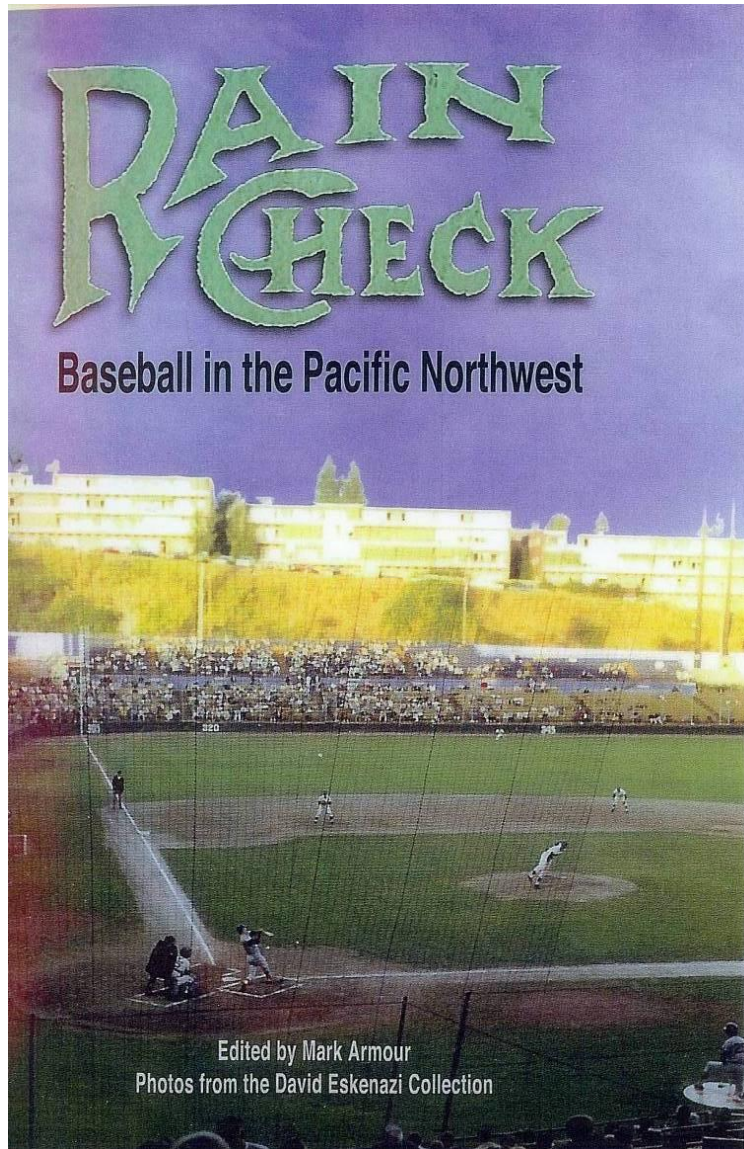


Cover of Steve's article in Rain Check, Spitballing



The 1913 Spokane Indians had many minor league veterans, but pitchers Stan Coveleski (ninth from left) and Shufflin' Phil Douglas (not pictured) proved to be the only good big league players. Other notables: longtime Northwestern League third baseman-catcher Dutch Alman (fifth from left), Manager Harry Ostdiek (11th from left) and a future member of the infamous Black Sox of 1919. "Swede" Risberg (far right).

## Spitballing to the Hall of Fame

### Colorful contemporaries paved Stan Coveleski's way to majors

*"The brand of stuff which Coveleski was putting on the ball today beats anything seen here since [Big] Bill James used to fan 'em out two years ago. The Portland twirler simply had the locals eating out of his hand, and he looked like he could keep on doing it all day."*

— Seattle sportswriter Royal Brougham, quoted in *The Oregonian*, Sept. 21, 1915

Steve Steinberg spends most of his time in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, where he focuses on spitball pitchers, St. Louis teams, and the New York Yankees. This is his first foray into Northwest baseball. He lives in Seattle with his wife and three children.

By STEVE STEINBERG

He came from the mining town of Shamokin, Pennsylvania, the youngest of five brothers who worked in the mines and played baseball. On his way to a Hall-of-Fame career, he spent three formative years in the Pacific Northwest: 1913-14 with the Spokane Indians of the Northwestern League (NWL) and 1915 with the Portland

Beavers of the Pacific Coast League (PCL). Little did Stan Coveleski know that his journey so far from the eastern epicenter of baseball would put him very much in the middle of larger baseball trends, conflicts, and competition. Following his western trail helped make him an emerging star in the heart of baseball's Deadball Era.

It was a hard life for the youngster at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was born Stanislaus Kowalewski in 1889, but he went by Coveleski as a pro, and dropped the "e" at the end of his name after his baseball career had ended. "There was nothing strange in those days about a twelve-year old Polish kid in the mines for 72 hours a week at a nickel an hour," he told baseball historian Larry Ritter. "What was strange was that I ever got out of there."

In four seasons in the Tri-State League, playing with Lancaster and Atlantic City from 1909 to 1912, Coveleski won 73 games and caught the eye of one of Connie Mack's scouts. Coveleski made his major league debut in September 1912 for the Athletics and hurled a shutout in his first start. With a surplus of talented pitchers, Mack chose not to offer Coveleski a contract for 1913. Mack felt he was set with young hurlers Joe Bush and Byron "Duke" Houck, who would combine to win 29 games between them for the 1913 Athletics.

In this era, major league teams often had informal relationships with the owners of minor league clubs. Mack had such an understanding with Joe Cohn, president and part owner of the Spokane Indians. Cohn had sent pitcher Houck to Mack a year earlier, and the pitcher had won eight