

Edward Trowbridge Collins

1887-1951



Edward Collins moved to Tarrytown as a child, where he discovered his love for baseball. He joined major league baseball with the Philadelphia Athletics in 1906. Playing for a quarter decade, Collins is considered one of the consistently great players of his time who holds multiple records that stand even today.

Commemorative Essay by Andrew Walek, Sleepy Hollow

Sleepy Hollow High School, May, 2017

Edward Trowbridge Collins

Arguably the greatest second baseman in baseball history with a prolific 26 year Major League Baseball career, Edward Trowbridge Collins was undoubtedly the best baseball player ever to grow up in Tarrytown. Born May 2, 1887, in Millerton, New York, his family moved to Tarrytown eight months after he was born. Collins enrolled in a preparatory school then known as Irving School in Tarrytown, starting in fourth grade and attending through his senior year of high school. Tarrytown is where he discovered his interest in and talent for the game of baseball.

After graduating, he attended Columbia University, where he played football for two years before the school dropped the sport. “At that time, I liked football better than baseball,” Collins said at the time. He then started playing baseball for Columbia and later for semi-pro teams: the hometown Tarrytown Terrors, Red Hook and Plattsburgh New York. During that time, a pitcher for the Philadelphia Athletics saw him play. Impressed by Collins, the pitcher alerted his manager, Connie Mack, who eventually signed Collins to a major league contract. Little did Mack know at the time that this scrawny, five foot nine player would become one of the best to ever step onto a big league field.

The first of Collins’s 2,826 pro games played came on September 17, 1906, at Chicago South Side Park under the alias, Eddie T. Sullivan. He played flawless defense at shortstop and recorded his first hit at his first at bat. He played six more games before going back to Columbia. But he soon discovered that the University had ruled him ineligible for the 1907 season, so he returned to the Athletics that summer.

Collins's first full season in major league baseball was average. He established a name for himself 1909, moving to second base full-time and playing every game that season. Finishing the season in the top 10 of multiple statistical categories, the Athletics narrowly missed postseason play. The 1910 season brought more success for Collins again finishing as one of the best hitters and fielders in the game and giving Mack his first World Series win. Multiple stupendous seasons followed, culminating with Collins winning the Chalmers Award, equivalent to today's Most Valuable Player Award, in 1914 and he would go on to play in four more World Series with the Athletics, winning three.

Known on the field for being one of the most aggressive and self-confident players, Collins was almost always the smartest person on the field, which would help him finish eighth all time in stolen bases for his career and earned him the nickname, "Cocky." In addition, Collins had many unorthodox pre-game rituals and observances, such as his complete avoidance of black cats, wearing the same pair of socks during winning streaks, and even burying his bats in cow dung to "keep 'em alive."

Some of his teammates disliked Collins's personality. That dislike and a dismal 1914 World Series performance for Collins and the team led to Mack cleaning house, including Collins. Still, when asked about Collins years later, Mack said that he was "one of the greatest players the game has ever known," high praise from a Hall of Fame coach.

Collins then joined the Chicago White Sox, playing there from 1915-1926, with a brief stint in managing between 1924 and 1926.

His excellent and consistent play continued and the previously mediocre White Sox quickly became a powerhouse, winning the World Series in 1917. Collins joined the the Marine Corps in 1918 in the midst of World War I but made it back in time for the infamous 1919 “Black Sox” season, where they allegedly threw the World Series. Collins made it clear he was not a part of this scandal. His play slowly declined with the White Sox and he eventually returned to the Athletics where he finished his career.

Collins retired in 1930, finishing 20th all time in games played. He was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1939. His Hall of Fame plaque reads, “Famed as batsman, base runner and second base, and also as field captain.” He also discovered Red Sox great Ted Williams while working as a General Manager. Collins struggled with heart problems throughout his life, and he eventually succumbed to this, dying on March 25, 1951. An Eddie Collins Memorial Park was created in Millerton, the place of his birth. Collins is remembered in baseball history, and should be remembered as the most notable Tarrytown sportsman ever.

Works Cited

- Mittermeyer, Paul. "Eddie Collins." Eddie Collins | Society for American Baseball Research. Society for American Baseball Research, n.d. Web. 28 Apr. 2017.
- Shinske, Stuart. "Your Sunday Letter from the Editor." Poughkeepsie Journal 15 Sept. 2013: 2A.
- "Eddie Collins." Tarrytown Daily News 26 June 1969: n. pag.
- "Eddie Collins." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, 25 Apr. 2017. Web. 28 Apr. 2017.