

## Baseball great once pitched in Mason City

By JOHN SKIPPER, *Of The Globe Gazette*

MASON CITY — A nominee for the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N.Y., pitched in Mason City 92 years ago, according to a baseball researcher.

John Donaldson was a pitcher in the early 1900s — when Ty Cobb was an established star and Babe Ruth was emerging as the “Sultan of Swat.”

Donaldson never got a chance to pitch in the major leagues. He was a black man playing at a time when big league baseball was a white man’s game.

Peter Gorton, a baseball researcher from Minneapolis, has led a campaign in recent years to get Donaldson elected to the Hall of Fame. Largely through his efforts, Donaldson’s name will be on the ballot when voting takes place Feb. 27 for Negro League and pre-Negro League players.

Donaldson barnstormed from 1911 to 1918 with the All Nations team, a touring ballclub that competed against anyone who would play them — white semi-pro teams, regional all-star teams and professional all-black teams.

Box scores reveal he won at least 235 games while losing 84, a winning percentage of .737. (Complete records are not available.) He also had 3,832 strikeouts, an earned run average of 1.37 and 86 shutouts. He completed 296 of 322 starts (92 percent), had 22 one-hitters, six no-hitters and a perfect game. Donaldson also had one 30-strikeout game (extra innings), 26 games with more than 20 strikeouts and a total of 166 double-digit strikeout games. Donaldson could also hit, batting .334 in more than 1,800 at bats.

Gorton said he believes Donaldson pitched in Mason City several times between 1911 and 1918 but has documented one appearance for certain. On Aug. 30, 1914, the All Nations team played a local team in Mason City. Donaldson shut out the locals and struck out 16 in the 5-0 All Nations win, according to Gorton.

So, depending on how the voting goes on Feb. 27, a man with a Mason City connection may be in the Hall of Fame.

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