

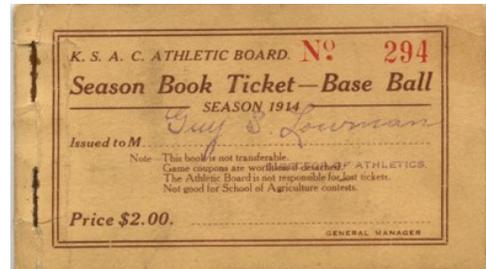
Play Ball! Wildcat Baseball Highlights

23rd in the Keepsakes series, originally published April 27, 2010

College basketball's March (April!) Madness is over and baseball, "America's past time," is now in full swing! The Cats have been ranked among the top 25 teams in the country this spring continuing a rich tradition that dates back to 1897 when the Cats played their first game against a Ft. Riley team on April 7, winning 4-3. The team consisted of a mixture of students and Manhattan residents. Home games were played in City Park and the coach was H.W. Wagner who was captain of the University of Kansas team in 1896! In 1898, after hearing complaints from faculty and students that the team did not represent the college, the Regents voted to limit team membership to K-State students.



Would you believe the Wildcats once played the Chicago Cubs?!?! The Cats and Cubbies took the diamond in Manhattan on April 6, 1905 when the team from Chicago won 13-0 on the way home from spring training in Arizona. Cubs who played that day included Joe Tinker, Johnny Evers, and Frank Chance who made up the legendary double play trio of "Tinker to Evers to Chance" that is part of major league baseball lore (Evers and Chance are now members of the Baseball Hall of Fame). The Cubs lost in the World Series the next year while winning in 1907 and 1908 (their last World Series win).



Early firsts in the history of Cats' baseball include: 1897, first home run, by second baseman Whitelock in the school's 4th game against Chapman High School; May 2, 1905, 1st extra-inning game came against Friends; April 16, 1906, first no hitter by Arthur Furey against College of Emporia; won the "Topeka Conference" in 1907 believed to be the first championship by a varsity team in school history; first double header came against Kansas on June 6, 1908. The Wildcats won the Missouri Valley Conference title in 1928 and in 1930 tied for first place in Big 6 Conference.

Mike Ahearn coached the team from 1907-1911; he resigned with a .734 winning percentage. Over time Ahearn coached every athletic sport at K-State, and served as athletic director! Ahearn Field House is named in his

honor.

Among the interesting photographs in the University Archives is that of a beam in the basement of Holton Hall. While the building was undergoing extensive renovation in 1988, the beam was exposed along with a hand written score of a baseball double header with Kansas. According to the Kansas State Baseball Media Guide, the Wildcats swept the Jayhawks 4-3 and 6-5 during the 1907 season.



Elden Auker became the first Wildcat to play in the major leagues pitching for several teams during a 10 year period beginning with the Detroit Tigers in 1933. Among other K-Staters who played in the major leagues were:



Elden Auker



Butch Nieman, Boston Braves in 1943-1945; Keith "Kite" Thomas for the Philadelphia Athletics and Washington Senators in 1952-1953 (originator of Kites in Aggieville!); Bobby Randle (Minnesota Twins, 1976-1982), who later coached Iowa State and Kansas in the Big 12; and Ted Power played 13 seasons in the major leagues after setting Wildcat records for strikeouts in a single game (19) in 1976.

In 1973, Andy Replogle became the first recorded Wildcat selected to an All American team, although it is believed there were previous selectees. Replogle later played two seasons with the Milwaukee Brewers. Craig Wilson was K-State's first Big 8 player of the year and became a 1st team all American and member of the Olympic team in 1992; he also played in the major leagues.

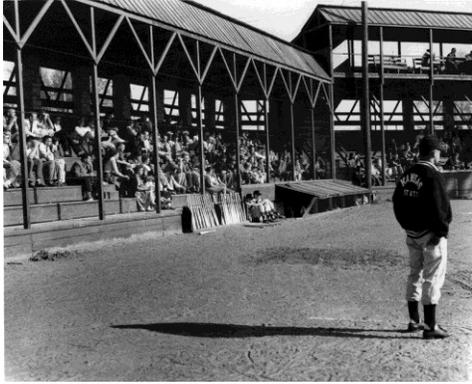
It is widely known that the first African American player in the Big Seven was a K-Stater. Earl Woods, father of professional golfer Tiger Woods, is usually credited with that honor, beginning his Wildcat career in 1952. There is also evidence that Easter Elliott from Richmond, Missouri played on the 1949 and 1950 teams before leaving school. Elliott appears in uniform with the baseball team in a photograph in the 1950 yearbook.

Dave Baker became the first African American baseball coach in the Big 8 in 1978 leading the Cats to 137 wins through the 1983 season.

In 1961, after playing its home games in Griffith Park (located today on south Fort Riley Blvd.), the Wildcats played their first game at the site of its current stadium beating Iowa State, 11-0; the field was named after Frank Myers in



Earl Woods



Griffith Park Stadium

1967. Myers coached the Cats to an 11-5 record during his only year as coach in 1940.

Mike Clark became coach in 1987, winning Big 8 coach of the year in 1990. He stepped down in 2003 after winning over 400 games to become the first K-State coach to post that many victories in any sport.

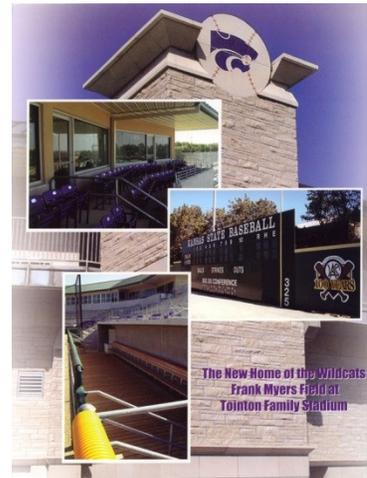
After the final game of the 1998 season, a complete renovation of Frank Myers Field began; construction delays made it necessary for all of the home games scheduled for the 1999 season to be played at other locations! The \$3.1

million improvements and additions were completed in 2002 and the facility was re-dedicated as Frank Myers Field at Tointon Family Stadium.

The 100th year anniversary of K-State baseball was celebrated during the 2000 when 21 players were inducted into the All-Century Team.

Brad Hill took over for Mike Clark as Wildcat coach in 2004 after leaving Central Missouri State where he led the school to nine consecutive trips to the NCAA tournament

After losing in the finals of the Big 12 tournament in 2008, the Cats had their most successful season in school history in 2009 winning a school record 43 games and going to the NCAA Regional for the first time where they lost to 6th



ranked Rice. Brad Hill was selected Big 12 and Midwest Region Coach of the Year, and pitcher A.J. Morris was named the conference's Pitcher of the Year and the school's first consensus All-American. On the left is how the baseball team looked in 1908, 100 years before going to the Big 12 finals!



KSU Baseball Team, 1908

For more information about the team's history, players, and season schedule, visit the K-State baseball [website](#), and get out to Tointon Family Stadium and root, root, root for the home team!

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Sources. K-State Sports Baseball Team home page (History Time Line in particular); University Archives, Vertical File-Athletic Department-Baseball Team History (contains newspaper and periodical articles and numerous other items); University Archives Photograph Collection; K-State Sports Information-Baseball Team media guides; Royal Purple yearbooks.