his late teens, he moved to the Washington, D.C. area, where he excelled as a third baseman on the sandlot and amateur diamonds. He was well known for his exploits in the Capital City League, and had captained the Rock Hill College team in 1908, as an 18-year old.

His 6-foot-one, 175 lb. frame stood out among the other young men on the college circuit, and his athletic prowess caught the attention of Philadelphia Athletics owner/manager, Connie Mack, who offered Hurley and “Dutch” Heinrich a try-out in the fall of 1908 with his American League club. Though he did not make the team, he did earn Mack’s respect as a quality ball player, which would become evident several years later, when Jack managed in the Minor Leagues.

After attending and playing baseball on the collegiate and amateur levels, Hurley signed his first professional contract with the Columbia-SC club of the old South Atlantic League in 1912. Playing in 89 games, he batted .253, while hitting 15 doubles. Hurley signed with the Charleston-SC club of the South Atlantic League on April 12, 1913, but his stay lasted only one month when he was released. Six weeks later, Hurley signed with the Valdosta-GA club of the Class D, Empire State League, and batted .311, while leading the circuit with eight triples to help the Millionaires advance to the league championship series, which they lost to Thomasville- GA, 4 games to 2.

He briefly returned to the Charleston-SC club before the 1914 season, but was released ten days later, before the season began. In May, he re-signed with the Millionaires, who were now playing in the renamed Class D, Georgia State League. However despite leading the club in batting with a .315 average, the Valdosta club finished last in the league.

Hurley was among several Washington, D.C. amateur standout players who moved on to the Blue Ridge League, a list that included “Country” Morris,



Jack Hurley

Player/Manager batted .385 to lead Hagerstown to the 1917 Class D, Blue Ridge League Pennant.

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“Reggie” Rawlings, “Skeets” Hayes, “Buck” Barton, and “Chief” Greene.

In 1916, 26-year old Hurley was signed by Bert Weeden to play first base for the Hagerstown Terriers of the Class D, Blue Ridge League. Batting from the right side, he batted a respectable .270 in 85 games, and helped Hagerstown finish third in the league, behind Chambersburg and Martinsburg.

When new ownership took over the Hagerstown club from Charles W. Boyer at the end of the 1916 season, Weeden decided not to return to manage the club. Hurley, who was one of the club’s more popular and respected players, was a natural choice to manage the Terriers. He did not disappoint.

Surrounded by returning veterans outfielder Charley Dysert, and pitchers Earl Howard and Chalkey McCleary, Hurley’s Terriers clearly was the best club in the league in 1917. Hurley set a new league record, batting .385, and leading the league with 125 hits, and tying Lu Blue in stolen bases with 30. Howard set a league mark by winning 25 games, and Dysert led the league in runs scored. At the end of the season, Hurley’s club finished 61-36, three games ahead of runner-up Martinsburg, and 11 1/2 games ahead of third place, Gettysburg. It was the most wins in one season by any club in the Blue Ridge League.

With two weeks left in the season, Dysert took over the club on an interim basis, after Hurley left the Hagerstown club to begin basic training in the U.S. Army. Jack entered Officers Training School in Fort Myer, VA in late November of 1917.

In the spring of 1918, he was stationed near New York, Hurley played 17 games with the Jersey City (NJ) club of the Class AA, International League while on leave, or on weekends, however his batting dipped to .102, and when his service commitments sent him down south, his baseball season ended. Commissioned as a Lieutenant in the Army, he was sent overseas on September 8, 1918. Two weeks before his departure, on August 20, Hurley married his sweetheart, the former Sarah “Sallie” Hager Spiegelman of Hagerstown, MD, at Camp Wadsworth in Spartanburg, SC. Hurley returned to the States via New York, on January 12, 1919, and was honorably discharged on September 15, 1919.

After his discharge, Hurley worked at a Navy Shipyard, and lived in Vallejo, California with his wife Sallie, and their infant son John A., who was born in October of 1919. While on the West Coast, Hurley tried out and was signed to play for the nearby Sacramento (CA) Solons of the Class AA, Pacific Coast League during part of the 1920 baseball season, when their regular first baseman was injured and unable to play. Hurley went 2-for-4 in his PCL debut on June 21 for the Solons, He played seven games, batting .231 on the West Coast.

He returned with his family to the Hagerstown, MD area sometime in the early spring of 1921. Shortly thereafter, Hurley was persuaded to return to the Hagerstown club to play for Manager Mike Mowrey, a veteran Major Leaguer.

