The Bandera Prophet

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Today in Texas History

On this day in 1899, Bibb Falk was born in Austin. As a boy he sold peanuts and worked as a batboy at the local Texas League ballpark. At the University of Texas he was a star player under Uncle Billy Disch, leading the Longhorns to three conference championships before signing with the Chicago White Sox in 1920.

In September of that year, when the Black Sox scandal was revealed, Falk replaced the disgraced "Shoeless Joe" Jackson in left field. During the 1920s he was one of the best hitters in the American League, though he lacked home-run power.

Falk enjoyed his best statistical season in 1926, when he batted .345 and led American League outfielders in fielding percentage. Following the 1928 season the White Sox traded him to the Cleveland Indians, for whom he played three more seasons. In 1935, he returned to Austin as a scout for the Boston Red Sox. He replaced Disch as UT baseball coach in 1940 and led the Longhorns to two consecutive conference championships.

Falk enlisted in the Army Air Corps in 1942 and coached a championship service-league baseball team at Randolph Field in San Antonio. He returned to UT in 1946, and in 1949 and 1950 Texas became the first college team to win back-to-back national championships.

Falk remained at Texas until 1967. During his 25 years as coach, the Longhorns won 15 conference titles outright and tied for five more, and Falk's crusty demeanor and salty vocabulary became legendary.

In 1975, the university honored Falk and his former mentor by naming its new baseball stadium Disch-Falk Field. Falk died in 1989.