

Beyond all that under today's conditions a pitcher needs more than three days rest. Today's pitcher has to contend with the encroaching fences, the lively ball, the diminishing strike zone and the upset routine caused by the necessity of making personal appearances for the publicity department and, worst of all, night ball. "If a pitcher works a night game on Friday and a day game on Tuesday, he hasn't had three days rest, he's only had two-and-a-half. More than that, a pitcher stiffens up much worse after working through a cool night than he does after a sunny afternoon. It takes him much longer to recover."

Richards had the reputation of being a good hand with pitchers even when he was in the minors, and it was in the minors that he spent the greater part of his playing career and nine long years as a manager. His playing career was undistinguished. When he first became a manager, with Atlanta in 1938, he had 12 years of baseball behind him and could show only 188 games of major-league baseball and a batting average of .218. Four years of wartime baseball later nudged that average up to a not very distinguished .227.

Paul Rapier Richards was born in the small town of Waxahachie, Texas, on November 21, 1908. (Rapier is a family name, and the most beautifully descriptive middle name to decorate baseball since the retirement of Paul Glee Waner.) His first national recognition came not in the box-score, but in Ripley's *Believe It Or Not*. Believe it or not, Paul once

pitched his high school team to victory in both ends of a doubleheader by pitching the first game right-handed and the second lefthanded. He had started throwing both ways at the age of seven, after he had overheard a family friend arguing with his school-teacher father that such a thing was impossible.

Paul was the town's athletic prodigy, so much so that when he was still in the eighth grade the high school pressed him into service to play third base during the state championship tournament. Waxahachie High lost out that year, but the next three years, with Paul playing third, short and pitching, it won 65 consecutive games, including three state championships. In addition to Richards, five other players who took part in that streak eventually made it to the majors: pitchers Belve Bean and Archie Wise, first-baseman Art (The Great) Shires, infielder Jimmy Adair and outfielder Gene Moore. Since Wise and Adair hardly hung around long enough to put sugar in that cup of coffee, Richards—with typical respect for the facts—says: "I wouldn't quite say that six of us became big-leaguers. I'd say that six of us eventually appeared in big-league box-scores."

Paul himself could hardly have displayed a rapier-like mind in his youth, since he was known around town as 'Sleepy,' a nickname that was hung on him after he once fell asleep in his English class.

While Paul was still a junior, Nap Rucker, scouting for the Dodgers, offered him a \$1,000 bonus to sign

with the Brooklyn organization. He had never wanted to be anything but a ballplayer, so he didn't see what good it would do him to wait around another year to pick up a diploma. Besides, \$1,000 was a tremendous amount of money for a high-school kid in those pre-bonus days of 1926.

A little frightened at the prospect of facing Wilbert Robinson, whom he had heard was a tough, crusty old manager, the kid from Waxahachie went up to Ebbets Field. Like many another rookie, he found that Uncle Robbie, underneath the crust, was a kind, soft-hearted man with a special weakness for young ballplayers. The original plan had been to keep Paul around Ebbets Field for the rest of the year, but he'd been there for only two weeks when Pittsfield, the Dodgers' affiliate in the Eastern League, sent a desperate plea for infielders. To save an option, Uncle Robbie had Paul sign a 1927 contract with the Dodgers, then sign another contract, for the 1926 season, with Pittsfield. Paul didn't hang around there long enough to justify all that manipulation. In his fourth game, old Sleepy got picked off first base, brushed himself off, had himself a good laugh, and went jogging over to his position at third. Since Pittsfield had just lost its 24th consecutive game, the humor of the situation escaped manager Neil Ball. (A point of view manager Paul Richards can appreciate today.) Ball, however, had a curious way of expressing his displeasure. Leaping in front of the dugout, he began to

Catcher Richards played seven years in majors, first with Giants and A's, then, after eight-year lapse, with wartime Tigers.

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