

Klein Chocolate Baseball Team

William and Frederick Klein worked in Hershey's factory, then founded, Klein Chocolate Company in 1912 in Elizabethtown, PA with their brother Paul. By 1922, Klein Chocolate Company produced 250,000 milk chocolate bars a day, making it the largest milk chocolate factory in the country.¹ In 1919, the company created a baseball team to increase publicity and create a secondary revenue source². The team wore tan uniforms with "KLEIN Chocolate" written in brown letters on the front.³ The team played on Klein Chocolate Athletic field, and was very competitive, beating the Boston Red Sox, Washington Senators, and Brooklyn Dodgers in one week in September 1919.⁴ In their first year, the team played about 60 games and won about 80 percent of them, and had 6 wins against MLB teams: Boston Red Sox, Washington Senators, Brooklyn Dodgers, St. Louis Cardinals, and Philadelphia Athletics.⁵ In addition to playing against MLB teams, they played against local teams like the African American Harrisburg Marvels, who they met on the field in June 1931.⁶ In September of 1931, they played against the Israelite House of David and Grover Cleveland Alexander, the star of the 1926 World Series, under portable floodlights supplied by The House of David. The House of David won 6-2, and in June 1932, they played a rematch, also under the lights.⁷

The team played a variety of teams from the major leagues, negro leagues, and the local semi-professional baseball teams. The professional teams that they played were the Boston Red Sox, Washington Senators, St. Louis Cardinals, Brooklyn Dodgers, Philadelphia Athletics, and the Cincinnati Reds. The Klein Baseball team defeated the Cardinals six to five on 19 August 1919.⁸ On 21 August 1919, a schedule detailing the planned games in August and the upcoming fall was released.⁹ The team came up short against the Cincinnati Reds in an extra innings game on 30 August 1919.¹⁰ The Philadelphia Athletics were blown out by the Klein team and the score was so bad that the newspaper did not report it.¹¹ Following their success against the middle level talent of professional baseball, Klein began to receive challenges from the elite teams in Major League Baseball. The challenges came in fast and the main challengers were the Brooklyn Dodgers and Boston Red Sox. From the Negro League Klein played against the Washington Senators and Kansas City Monarchs.¹² In one week in the fall of 1919, the Klein team faced off against the Boston Red Sox twice, and the Brooklyn Dodgers, Washington Senators, and Kansas City Monarchs once.¹³

¹ Jean-Paul Benowitz, Images of America: Elizabethtown, (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2015), 67.

² Historical Society How the Klein's sold \$300k in stock

³ Historical Society- actual uniform

⁴ Benowitz, 68.

⁵ Historical Society How the Klein's sold \$300k in stock

⁶ Benowitz, 68.

⁷ Richard K. MacMaster, Elizabethtown: The First Three Centuries, (Elizabethtown, PA: Elizabethtown Historical Society)213.

⁸ Strouse, Fran, "Klein Baseball Team Powerpoint," (Powerpoint Presentation, Elizabethtown Historical Society, Elizabethtown, PA)

⁹ MacMaster, 213.

¹⁰ Christian Wilbers, "William Klein," Immigrant Entrepreneurship, December 17, 2014, accessed October 31, 2017

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.