Considered a “Class Man”, because he played in a higher league above Class D, Hurley was

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batting around the .350 mark, and helping lead Hagerstown in the league pennant race when word broke out in early July that the Hagerstown club had too many “Class Men” on their roster. The league allowed three “class” players, which included Mowrey, outfielder George Pedone, and Hurley. However, it was disputed that infielder Ray Gardner had spent part of a season in a North Carolina League that had moved from Class D to Class C prior to the season he played, thus making him a “Class Man”. Outfielder Charles Dysert was also caught up in the controversy when it was found he also played in the Class AA, International League during the war-torn 1918 season. Dysert and Pedone were originally released to keep the club within the league rules of three “class men,” but Dysert returned a week later when Mowrey suffered a severe knee injury, and could not play for the remainder of the season. The infraction forced first-place Hagerstown to forfeit 10 games which moved them to fifth place. Hurley, one of the league’s most productive hitters, was caught up in the controversy, wanted to avoid any negative publicity, and requested his release. The Hagerstown club, distracted by the situation, and loss of their top players, never regained their form, and finished the season in last place.

In 1922, he became a physical education teacher at the Washington County Surrey School, a position he held for two years. Though he was “retired” from the game after the 1921 season, Hurley was persuaded by several clubs to return to action, and after some consideration decided to return to play for the Hagerstown club, playing both ends of a doubleheader on June 12 at Willow Lane Park. It was his last professional baseball game as a player.

After he hung up his spikes, Hurley left teaching to become a salesman, living in Hagerstown, MD until 1930, when he and Sallie divorced.

In his later years, Hurley remarried the former Margaret Louise Hensel (1910-1994), and moved to Southern Maryland, living near St. Leonard in Calvert County, MD. He died on August 7, 1972 at the age of 82 years in Prince Frederick, MD. A decorated veteran of World War I, he and Margaret are buried in the Annex section of the Gettysburg National Military Park Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

Listed below is a breakdown of Hurley’s professional batting record:

Jack Hurley’s Known Minor League Batting Statistics

BATTING

Year	Club	League	.AVG	G	AB	R	H	TB	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SAC	SB
1912	COLUMBIA-SC	SAL-B	.253	89	312	30	79	100	15	3	0	-	-	19
1913	CHARLESTON-SC	SAL-B	.261	18	69	4	18	20	2	0	0	-	-	2
1913	VALDOSTA-GA	ESL-D	.311	89	350	55	109	148	14	8	3	-	-	12
1914	VALDOSTA-GA	GaSL-D	.315	81	330	53	104	129	10	6	1	-	-	12
1915	SUFFOLK-VA	VA-L-C	.222	123	451	67	110	153	16	0	9	-	-	7
1916	HAGERSTOWN-MD	BRL-D	.270	85	304	34	82	102	15	1	1	35	13	17
1917	HAGERSTOWN-MD	BRL-D	.385	86	325	53	125	147	19	0	1	56	8	30
1918	JERSEY CITY-NJ	INT-AA	.102	17	49	2	5	6	1	0	0	-	-	1
1919		<i>Did Not Play - In Military Service</i>												
1920	SACRAMENTO-CA	PCL-AA	.231	7	26	3	6	6	0	0	0	-	-	0
	HAGERSTOWN-MD	BRL-D	.346	44	159	40	55	83	13	0	5	-	-	24
1921	HAGERSTOWN-MD	BRL-D	.333	2	9	1	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
MINOR LEAGUE TOTALS			10 years	.291	645	2393	342	696	897	105	18	20	-	132

Sources - Hurley's contract record from the National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, NY; Maryland World War Service Records, 1917-1918, Book 1 - A-J, page 1018; Genealogymagazine.com - Dedham, Massachusetts Births (1890); "Plucky Dive Into Brook, High School Captain Goes To The Rescue, John L. Hurley Saves Boy From Death at Dedham," The Boston Globe, June 9, 1908; "Amateurs To Get Try-Out..Big League Manager Signs Several Local Players", The Washington Post, August 28, 1908, pg. 8; RootsWeb.com - Social Security Death Index Search - John Hurley; Maryland and the Virginians - Hurley and Siegelman Nuptials, The Washington Post, August 21, 1918, pg. 3; "Billy Smith Backed by Griff for Place as Hagerstown Pilot," The Washington Post, January 7, 1918, pg. 9; Spearing The Sphere, Frederick Post, July 21, 1921, pg. 3; Obituary, The Washington Post, August 10, 1972, page C6; John Frye, Western Maryland Room, Washington County Free Library, Hagerstown, MD; 1929 Hagerstown City Directory, Hagerstown, MD; Additional statistical research provided by SABR members Andrew North, Ferguson, Ontario, Canada; Ray Nemeec © baseballray@aol.com, and Bill Shubb, PCL historian.