J. Edward Krause

This article was written by Bill Lamb

Full Name

Johann Eduard Krause Krause

Born

February 23, 1867 at Indianapolis, IN (USA)

Died

August 21, 1935 at St. Cloud, FL (USA)

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Tags

Executives

An Indianapolis native and prosperous city hotelier with no previous connection to baseball, J. Edward Krause served as club president and principal public spokesman for the Indianapolis Hoosiers, the premier franchise of the Federal League for the first two of the circuit's three-season existence.

On the field, the Hoosiers were sterling, capturing the flag in the league's inaugural campaign as an independent minor league in 1913, and repeating as the pennant-winner for the outlaw, now self-declared third major league the following summer. But for the fourth and final time, the mid-sized city of Indianapolis proved unable to sustain a major league franchise.[1] With the club on the verge of financial collapse, Krause and the other shareholders acquiesced in the league-sponsored relinquishing of the Indianapolis franchise to oil tycoon Harry Sinclair and the relocation of the Hoosiers to Newark, New Jersey. With that, Krause's brief involvement in the game came to a close, and he spent the remaining two decades of his life back in the hotel trade. The story of this little noted and long forgotten club executive follows.

Our protagonist was born Johann Eduard Krause[2] in Indianapolis on February 23, 1867. He was one of 11 children born to Reinhold Krause (1824-1918) and his wife Catharina (nee Schneider, 1834-1903), German immigrants who married in Baltimore in 1852. By the time that John Edward (as his name was later Anglicized to) was born, the Krause family had relocated to Indianapolis where their father established a successful knitting mill and haberdashery business. Reinhold was also among the founders of the First German Evangelical Church of Indianapolis and saw to it that his children were raised in a religiously observant household.[3]

Eddie, as he was called in his youth, attended local schools through the eighth grade and then entered the Indianapolis workforce as a teenage newsboy. Sometime thereafter, he gained employment with a downtown upholstering company, in time acquiring the skill necessary for a special assignment: furnishing the hotel living room suite of former US President Benjamin Harrison.[4] Later, Krause advanced into entrepreneur ranks when he and older brother William organized Krause Brothers, a chair manufacturing business. But Ed Krause found his true calling when he assumed management of the Iroquois Hotel, a modest-sized establishment situated on the city's Monument Square in 1899. Thereafter, he took over running another hostel, the larger Morton Hotel, and became manager of the Indianapolis Rubber Company factory, as well.[5] Krause also became active in local Republican Party politics, winning a city councilman-at-large election in October 1903.[6]

In 1907, Krause expanded his hotel holdings via construction of the upscale seven-story Hotel Edward.[7] Thereafter, he took a more prominent role in the activities of the Indiana Hotel Keepers Association, the lobbying organ of the state's hotel proprietors. In December 1909, Krause was elected the Association's secretary-treasurer.[8] Two years later, he was elevated to the presidency.[9] By then, the long-time bachelor had taken a bride, the much younger Ida Mae Adams of Indianapolis, and begun the family that would eventually include two daughters and a son. As one of the city's leading political, business, and social lights, Krause garnered the frequent attention of Indianapolis newspapers. Conspicuous by its absence in such reportage was any mention of his interest in baseball.

Baseball may not have been a concern of J. Edward Krause, but it was a matter of considerable interest to others in Indianapolis. Since squeezed out of the fledgling American League prior to the 1901 season, the city had become home to a top-tier minor league club, the Indianapolis Indians of the Class A American Association. In time, competition emerged. In early 1912, Indianapolis was identified as a possible franchise site for the Columbian League, a wannabe third major league proposed by Chicago baseball entrepreneur and organizer John T. Powers. The Columbian League never got off the drawing board, but a year later Powers was back with a more viable proposition: a circuit of six or eight non-National Agreement teams to be called the Federal League.[10]

The independent (or outlaw) circuit envisioned by Powers placed franchises in large Midwestern cities already serviced by an American or National League club save one: Indianapolis. With a 1913 population of 266,000, Indy was considerably smaller than Chicago, St. Louis, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and other sites contemplated for a Federal League outpost.[11] But prominent Indianapolis businessmen and civic leaders such as James A. Ross, John A. George, and Edward E. Gates were at the fore in the Federal League movement, and soon assumed executive positions in the budding FL hierarchy.[12] Ross and George, plus several other leading Indianapolis figures, also assumed command of the Indianapolis Hoosiers,[13] the city's newly-minted Federal League franchise, Their first task was locating suitable grounds.[14] They quickly settled upon Riverside Beach Park, previously used for boxing matches and track meets,[15] and then set about construction of a ballpark there.

