



KANSAS LEGEND BIOGRAPHY

Walter Perry Johnson (1887-1946)

Known as "The Big Train," Walter Perry Johnson is one of the most legendary pitchers in Major League Baseball (MLB) history. Johnson became widely recognized not only for his baseball talent but also for his unparalleled sportsmanship and good nature. He epitomized all of the great things that the golden age of baseball is still remembered for today.

Walter Perry Johnson was born the second of six children in Humboldt, Kan. For the first few years of his life, Johnson became accustomed to rural farm life. In 1901, the family moved to Orange County, Calif., to pursue opportunities in the oil industry. Johnson also began to explore his talents in baseball, playing numerous positions on the Fullerton High School team but standing out for his fast arm motion while pitching.

After high school, Johnson joined the semi-professional Idaho State League and was soon scouted by Washington's American League team. Initially, Johnson was unwilling to give up rural life for the big city, but the following year, he signed with the Senators and moved to Washington, D.C.

Johnson played with the Senators for his entire 21-year pitching career. Although the Senators struggled as a team for most of this time, Johnson's pitching was outstanding. His sweeping sidearm delivery was masterfully crafted, and he is thought to have thrown his fastball at 99 miles per hour. Johnson had 10 consecutive 20-win seasons in his career and 12 overall. He threw 3,508 strikeouts, a record that lasted 55 years until broken by Nolan Ryan and Steve Carlton, and earned numerous honors along the way.

In both 1913 and 1924, Johnson won the American League Most Valuable Player Award. He also won the Triple Crown in 1913, 1918 and 1924. Johnson recorded 110 shutouts, and in 1916, he pitched 369.2 innings without giving up a single home run. Both records still stand today. Additionally, Johnson is the second winningest pitcher in MLB history with 417 wins.

The 1920s proved to be difficult for Johnson both on and off the field. He lost his father to a stroke and his eldest daughter to influenza. Johnson considered retirement, but his fans would not let him give up. Instead, Johnson led the Senators to the World Series back-to-back in 1924 and 1925, winning the pennant in 1924 after Johnson pitched the final game. Johnson was presented with an \$8,000 Lincoln touring car, the most expensive automobile in the United States at the time.

Johnson retired from playing in 1927, but this was far from the end of his baseball career. The following year he began coaching in the minor leagues, and returned to the majors in 1928 to manage the Senators. Johnson then moved to manage the Cleveland Indians from 1933 to 1935. Just after retiring from the game altogether, Johnson became one of the first five players selected to the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1936. Johnson died of a brain tumor in Washington, D.C. in 1946. He posthumously has been chosen for the MLB All-Century Team and the MLB All-Time Team.

