

Kindsfather remembered for contributions at Clark

Former 20-game winner in PCL died last month at 84

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Vern Kindsfather was a 20-game winner for the Seattle Rainiers in the Pacific Coast League, and pitched the first perfect game in Northwest League history.

But his greatest contribution to the sport he loved might have come in his hometown. For 25 years, Kindsfather coached the Clark College baseball team and taught physical education.

Kindsfather died Dec. 21. He was 84.

"Vern, when working with students, was a disciplined coach, but he had a soft heart," said Gaydena Thompson, a former Clark College athletic director and physical education teacher who joined the Clark faculty along with Kindsfather in 1962. "He was very personable. Students went to him for counsel. He loved the sport of baseball, and it showed."

A native of Vancouver, Kindsfather played baseball and basketball at Clark before an 11-year career as a pitcher.

He was one of the first athletes Skeet O'Connell recruited for his basketball and baseball teams at Clark College.

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"I'd heard a lot about his athletic ability," O'Connell said this week. "He was a good basketball player, but baseball was his thing."

Kindsfather spent five of his 11 pro seasons with the Rainiers in the PCL. He was one of 15 pitchers in that team's 27-year history to win 20 games in a season, posting a 21-11 record in 1952.

He followed that up a year later with a 16-16 mark, including eight shutouts. During his time with the Rainiers, he ranked among the PCL leaders in innings pitched.

On June 15, 1957, Kindsfather pitched the first perfect game in the Northwest League, blanking Eugene 3-0 in a seven-inning game in the first game of a doubleheader.

His out pitch was a sinking fastball.

"Don't ask me how I threw it. I don't know," he told The Columbian in 2002, shortly after the Salem-Keizer Volcanoes honored Kindsfather for his perfect game. "It was just a natural pitch."

After an 11-year career as a professional pitcher, Kindsfather again was recruited by O'Connell, who hired him to become the Clark College baseball coach and teach physical education.

Kindsfather guided Clark to the 1968 NWAACC baseball championship.

"Vern was a very good teacher and an excellent baseball coach," O'Connell said. "He knew the fundamentals of baseball very well; he was a good recruiter. Students liked him very much."

After retiring from Clark, Kindsfather remained connected with the college, working to bring former Clark athletes into the Penguin Athletic Club.

"He helped us a lot with the Penguin Athletic Club to stay connected with former athletes," said Cheri Martin, a former director of the club. "Vern was just always there for us. ... He was very special."

Kindsfather also enjoyed golf, hunting, fishing, and building projects, friends said. He is survived by his wife of 60 years, Margie; two sons, Mark and Tracy Kindsfather; one granddaughter, Arianna Kindsfather; and one sister, Marian Rudberg, all of Vancouver.