September 2022

Yarnell Regional Community Center

Serving the Weaver Mountains' Communities
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Rubbing Mud

Uses for mud. Bricks, facials, dandruff treatment, fine art, fun art (mostly for kids), and wrestling. And baseballs. Who knew? Now I know that not all of you are into baseball, America's pastime, but I encourage you to lean into this little article.

Russell Aubrey "Lena" Blackburne was a baseball infielder, manager, coach, and scout in Major League Baseball. However, Blackburne is best remembered for his rubbing mud, used by umpires on new baseballs to remove their slippery finish, and give better grip and control to the pitcher. Blackburne only hit four homeruns throughout his career as a major leaguer. Four. Eighteen players have accomplished this in one game. But he will go down as someone who really impacted the game. Probably saved many a fractured skull caused by pitchers throwing some crazy heat and not having the best control because of the slippery new baseballs. Pretty, white, slippery, death missiles. But due to Blackburne's mudpies, his concoction made them much less slippery and much more controllable.

Rumor says it was from a tributary of the Delaware River, near Palmyra, New Jersey, where he lived most of his life. He marketed his idea, and by 1938, he was supplying the mud to all American League teams, and by the 1950's to all the National League teams as well. Since then, every major and minor league team has used only his product. One container, a little more than 16 ounces, will usually last a season. And it's a little-known fact (Cliff Claven - Cheers) that the process of creating the mud was featured in a pilot episode of the television show Dirty Jobs on the Discovery Channel. Blackburne's contribution to the game has earned him a mention in the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York. So, there you have it. Next time your kids, or g'kids, are playing in the mud, remember 'ol Russell. They could be destined for the Baseball Hall of Fame.

Making something out of mud reminds me of a quote I recently read, "We can't always see our own formation when it's taking place—we're clay on life's wheel, unable to predict the forces that will shape us." Challenging moments, tough lessons, unexpected help, painful losses, humor at just the right moment, kindness received – and given. All are forces that shape the clay we are.

Jimmy

Club Yarnell events for September are listed on the menu and here's a sneak peak…
YRCC Birthday Music – with Weaver Mountains Chorale
Comedy Night – register early for open mic lineup – featuring local comedians
Suicide Signs & Prevention – QPR Certified Instructor Frazier Mayer