Nothing in the available reportage suggests that J. Edward Krause was involved in the formation of either the Federal League or its Indianapolis entry. Nor was he involved in the ballpark designation effort. Rather, Krause was engrossed in the construction and opening of his crowning achievement as a hotelier: the Hotel Washington, a handsome 17-story Beaux Arts luxury hotel situated in the heart of downtown Indianapolis. He was, however, among the multitude of local businessmen who appear to have invested in the fledgling team as a matter of civic duty.[16] Still, the early April 1913 announcement that he had become the Hoosiers' president came without much forewarning.[17] But whatever he lacked in baseball expertise and experience, Krause quickly set about overcoming with enthusiasm for his new post. There may be some things that he did not know about baseball, Krause admitted on the eve of the season opener in Pittsburgh, "but there was nothing that he could not learn."[18]

Although the Hoosiers were a member of an outlaw circuit and a direct threat to the Indians, the city's well-established American Association club, the Federal League nine was quickly recognized by officialdom, with no less a personage than Indiana Governor Samuel M. Ralston in attendance for the Hoosiers' home opener on May 10. More important, the new club was embraced by Indy baseball fans, with 7,500 fans in attendance at Riverside Beach Park to see the Hoosiers take on the Chicago Chifeds. Meanwhile, only 2,000 locals opted for an Indians doubleheader against Louisville in nearby Washington Park II.[19]

Also making his baseball debut at the Hoosiers' home opener was their new club president. "Ed Krause put in his first day at the new Federal League Park yesterday and finished it with a record of being the busiest man on the job," reported the *Indianapolis Star*.[20] After overseeing game day preparations and checking on gate receipts, Krause led a mini-parade of the two teams around the infield before introducing Hoosiers manager Bill Phillips and Chicago field leader Bert Keeley to the crowd. Krause thereupon delivered a welcoming address to the throng in the grandstand. And lest those in the bleachers felt shortchanged, he promptly turned around and repeated his oration for their benefit.[21] His day's labors complete, Krause then sat back and joined fellow club officials in enjoyment of a thrilling 11-inning Hoosiers victory, 6-5.

With Sunday baseball lawful in Indianapolis, Riverside Beach Park was jammed past capacity by the 18,507 fans who witnessed the Hoosiers drop a 3-2 decision to Chicago the following day. Whatever the expectations of prosperity prompted by such throngs, things came back to earth when fewer than 1,000 showed up to watch the Hoosiers close out the three-game set with a 5-4 loss. Yet club boss Krause was optimistic. "The people of Indianapolis proved the last few days that they are in favor of Federal baseball," he declared. "We want to assure them that we appreciate their position and will do our best to give them a club that is a winner." Krause then advised local fans that "parsimony will not be a part of the club administration" and that the Hoosiers ballpark "will be beautified. It will be sodded and there will be other changes in the playing field that will help out the standard of play."[22]

True to Krause's word, the grounds were substantially improved over the coming months. Doubtless more important to club fans, the Hoosiers played top-notch baseball. Behind steady pitching and a league-leading .284 team batting average, Indianapolis went 75-45 (.625) and cruised to the inaugural FL pennant, a full 10 games better than the second-place Cleveland Green Sox. Success on the diamond, however, was not matched at the turnstiles. The Hoosiers lost money in 1913, but not so much as to imperil the franchise's immediate future. In fact, Krause and club officials busied themselves in the fall with finding suitable property for the erection of a modern concrete-and-steel ballpark for an expected 1914 season.[23] In time, a swath of Greenlawn Cemetery, a venerable downtown graveyard, was leased for that purpose.

