

Dakota Images

Charles Louis (“Deacon”) Phillippe was born on 23 May 1872 in Rural Retreat, Virginia, the fourth child of Andrew and Margaret Phillippe. The family moved several times in Virginia and then to present-day Oklahoma. They settled near Athol in Spink County, Dakota Territory, in about 1886. The young Phillippe took up baseball and pitched for numerous town teams, most notably the Rose Post Office squad in Spink County. He had a knee-buckling curveball, described by the *Redfield Press* on 4 July 1895 as “hard [for hitters] to find.”

Phillippe signed his first professional contract with the Maroons of Mankato, Minnesota, in 1896. He played for the Minneapolis Millers of the Western League in 1897 and 1898. While in the minor leagues, Phillippe acquired the nickname “Deacon” due to his clean living and reserved, humble manner. The Louisville Colonels of the National League drafted him before the 1899 season.

Phillippe made his major-league debut at the age of twenty-six and achieved the rare distinction of pitching a no-hitter in his first big-league season. Along with legendary teammate Honus Wagner, he joined the Pittsburgh Pirates in 1900 and stayed with the club for the remainder of his thirteen years in the major leagues. He compiled a career pitching record of 189 wins to 109 losses with an excellent earned-run average (2.59), won twenty or more games in six seasons, and never had a losing season.

Phillippe is best known as the winning pitcher of the first modern World Series game on 1 October 1903, in which he struck out ten opposing batters and the Pirates defeated the Boston Americans (now known as the Red Sox) by a score of 7 to 3. The illustrious Denton (“Cy”) Young, namesake of baseball’s most prestigious season pitching award, was the Boston pitcher in that contest. Phillippe threw five complete games in the nine-game series, a record that still stands. Although the Pirates won three of the five games Phillippe pitched, Boston won the series five games to three.

Phillippe’s last major-league appearance was in 1913. He went on to work at various occupations, including scouting for the Pirates and operating a cigar store. He died on 30 March 1952 in Avalon, Pennsylvania, at the age of seventy-nine.

—Dan Brosz

