

# Paul Lopez - HoF - 1974

PAUL "HOSS" LOPEZ, Player, Las Vegas, NV - by Jose R. Kennard

## "THE BOSS OF THE MOUND"



Few in softball have reached the height of accomplishment that Paul "Hoss" Lopez reached in his 27 year career.

During that span of time Paul threw over 150 no-hitters (32 of them perfect games) and struck out at least 18,000 batters. He won over 1,000 games.

At 6'4" and 220 pounds Paul was an imposing figure on the mound. His lumbering stride masked his amazing skill and blazing fastball mixed with a deadly changeup that left many a batter swinging wildly at air. Few have matched his speed or cleverness.

His career began early at age 14 in Phoenix, Arizona before World War II. Two years later, pitching for the Phoenix Lettuce Kings, Paul pitched his first tournament no-hitter at the Amateur Softball Association World Tournament in Detroit. At 16, he was the youngest pitcher ever to participate in a World Tournament. He pitched two no-hitters and was selected the most promising young player in the tournament.

His career was interrupted by the war. Paul enlisted in the Navy and served five years before returning to softball in 1947 pitching for the Phoenix Farm Fresh Team and helping them win the National Softball Congress World Tournament that year.

Paul was lured to El Paso in 1948 by Tommy Deal to pitch for his Deal Motor Co. team. At the same time Paul began his career in law enforcement that spanned five decades retiring from the El Paso Police Department and twice in security careers in Las Vegas, Nevada his present home. The following year, he pitched a 20-inning, 1-0 victory for the team in the International Softball Congress World Tournament in Toronto, Canada, a record that stood for 20 years as the longest world tournament game.

Except for a short span from 1951 to 1954 when Paul played for the Eastman Kodak team in Rochester, N.Y., Paul played most of his career in El Paso. While with Kodak his team won the Mid-Atlantic championship and participated in the ASA World Tournament in Miami where Paul was named to the All-Tournament team.

In 1954 Paul returned to El Paso and pitched for various teams for the next 13 years. It was during this span that Paul hit the peak of his career. One of his most notable accomplishments was when he pitched three no-hit no-run games in one day for the Union Furniture team to win the Texas State Tournament! Union had lost one game and since the tournament was double elimination it had to win all three the final day. In 1961 and 1962 Paul helped his Dautrich Realty team win back to back ISC World Tournament championships. He was named to the all-tournament team both years, going 4-0 with 33 strikeouts in 1961 and 2-1 with 36 strikeouts in 1962.

The following year a knee injury nearly ended his career. But with the same grit and determination with which he faced all challenges Paul made a spectacular comeback in July, 1964. After a long layoff and with no pre-tournament warm-ups, Paul pitched his team to the championship of the highly competitive Southwestern Softball Classic. He won four straight games, including wins over the 1964 world champion Downey, California and 1965 world champion to-be Pomona, California teams.

His major awards include being the first player to be inducted into the El Paso Softball Hall of Fame in 1964, inducted into the El Paso Athletic Hall of Fame in 1972, inducted into the International Softball Congress Hall of Fame in 1974, and inducted into the Phoenix Softball Hall of Fame in 1977.

He received a citation from Miguel Aleman, president of Mexico, for his contribution to the game of softball in Mexico. Paul had participated in several national tournaments in Mexico following completion of the seasons in the United States and had led a team from Chihuahua to the Mexican National Softball Tournament. To the surprise of all, except Paul, they won the tournament making Paul the only pitcher to have won national titles in the game of softball in two nations.

Paul has been written up in many national publications including a two-page spread in Softball Illustrated. He was named to the All-America team 11 times, was named Most Valuable Player at a national tournament five times, and was named winner of the Leading Pitcher award at a national tournament six times.

2004 marked two milestones in Paul's life. He celebrated his 50th wedding anniversary and his 80th birthday. Paul and Lilly live in Las Vegas, Nevada with their son Paul, Jr. where he still sticks to his routine of regular workouts.