In late October, the Indianapolis club was reorganized, with capitalization raised to $200,000, more than half of which would end up being expended on the new ballpark.[24] Club president Krause and the other incumbent team officers, meanwhile, were reelected to their posts.[25] Shortly thereafter, Krause was appointed to the Federal League Board of Managers. As the circuit prepared to place franchises in major Eastern venues like Baltimore, Brooklyn, and Buffalo and declare itself a major league for the 1914 campaign, Krause became a prominent FL spokesman, publicly assuring American and National ballplayers defecting to the Federals of protection against reserve clause-based lawsuits. "We think that the reserve clause in the contracts of ball players is invalid," Krause asserted, "and believe that we can secure such a decision if the matter is taken to court."[26]

Groundbreaking ceremonies for the new ballpark were held in late January 1914, with Indianapolis Mayor Joseph E. Bell turning over the first spade of dirt followed by a speech on the upcoming season by club president Krause.[27] Hampered by a production slowdown at a Bethlehem Steel plant, work on the new stadium proceeded fitfully, but by mid-April Indianapolis's new Federal League Park, aka Greenlawn Park, was ready for unveiling. Thousands of locals turned out for "Inspection Day" of the spacious single-tier stadium capable of seating near 23,000. The occasion was seen as demanding remarks by a proud Ed Krause who informed onlookers that "we have built a park sufficient for all requirements and is good for 25 years. My only concern now is to give Indianapolis a winning team. We already have a splendid aggregation of players, but if it is necessary to strengthen the team, you can rest assured it will be done."[28]

Governor Ralston and Mayor Bell were again on hand when Federal League Park hosted its first major league game on April 23, 1914. So was a crowd of 15,125[29] and Hoosier club president Ed Krause who "lost his voice long before the teams lined up for the getaway and had to use considerable arm movement to emphasize his enthusiasm over a brilliant play."[30] After Hoosiers ace Cy Falkenberg and St. Louis Terriers lefty Hank Keupper traded blanks for eight innings, a three-run last-frame rally proved the difference in a well-played 3-0 St. Louis win.

The home opener defeat notwithstanding, the Hoosiers thrived at Federal League Park, posting an impressive 53-23 (.697) home record. Regrettably, ballpark attendance did not keep pace, with the club averaging fewer than 2,700 fans per discoverable home playing date.[31] Thus, the club's capture of the Federal League crown with an 88-65 (.575) record did not ensure its continued survival. To the contrary, the Hoosiers were in serious financial trouble, finishing the 1914 season over $100,000 in debt.[32] Nor was the club structured to absorb heavy losses.

Unlike more structurally-sound FL operations, the Hoosiers were not controlled by a deep-pocketed businessman like Charles Weeghman (Chicago), Otto Stifel (St. Louis) or the Ward brothers (Brooklyn). Rather, Indianapolis was a shareholder franchise, with club president J. Edward Krause only one of nearly 400 individual investors. This corporate makeup made efforts to raise much-needed cash as the season progressed difficult, if not impossible. Indeed, only a discreet cash infusion by Brooklyn club boss Robert B. Ward had allowed the Hoosiers to complete their pennant-winning campaign. In lieu of payback in kind, Indianapolis's best players, star outfielder Benny Kauff (.370) and hurling stalwart Falkenberg (25-16), were quietly ticketed for Brooklyn in 1915. A substantial debt owed to the Federal League itself, however, remained outstanding.

During the offseason, the club's unresolved debt problem and turmoil in the ranks of its shareholders made the Hoosiers an inviting takeover target. And once oil tycoon Harry Sinclair's attempt to acquire the bankrupt Kansas City Packers had been stymied by court injunction, Federal League officials anxious to have the Sinclair fortune injected into their circuit dangled the prospect of ownership of the Indianapolis franchise before him. The situation came to a head in March 1915. Without a viable alternative, Hoosiers backers acquiesced in the surrender of their franchise to Sinclair during a March 23 shareholder meeting. In return, Sinclair assumed $76,000 in franchise debt, while the FL furnished the $4,200 Indianapolis ballpark rent due and owing for the 1915 season. With that, relocation of the Indianapolis franchise to Newark was sanctioned.[33] Major league baseball in Indianapolis had come to an end.

