

# Claude Crooker, "From Chapel Hill to Ebbetts Field"

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On July 16, 1945, in a recently vandalized Memorial Stadium, Burlington Bees right-hander Claude (Rosebud) Crooker hurls the first no-hitter in Carolina League history, but loses the game 1-0 to the Greensboro Patriots on a wild pitch in the fifth inning.

Crocker strikes out nine and walks seven and his no-hitter almost goes unnoticed until an announcement over the public address system following the game ... the night prior to the game, the stadium's press box is broken into and every "playing record broken to bits," all of the lights in the scoreboard are demolished and the numbers for the scoreboard are tossed into a creek behind the right field fence.

Born on July 20, 1924, in Caroleen, North Carolina, Claude Arthur Crocker is a three-sport athlete at the University of North Carolina ... in only his third year of playing baseball (he took up the sport as a junior in high school to stay in shape for football), Crocker signs a no-cut contract with Brooklyn's Frank Rickey in late June of 1944

for \$3,500, but does not report until July 22 because of summer school.

## Crocker Hurls No-Hit Game But Loses As Pats Win Two

July 16, 1945

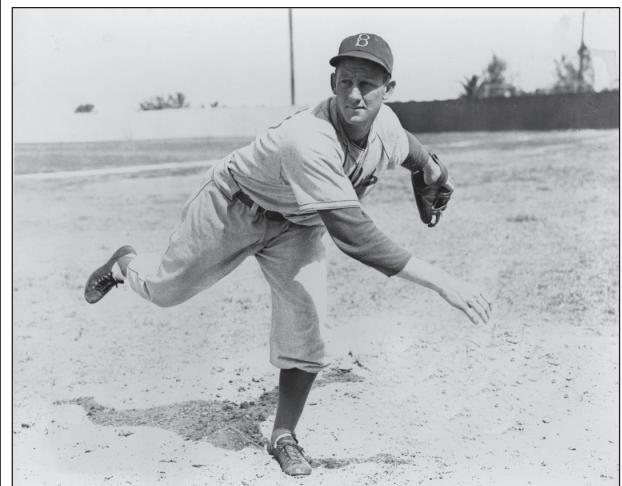
Memorial Stadium, Greensboro, North Carolina

BURLINGTON	SECOND GAME					GREENSBORO			
	ab	r	h	a	ab	r	h	a	
Saunders, 2b	4	0	1	1	Lyle, ss	3	0	0	3
Carroll, cf	4	0	1	0	Doak, cf	4	0	0	0
Wilson, 1b	4	0	1	0	Coleman, lf	3	0	0	0
Ferrell, c	3	0	0	2	Vorell, 1b	2	0	0	2
Howell, rf	4	0	0	0	Hossann, 2b	1	0	0	2
Meyers, 3b	4	0	1	0	Northrup, 3b	3	0	0	3
Lohback, lf	4	0	1	0	Stineride, rf	3	0	0	0
Groome, ss	4	0	0	2	Hansen, c	0	0	0	0
Crocker, p	3	0	0	6	Gauldin, p	1	1	0	4
<b>Totals</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>Totals</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>14</b>

Burlington ..... 000 000 000—0

GREENSBORO ..... 000 010 00x—1

E—Meyers, Groome, Lyle 2, Vorell, Hossann, 2B—Lohback, SB—Carroll, S—Hossann, Gauldin 2. DP—Ferrell to Saunders, BOB—Crocker 7; SO—Crocker 9; Gauldin 4. LOB — Burlington 8; Greensboro 6. Wild pitch—Crocker. Hit by pitcher—Ferrell (by Gauldin). U—Kreger and Barter. T—2:00.



Claude Crooker  
1944 Brooklyn Dodgers

Classified 4-F as a result of a knee injury, and one of two North Carolina players signed by the Rickeys over a three-week period in June, Crocker follows fellow Tar Heel twirler Clyde King to Brooklyn, making his major league debut on August 1, 1944, against the St. Louis Cardinals ... trailing 11-3 in the eighth inning, Crocker relieves Ralph Branca and allows three runs on two hits and four walks in a one-inning stint.

On August 6, in a 14-4 loss to the Boston Braves, Crocker allows one run on four hits and a walk in 2 1/3 innings and collects a single in his only major league at bat ... two days later (August 8), Crocker is optioned to the Richmond Colts of the Piedmont (B) League ... at the time of his departure, Brooklyn manager Leo Durocher says of Crocker:

"Crocker really has a fast ball that burns the platter, and with more poise should develop into one of the best speedball pitchers in the game."

Crocker is 1-3 in seven appearances at Richmond before being recalled to the Dodgers at the end of the season ... beginning the 1945 season with the Burlington Bees of the Carolina (C) League, the 20-year-old Caroleen, North Carolina

## The Mad Dog of Anderson

June, 1946

In Anderson, South Carolina, for a three-game series, Crocker and Asheville teammates Roy Whittaker and Fred Monge are walking down a street when "the blood-curdling yell of a Mad Dog rent the air."

