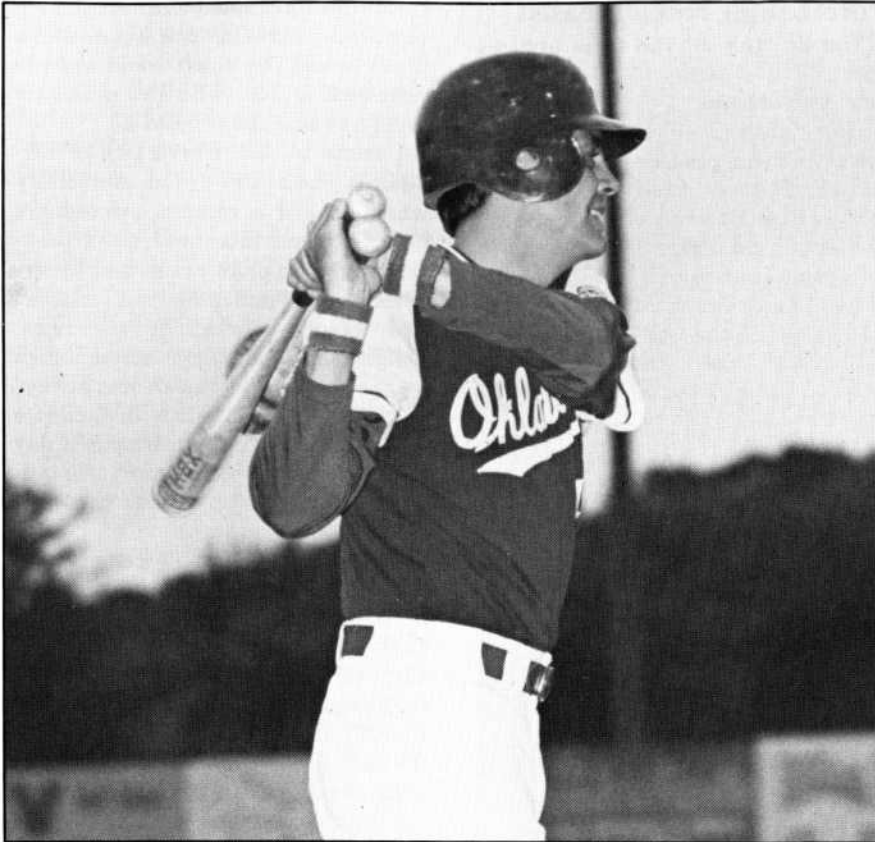




TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALL GAME



Democratic MVP Dave McCurdy runs out of gas trying unsuccessfully to stretch his triple into a home run, but Republican fielders Ron Chandler and Dan Schaefer have trouble finding the handle on the ball to tag him out coming into the plate.



Rep. Mike Synar models his Sooner baseball uniform as he warms up in the on-deck circle. Although Synar was the 1982 MVP, his bat was silent this year.

When the umpire shouted "Play ball!" for the 22nd annual congressional baseball game in July, the players taking the field looked like an assortment of leftovers from the All-Star game. Each congressman on both the Republican and Democratic rosters wore the uniform of his favorite team, creating a colorful array of Red and White Sox, Royals, Brewers, Dodgers, Yankees, Astros, Twins — and a couple of Sooners.

Rep. Dave McCurdy of Norman, and Rep. Mike Synar of Muskogee, both members of the class of 1972 and the law classes of 1975 and 1976 respectively, have donned Sooner uniforms for the past three congressional games with spectacular results. Although Synar has figured most prominently in the last two games, being named the Democrats' MVP in 1982, his bat was silent this year, leaving McCurdy to claim the gold-plated donkey as 1983's MVP.

Synar should have known he was in for a long night when he was hit by a pitched ball on his first trip to the plate. He later scored, however, to the cheers of his friends and staff, who offered lusty renditions of "Boomer Sooner" for both Oklahomans throughout the evening.

McCurdy had better luck, overcoming his easy-out image as the ninth batter and redeeming himself for a less impressive showing last year. In the first inning he powered a drive over the head of the center fielder, Rep. Tom Ridge (PA), all the way to the fence, scoring Rep. Martin Sabo (MN). Unfortunately, in a burst of misplaced enthusiasm, McCurdy tried to stretch his triple into a inside-the-park homerun, only to suddenly run out of gas rounding third. The catcher, Rep. Rod Chandler (WA), bobbled the relay, which was scooped up by the pitcher, Rep. Dan Schaefer (CO), who tagged McCurdy sliding home.

A second triple in the third gave McCurdy two more RBIs, and he scored on the next play. He also reached first on an error in the sixth and flied out in the eighth in what could have been the game-winning at bat.

Both Synar in center field and McCurdy at third performed well defensively, the latter's two-inning stint on the mound notwithstanding. Coming in to relieve in the fourth, McCurdy walked in a run before his colleagues overcame some shaky fielding to retire the side. In the fifth, as the congressional newspaper later reported, "McCurdy then lost control of his pitches," hitting Rep. Jack Fields (TX) on the elbow with one and Rep. Ron Paul (TX) on the rump with another. Not realizing that a Sooner hitting two Texans is no accident, the crowd chanted "We want Claude" (Pepper), the oldest member of Congress who had thrown out the game's first ball. McCurdy was returned to third base.

The contest's regulation seven innings were completed 16-16. An attempt to resolve the deadlock with an extra inning only brought the teams to 17 apiece. Nearing the four-hour mark and the midnight curfew in Alexandria's Four Mile Park, the longest and wildest congressional baseball game ended in its first tie.

Both Synar and McCurdy were standout high school athletes, and later, while on a Rotary post-graduate fellowship, Synar played on the University of Edinburgh basketball team that won the all-Scottish championship. At OU, however, they abandoned athletics for campus political leadership. Synar completed his undergraduate career in 1972 having been named a Top Ten Freshman, Man of Distinction and chairman of Student Congress, while McCurdy ended 1972 as a Top Ten Senior Man and president of both the Senior Class and the national leadership society Omicron Delta Kappa.

Perhaps it should be noted that, meanwhile, OU's 1972 baseball Sooners, playing on old Jap Haskell Field, went 35-17 and won the Big Eight championship. 