

WABASH VALLEY

P R O F I L E S

A series of tributes to hometown people and events that have shaped our history.

Josh Devore

Eighty-two years after Josh Devore's retirement, his name was still on the lips of World Series television commentators during the 1997 baseball classic. However, his Hoosier nickname, "The Seelyville Speed Demon," was not mentioned.

Devore's notable career embraced three World Series, two as a star for New York Giants Manager John McGraw's National League dynasty. Legendary sportswriter Grantland Rice's popular poem devoted to Giants fans glorified Devore's clutch achievements.

At least three times Devore was a World Series hero. His game-winning single in Game One of the 1911 Series gave Giants pitcher Christy Mathewson a 2-1 victory over the Philadelphia A's. In Game Five, his ninth-inning double tied the contest, enabling the Giants to prevail in extra innings, 4-3. His spectacular barehanded catch with two on and two out in the bottom of the ninth—heralded "the greatest catch in baseball history"—saved a 2-1 triumph over the Boston Red Sox in Game Three of the 1912 Series.

On June 20, 1912, Josh stole four bases in one inning against Boston, still a National League mark. Though he fanned only 43 times the entire season, Devore's record of eight strikeouts in the 1911 World Series still stands.

Born to William and Louisa DeVore (his parents used a capital "v") in tiny Murray City, Ohio, on Nov. 13, 1887, Josh was reared in nearby New Marshfield. When brother William bought a Seelyville grocery, 16-year-old Josh joined him. A 5-foot-6 southpaw with blazing speed, he became a star in the local industrial and semi-pro leagues. In 1906 Bill DeVore took his brother to Mississippi, betting Meridian manager Guy Sample \$100 that Josh could make the professional team. For two seasons, he was the best outfielder in the Cotton States League. After some seasoning in Newark, he made his major league debut Sept. 25, 1908. During the off seasons, he lived in Terre Haute, looking after the boxing club he founded in Fontanet.

Hitting .304 and pilfering 43 bases in 1910, Josh became a favorite at the Giants' Polo Grounds. An ideal leadoff man, in 1911 he hit .280, walked 81 times, had 61 steals and controlled the outfield. In 1913 he was traded to Cincinnati and the Reds swapped him to the Phillies. Hitting .302 after 30 games in 1914, Devore was traded to Boston, helping George Stallings' "Miracle Braves" win the world title. Devore deserted the majors in 1915 to become stockholder and field manager of the Chillicothe Babes in the the Ohio State League. After service during World War I, he coached and managed in the minors through 1924.

Josh and Catherine Devore's only child Patricia became a national class swimmer. Pat's husband William Harkness was a Yale University coach and intramural director. Devore died in Chillicothe on Oct. 6, 1954, a month before his 67th birthday. He is buried at the New Marshfield Cemetery.



TERRE HAUTE

(812) 238-6000



NATIONAL BANK

Always Close to Home