Before the players can find safe refuge, a dog "frothing at the mouth," leaps upon the three hapless players biting them on the arms and legs before they are able to beat him off.

Asheville manager Bill Sayles wastes no time getting the three players to the local hospital for rabies shots ... the unfortunate trio is forced to miss a couple of games as the injuries heal.

## Claude Crocker [2 of 2]:

native is 9-11 with a 3.40 for the fourth-place Bees when he is recalled to the Dodgers on September 25 ... Crocker pitches two scoreless innings and earns a save in his final major league appearance against the Philadelphia Phillies at Shibe Park on September 30.

Crocker signs his 1946 contract on February 6 and is invited to the Dodgers' spring training camp at Daytona Beach.

## Claude Crooker Year by Year:

Year	Team	League	Level	W-L	INN	H	BB	SO	ERA
1942	James A. Gray High School	--	NCHSA	-	-	-	-	-	---
1943	James A. Gray High School	--	NCHSA	-	-	-	-	-	---
1944	University of North Carolina	Ration	NCAA	-	-	-	-	-	---
1944	Brooklyn Dodgers	NATIONAL	ML	0-0	3.1	6	5	110.80	
1944	Richmond Colts	Piedmont	B	1-3	21.0	22	16	-	---
1945	Burlington Bees	Carolina	C	9-11	167.0	156	88	-	3.40
1945	Brooklyn Dodgers	NATIONAL	ML	0-0	2.0	2	1	1	0.00
1946	Asheville Tourists	Tri-State	B	4-4	66.0	73	40	-	6.00
1947	Mobile Bears	Southern	AA	0-1	4.0	6	6	-	---
1948	Asheville Tourists	Tri-State	B	2-4	47.0	60	41	-	6.89
<b>Major League Totals</b>		<b>2 Seasons</b>		<b>0-0</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6.75</b>
<b>Minor League Totals</b>		<b>5 Seasons</b>		<b>16-23</b>	<b>305.0</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>191</b>	-	<b>4.22</b>

Crocker is one of seven North Carolinians on the Dodgers spring roster: Clyde King of Goldsboro, a pitcher and a former teammate of Crocker at North Carolina; pitcher Rube Melton of Cramerton who remains on the National Defense list; pitcher Tom Seals of Farmington, an old time left-hander; infielder Lester Burge of High Point a recently discharged service veteran; infielder Lew Riggs of Mebane, who was also in the service last year, and outfielder Don Padgett of Caroleen, another service veteran.



Bill Sayles  
1946 Asheville Tourists

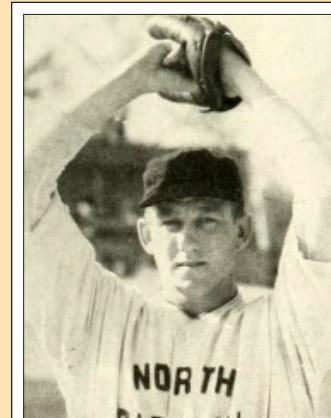
On April 13, Brooklyn options Crocker to the Asheville Tourists of the Tri-State (B) League ... the Tourists are managed by 28-year-old Bill Sayles, recently discharged from the Army and a former major league pitcher with the Boston Red Sox (1939), the New York Giants (1943) and Brooklyn (1943) ... hampered with a chronic sore arm, Sayles gives up his mound duties after two games and becomes the team's starting left fielder ... in two years with the Tourists, Sayles hits .334 (1946) and .360 (1947).

On September 1, 1947, after guiding the Tourists to a sixth-place finish in an eight team league, Sayles, at the age of 29, announces his retirement from organized baseball.

Crocker, despite a 4-4 record with a 6.00 ERA in an injury-plagued season, is one of 18 players recalled by the Dodgers in September.

Following two seasons hindered by injuries, Crocker's diamond career comes to an end in 1948, at the age of 23, following a 2-4 season with a 6.75 ERA at Asheville.

On December 19, 2002, Crocker passes away at the age of 78 in Clinton, South Carolina.



Claude Crocker  
1944 North Carolina Tar Heels

## Claude Crocker To Join Dodgers

WINSTON-SALEM, July 17. — (AP)—Claude "Rosebud" Crocker, of Winston-Salem, University of North Carolina pitcher this year as a freshman, signed with the Brooklyn Dodgers three weeks ago but said he wouldn't be ready to play until after summer school, so he reports Saturday.

His only interest in baseball two seasons ago was as a means of staying in shape for the football —at a class B high school.

Crocker became interested as a junior at Gray high school in 1942 and the next year pitched his team to the class B title. A university teammate, Clyde King, also a hurler, signed with Brooklyn several weeks ago and has seen lots of action with the team.