The demise of the Indianapolis Hoosiers ended J. Edward Krause's brief involvement in baseball. Apart from a telegram to Chicago Whales club boss Charles Weeghman congratulating him on his club's capture of the 1915 Federal League flag re-published in the *Chicago Daily News*,[34] the Krause name disappeared from the nation's sports pages. Instead, Krause refocused his attention on the hotel business, soon expanding his holdings to include a resort lodge in Florida. He also reasserted influence on the local real estate scene via the Indiana Hotel Keepers Association. By 1920, Krause had become a millionaire with "an income that requires both hands to write down."[35]

For the remainder of his life, Ed Krause retained his prominent place in the business and civic life of his hometown, serving on various Indianapolis boards and commissions while superintending his hotel empire. He was also active in local fraternal organizations, particularly the Elks and Knights of Pythias, and rose to thirty-second degree Mason.[36] For political and business purposes, Krause maintained his official residence at the Hotel Washington in Indianapolis. But leisure time was spent at his mansion in the suburb of Spring Hills, while winters months saw Krause and family at their Florida resort home. It was during such a winter sojourn that Krause's health began to fail in December 1934. Bedridden for months thereafter, J. Edward Krause died at Runnymede Lodge in St. Cloud on August 21, 1935. He was 68. Following funeral services conducted locally, his remains were returned to Indianapolis and interred in Crown Hill Cemetery. Survivors included his widow, Ida, adult children Katherine Ezell, Jane Krause, and Jack Krause, and his brothers, Harry and Frank.

Acknowledgments

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Sources

The primary sources of information about the Federal League were Daniel R. Levitt, *The Battle That Forged Modern Baseball: The Federal League Challenge and Its Legacy* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2012); Robert Peyton Wiggins, *The Federal League of Base Ball Clubs: The History of an Outlaw Major League, 1914-1915* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2009), and Marc Okkonen, *The Federal League of 1914-1915, Baseball's Third Major League* (Garrett Park, Maryland: SABR, 1989). Biographical data on J. Edward Krause were culled from US Census reports; Indianapolis city directories; Krause family posts accessed via Ancestry.com; contemporaneous newspaper reportage; and Krause obituaries, particularly those published in the *Indianapolis News, Indianapolis Star,* and *Indianapolis Times,* August 22, 1935.

Notes

[1] Previously, inadequate Indianapolis fan support had led to the failure of a National League franchise in 1878, an American League club in 1884, and a second National League team (1887-1889).

[2] According to Indiana birth records and a baptismal certificate of the First German Evangelical Church of Indianapolis, accessed via Ancestry.com.

[3] Per "One of Pioneer Men in Indianapolis Dead," *Indianapolis News,* December 18, 1918: 17, which reported that the deceased had taught Sunday school at church for more than 50 years.

[4] As related in "J. Edward Krause Dead in Florida," *Indianapolis News,* August 22, 1935: 16; "J.E. Krause Dies in St. Cloud, Fla.," *Indianapolis Star,* August 22, 1935: 3.; and "City Figure Is Dead in South," *Indianapolis Times,* August 22, 1935: 10.

[5] See "J. Edward Krause for Council," *Indianapolis Journal,* March 24, 1903: 5.

[6] As reported in the *Indianapolis Journal,* October 15, 1903: 5.

[7] "Hotel Edward Opens Doors," *Indianapolis Star,* August 6, 1907: 3.

[8] See "Denounce Option Law," *Indianapolis Star,* December 28, 1909: 1.

[9] Per "Pledge Support of Proctor Law," *Indianapolis Star,* December 16, 1911: 3.

[10] For more detail on the failure of the Columbian League and the formation of the Federal League, see Bill Lamb, "John T. Powers: Minor League Organizer and Founder of the Federal League," *The Inside Game,* Vol. XXI, No. 1, (February 2021), 7-9.

[11] See "Plan for New Federal League," *Indianapolis Star,* March 9, 1913: 42. The March 1913 organizational meeting of the new Federal League was held in Indianapolis, as well. See "New Federal League A-Bornin' Here Today," *Indianapolis News,* March 8, 1913: 10.

[12] Per "Federal League Is Formed in the West," *Baltimore Sun,* March 9, 1913: 1; "Local Men Are Made Officers of League," *Indianapolis Star,* March 9, 1913: 41. Supporting newly-installed league president John T. Powers as Federal League officers were Indianapolis attorney Ross (secretary), coal merchant George (treasurer), and attorney Edward E. Gates (general counsel).

[13] See "Federal Club Files Incorporation Papers," *Indianapolis News,* April 14, 1913: 10; "Federal League Club Is Organized; Local Team to Open in Pittsburgh," *Indianapolis Star,* April 15, 1913: 10. In addition to Ross and George, the Hoosiers board of directors included Indianapolis businessmen Theodore Hewes, Bert Essex, and Lynn B. Millikan.

