



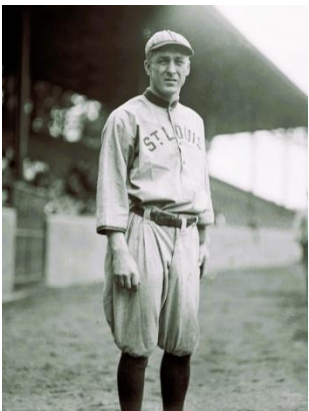
E-NEWS AND E-NOTES FOR TUESDAY NOVEMBER 11th 2025

Out on a limb...

He was born in Portsmouth, Ohio in 1881. As a youngster the great-grandson of an original settler of Mindon would excel in academic and athletic events, graduating from Lucasville High school in 1899. He would play professional baseball for Newark and football in the Ohio league, the precursor to the NFL. He would shine too at Ohio Wesleyan University in downtown Delaware where he would teach and coach.



It was at Ohio Wesleyan that he befriended a fellow catcher by the name of George Thomas from Zanesville who was an exceptional athlete as well. Seeing how much prejudice and difficulty but albeit popular "Tommie" endured just because of his race, Branch Rickey Jr. vowed he would try to make amends. He



would remain friends with Dr. Thomas for their lifetimes.

Realizing that he could not hit that well for playing professional baseball he went back to school at Michigan to graduate with a law degree and would return serving in numerous capacities as a coach and manager.

When America entered World War I the deeply religious 37-year-old Rickey still served as a Major in the Chemical Warfare Regiment. Amongst the men in his training unit to protect against mustard gas attacks were future baseball hall of famers Cristy Mathewson, George Sisler, and Ty Cobb.



Following along similar lines although 20 years his junior was Clyde Sukeforth, a catcher from Maine who would play ball in college for the Georgetown Hoyas and have a standout career as a professional player/coach as well. A hunting accident in the offseason in 1931 took away his vision in one eye and his batting suffered. "Sukey" would become a player/manager in 1936 in the minors and had great success there as well.

In 1944/45 Rickey would call his favorite scout into the office and tell him that he wanted him to follow a young black player about to be released from the service.

"At the end of the month I will ask you one question. You will answer yes or no. 'Is he good enough to break the color barrier?'"

True to his word, Rickey, Sukey, and Jackie Robinson had that historic meeting.

Jackie Robinson would play his minor league ball in Montreal in 1946 excelling in all aspects. Through a string of events that had pitching coach Sukey taking over as acting interim manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers for two games (which he won) due to Leo "The Lip" Derocher being suspended for the season, he would pencil in the name of J. Robinson onto the playing card and erase the non-verbal "gentleman's agreement" of "no blacks" which existed in baseball up until in that day in 1947.



Robinson was baseball's first Rookie of the Year.

Under Rickey's guidance the Brooklyn Trolley Dodgers (their original name) became pennant contenders as Sukey would find another star in pitcher Carl Erskine who would help lead them to 5 world championships.

It was during those days that two friends from Montreal would also share their passion for harness racing: Ralph Swartsky would go on to have a career in the racing office side of the business and would become a respected race secretary at over 13 different tracks throughout the U.S. and Canada.

Dave Cochrane chose business as he regarded harness racing more of a hobby. He had been going to Blue Bonnets in Montreal since his teenage years and through a series of coincidences ended up jogging horses for Canadian Legend Percy Robillard. He also would coach/manage one of the area's best local baseball teams.



One day a scout for another team asked for a favor. It seemed that he was going on vacation, but the head scout would be in town for a few days and "could you pick him up..."

He didn't have to ask twice as Dave stepped up and for the next four days would drive him to the games, have dinner with him, & return him to the hotel room.

And all the while they talked baseball. The other team's weaknesses. Some tricks of the trade. Stories that made baseball baseball.

So when David dropped off the now 66-year-old Clyde "Sukey" Sukeforth at the airport he thanked him and vowed to implement his ideas.

David's team would win the Championship that season as he was named Manager of the Year.

Sukey would later sign a young Puerto Rican player by the name of Roberto Clemente, whose 19-year-career with Branch Rickey's Pittsburgh Pirates led him to the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, NY.

David would own several horses and found his dream catch with *Sent From Above*, a green trotter by Earl who would earn over \$197,000 in his career, not too bad for a \$7,500. purchase.

David's hobby would have him become the VP of the Amateur Drivers as he competed at Delaware County Fair against Roger Huston and Peter Gerry III amongst others. He would do some announcing, color commentary, lessons on handicapping, and offer valuable tips of the trade of his own,

His advice: "Learn from the best." Seek success.

For whether it be a Maine or a Georgia Pine, a New England Oak, the New York or Canadian Maple or the Ohio Buckeye, they went out on a limb to reach for their dream.

And along their journey, lifted us all up as well.