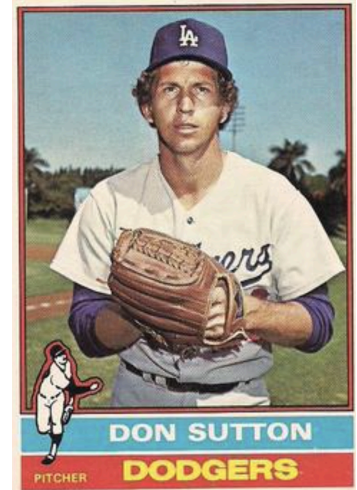


Don Sutton

April 2, 1945-January 19, 2021

Wyoming (MI) Colts 1964

If ever there was a model of consistency for a lengthy major league career, Don Sutton would be the gold standard. In 23 seasons, he had at least 31 starts and 200 innings pitched in 20 of them, and won at least 11 games a year 21 times. He always remained healthy and didn't have his first stint on the disabled list until his final season in 1987. His father was 18 and his mother just 15 when Sutton was born in Cilo, Alabama, on April 2, 1945, but the two were very disciplined for their young age and taught him the importance of a strong work ethic from the start. His dad was a sharecropper and worked in construction as well when he moved the family to Florida when Don was just 5. Playing multiple sports growing up, he was drawn mostly to pitching and was a Colt League All-Star in 1960. He led his high school to the Class A state championship in his junior year, and in the title game, threw a 13-inning complete game 2-hitter, striking out 11 in the 3-1 win.



Upon graduation, he attended Gulf Coast Junior College with a desire to play as much as possible in order to be seen by major league scouts. He had a stellar freshman year, striking out 130 in 91 innings while sporting a 1.93 ERA. He joined the Sioux Falls (SD) Packers of the Basin League that summer and continued his dominance, leading the league in ERA at 2.20 as well as catching the eye of Los Angeles Dodgers scouts Bert Wells and Monty Basgall.

He struck out 5 and allowed no hits in 2 innings of work before them while preserving the victory for the Packers on July 30th. A few weeks later, Sioux Falls would lose in the Basin League finals, but still looking to play, he immediately accepted the Wyoming Colts' offer to join the Michigan state champions in Wichita for the 1964 National.



Sutton was a standout player for the Colts from the moment he took the mound in their first game. With the bases loaded and no outs in the top of the first against the Ponchatoula (LA) Athletics, NBC runners up the year before, Sutton was brought in to pitch and prevent the game from getting out of hand early. He not only kept them from scoring in the first, but didn't surrender a hit until the sixth, and the Colts upset the A's 5-2. Sutton's final line for that relief appearance - 9IP, 4H, 2R, ER, 2BB, 11K.

Two days later, Sutton was once again brought into a game with the bases loaded. This time in the 6th inning of a 7-7 game against the Greensboro (NC) Tar Heels. He allowed a sacrifice fly before getting out of the inning, and the Colts regained the lead in the 7th as Sutton closed out the game and notched his second win of the tournament. Final line - 3.1IP, H, R, ER, BB, 2K.

After a loss in a game that Sutton didn't appear in, he made his first start and went the distance in an elimination game against the Fulton (MO) Sports. He gave up only 4 hits while also going 1-4 at the plate as the Colts stayed alive, winning 5-2. Final line - 9IP, 4H, 2R, 2ER, 3BB, 8K.

Following an extra-inning win, the Colts lost in the quarterfinals to the Bellingham Bells. Sutton started, and lasted just two innings as Wyoming committed 3 errors that led to 6 unearned runs in the second. The loss wouldn't dampen the lasting mark that he made in Wichita, though. He was named to the All-Tournament pitching staff along with future MLB and NBC Hall of Famer Tom Seaver, and was seen again by the scouts who were in Sioux Falls. Sutton's 1964 NBC World Series totals - 3-1, 1.93ERA, 23.1IP, 15H, 12R, 5ER, 7BB, 22K.

Ten days after his final outing in Wichita, the Dodgers signed him for \$15,000. He would split his only season in the minors in 1965 between Class A Santa Barbara and AA Albuquerque, combining to go 23-7 with a 2.35 ERA while striking out 239 in 249 innings. He left no reason for the Dodgers to keep him out of the majors, and debuted for them in April 1966. Over the course of 16 seasons in Los Angeles, he would become, and still is, the franchise leader in wins (233), games started (533), innings pitched (3816.1), and shutouts (52). On the major league leaderboard, Sutton is tied for 5th in wins since World War II with Nolan Ryan at 324, and he is 7th all-time in strikeouts with 3,574. He was elected to the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1998, and the Dodgers retired his number 20 that same summer.

After his pitching days were over, Sutton had a second distinguished career as a major league broadcaster, mostly with the Atlanta Braves. His impact with that franchise

behind the microphone was honored as well, as he is also a member of the Braves Hall of Fame.

When Sutton reflected on his baseball career, he saw the time at the NBC as the catalyst in his journey to the majors: "Playing in the national tournament at Wichita was really exciting. I was only 19 then and hadn't been away from home too much. I'd pitched for Sioux Falls in the Basin League, but Wyoming qualified for Wichita and picked me. There's no doubt the National was the big break that got me into pro ball. Two Dodger scouts, Bert Wells and Monte Basgall, saw me pitch well."

Sutton passed away in 2021.