

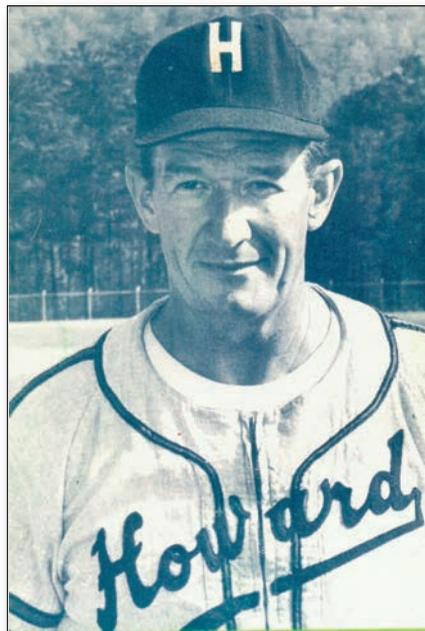
2016 INDUCTEE

VIRGIL LEDBETTER

VIRGIL CHAPEL LEDBETTER WAS BORN IN DORA, ALABAMA, ON MARCH 7, 1918, TO JOSEPH MARTIN AND MARY

Savage Ledbetter. Although from a rough and tumble background, Virgil excelled in all aspects of scholastic life. In 1938, he was a charter member and the first president of Dora High's Beta Club. His senior year, 1939, he was president of his class, as well as the letterman club. He was the captain of all three athletic teams, was voted the most intelligent and most athletic, and was salutatorian of his senior class.

Virgil received a scholarship to Howard College (now Samford University) and became the only bulldog to letter in three sports, which he did his sophomore year. Virgil played end in football, center in basketball and first base for the baseball team. During the summer of 1940, he led the Empire Mine team to an appearance in the National Amateur Baseball Federation World Series.



While awaiting military induction for World War II, Virgil left Howard and became head football coach at Dora. With one game left in the 1942 football season, he was called to active duty. At that time, military bases fielded athletic teams for morale and troop entertainment. Virgil played for Camp Adair in Oregon as the only non-professional on the team.

After the armistice, Virgil completed his degree at Arkansas State and again lettered in three sports. After brief coaching stints in Arkansas, he became the baseball and basketball coach for Walker High School. Two of his Walker athletes, J.W. Burgess and Segal Drummond, entered professional baseball. During the summers in Jasper, Virgil managed the semi-pro Jasper Eagles and a team from Amory, MS.

Ledbetter was recalled to active military duty during the Korean Conflict and earned the rank of Major. Following his service, he coached at T.W. Martin High School and then moved to Ramsey High School in Birmingham.

In 1956, Virgil Ledbetter was hired by Howard College. For the next decade, Virgil served as an assistant football coach, head baseball and head basketball coach. He often coached all three sports during the year. From 1959 through 1962, he served as an assistant to legendary Coach Bobby Bowden. Virgil played an active role in moving Howard College from the East Lake campus to the present location in Homewood. He was also instrumental in moving the university athletic programs into the modern era. While at Howard College, Virgil coached Walker County natives Gerald Faught, Terry Joe Suchey and Joe Murray.

In 1964, Virgil authored a book, Coaching Baseball and the book is still found in many libraries. He also served as a professional scout for the Brooklyn Dodgers.

Virgil died of a sudden heart attack on August 11, 1967. He was survived by his wife, Dorothy, and one son, Gary, who are both now deceased.

As a tribute to Virgil, Howard College established the Virgil Ledbetter Fund in 1988 to assist the baseball program in various ways. Since its inception, the Virgil Ledbetter Fund has provided over \$104,000 toward improvements in the baseball facilities and overall program. As a further tribute, Virgil Ledbetter was inducted into the Samford Baseball Hall of Fame in 2006.