

Whiz Kids baseball team in Baxter Springs, Kansas

The Baxter Springs Whiz Kids baseball team is pictured in this photograph from 1945. That year, the team competed in the Gabby Street League based in Picher, Oklahoma, and won the league pennant with a record of 40-8. The first Whiz Kids team was organized in 1944 by manager Barney Barnett (standing in back of the players, on the right). Players seated in the back row are (l to r): Ben Craig, Calvin Mishler, Reggie Helms, Bill Johnson, Jimmy Kenaga, Dick Weaver, Wylie Pitts, Bob Myers, Charles Heavin, Lowell Crawford, Billy Crow, and Jack Moore. Seated on the ground in front are (l to r): unknown, Guy Crow, Jim Bowers, and Bob Steele. Standing behind the players on the left is Richard Barnett, the manager's son. Most of the players are wearing 1939 New York Yankee uniforms donated to the Whiz Kids by Joe Becker, former business manager of the Joplin Miners, a minor league affiliate of the Yankees. The Miners wore the uniforms in 1942 but Joplin did not field a team again until after the war. During the Whiz Kids' eight-season run, the team was exceptionally successful. It became best known, however, for its most famous player, future Hall-of-Famer Mickey Mantle, who played for the Whiz Kids for a full season in 1948 and briefly in both 1947 and 1949.

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