[14] See "Federal League Men Will Pick Park Site," *Indianapolis News,* March 10, 1913: 14, and "Federal Promoters to Inspect Site for Park," *Indianapolis News,* March 15, 1913: 10.

[15] Per "Where Indianapolis Federal League Players Will Perform," *Indianapolis News,* April 26, 1913: 10; "Federal League Park Rapidly Nearing Completion," *Indianapolis Star,* May 5, 1913: 8.

[16] Unlike Federal League clubs primarily backed by a wealthy industrialist/baseball enthusiast like W.T. McCullough (Pittsburgh), Otto Stifel (St. Louis), and, later, Charles Weeghman (Chicago), and Robert B. Ward (Brooklyn), the Indianapolis Hoosiers were a stock club whose ownership was eventually spread among close to 400 individuals holding shares of franchise stock. Many of these shareholders were like J. Edward Krause, prominent Indianapolis businessman and civic boosters, but previously unknown to have an interest in baseball.

[17] Per "J. Edward Krause New Federal Club Magnate," *Indianapolis Star,* April 19, 1913: 8.

[18] As reported in "Indianapolis Moguls See Federal Opening," *Indianapolis News,* May 6, 1913: 12.

[19] Compare, Fred Turbyville, "Fans Pronounce New League O.K.," with Ed Ash, "Only 2,000 Fans to See Work's Debut," both *Indianapolis Star,* May 11, 1913: 32.

[20] "Krause Diplomatic Baseball Magnate," *Indianapolis Star,* May 11, 1913: 33.

[21] As reported by Turbyville in "Fans Pronounce …," *Indianapolis Star,* May 11, 1913: 32, complete with photo of Krause addressing the crowd.

[22] "Plan Improvements," *Indianapolis Star,* May 12, 1913: 9.

[23] See "Hoosier Federals to Select Site for New Park Today," *Indianapolis Star,* October 29, 1913: 9.

[24] According to Daniel R. Levitt, *The Battle That Forged Modern Baseball: The Federal League Challenge and Its Legacy* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2012), 55.

[25] As reported in "Two Federal League Clubs Elect Officials," *Harrisburg* (Pennsylvania) *Patriot,* November 13, 1913: 10; "Krause to Lead Hoosier 'Feds,'" *Lake County* (Hammond, Indiana) *Times,* November 13, 1913: 4; "Krause Heads Federals Indianapolis Club," *New Orleans Times-Picayune,* November 13, 1913: 10; and elsewhere.

[26] As quoted in "Local Federal Leader Asserts League Will Protect Players Against All Legal Proceedings," *Indianapolis Star,* December 29, 1913: 9; "Federal League to Back Players," *Lake County Times,* December 29, 1913: 4; and elsewhere.

[27] Per "Mayor Bell Will Officiate at Start of Work on New Federal League Park," *Indianapolis Star,* January 23, 1914: 10.

[28] "Thousands Go to View New Federal Park," *Indianapolis Star,* April 13, 1914: 7.

[29] Per Ralston Goss, "Fine Opening Even If Home Boys Did Lose," *Indianapolis Star,* April 24, 1914: 13.

[30] Per Eddie Ash, "Feds Back 'P.T.' Off the Boards," *Indianapolis Star,* April 24, 1914: 13.

[31] Attendance figures for the 1914 Federal League season were not discovered. But using the 15 Indianapolis home dates that Retrosheet provides attendance figures for, the Hoosiers drew an average crowd of 2,677.

[32] According to Robert Peyton Wiggins, *The Federal League of Base Ball Clubs: The History of the Outlaw Major League, 1914-1915* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2009), 189.

[33] For a more detailed account of events attending the transfer of the Indianapolis franchise to Harry Sinclair, see Levitt, 188-192.

[34] See "Tributes to Whale Victory," *Chicago Daily News,* October 4, 1915: 2.

[35] Arthur Brooks Baker, "The Velvet Hammer," *Indianapolis Star,* January 9, 1920: 9.

[36] Per "Hotel Executive," *Indianapolis News,* September 5, 1927: 3, and the Krause obituaries published in the *Indianapolis News, Indianapolis Star,* and *Indianapolis Times,* August 22, 1935.

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