

# Charlie Maxwell, Major Leaguer

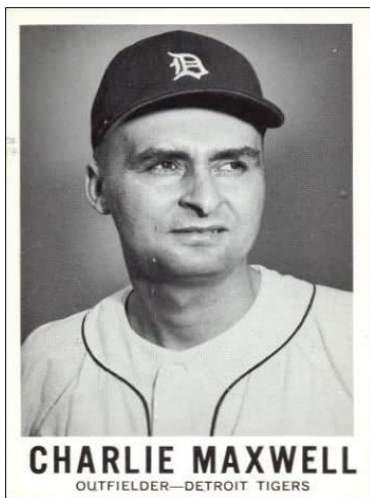
**Charles Richard Maxwell** (born April 8, 1927 in Lawton, Michigan), nicknamed "**Smokey**," "**Paw Paw**," and "**Sunday Charlie**," is a former Major League Baseball player, who played 14 seasons in the major leagues with the Boston Red Sox (1950-54), Baltimore Orioles (1955), Detroit Tigers (1955-62), and Chicago White Sox (1962-64). Charlie Maxwell was 23 years old

when he broke into the big leagues on September 20, 1950, with the Boston Red Sox.



Maxwell was an agile left fielder who led all American League outfielders in fielding percentage in 1957 (.997) and 1960 (.996). He had only one error in both years. He was also one of the top power hitters in baseball during his peak years with the Detroit Tigers from 1956-1960, finishing four times among the league leaders in home runs. Maxwell was elected to the American League All-Star team in

*Above: Charlie "Paw Paw" Maxwell beaming in front of his locker after blasting four home runs in a doubleheader against the Yankees on May 3, 1959.*



**Maxwell's nicknames included "Paw Paw,"** (given by the Detroit Tigers announcer Van Patrick because of Maxwell's unusually named hometown of Paw Paw, Michigan), "Smokey," "Sunday Charlie", and "the Sabbath Smasher," the latter two given in recognition of his propensity for hitting home runs on Sundays

Maxwell played baseball for Western Michigan University in 1945 before being drafted into the U.S. Army. After two years in the military, Maxwell played parts of 8 seasons in the minor leagues (1947-53) before reaching the majors on a full-time basis.

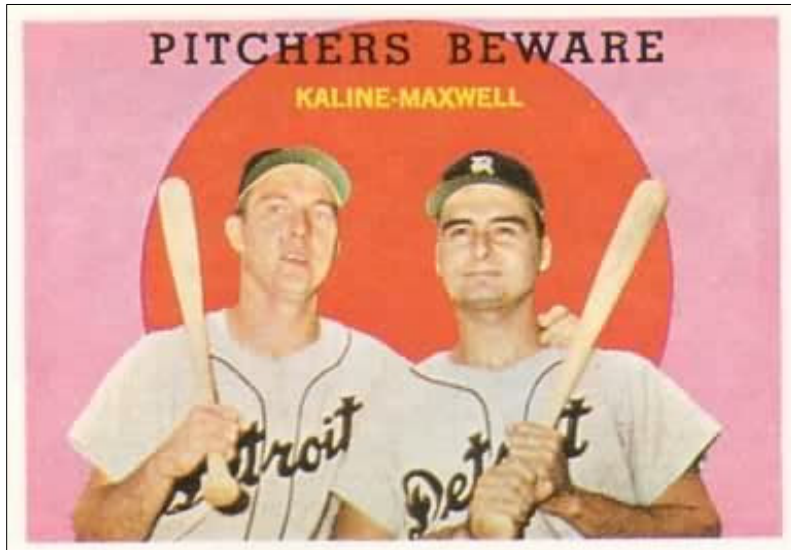
Maxwell batted left and threw left. At 5'-11" his playing weight was 185

## Peak years with Detroit (1956-1960)

Maxwell remained with the Tigers from 1955-62, serving as the teams' regular left fielder from 1956-1960.

After being platooned in Detroit's outfield in 1955, the 1956 season was Maxwell's first as an every-day player, and his performance won him a spot on the 1956 American League All-

Star. Maxwell played 141 games for the Tigers in 1956 and finished among the AL leaders in most batting categories with a .534 slugging percentage (3rd in the AL behind Mickey Mantle and Ted Williams); a .326 batted (4th in AL ); a .414 on base percentage (4th in the AL); 96 runs (4th in the AL); 28 home runs (5th in the AL); and 95 RBIs (5th in the AL). Maxwell also excelled in the field in 1956, with a .987 fielding percentage.



Maxwell was a Michigan native with an affable personality, and quickly became a fan favorite in Detroit. He often gave a pregame show for the fans, especially on Saturdays when the Tigers hosted kids from the "Knothole Gang." "Shagging fungoes in left field, Maxwell would grin, clown around, and catch the ball behind his back or between his legs." (*Charlie Maxwell*," by Jim Sargent)[2]

At age 30, Maxwell followed up with another strong season in 1957, winning a spot

on the American League All-Star team for the second straight year. Having committed only four errors in 1956, Maxwell improved his performance in 1957, committing only one error in over 300 chances. He led all American League outfielders with a .997 fielding percentage. And his 2.36 Range factor in left field was 0.39 points above the average for all outfielders.

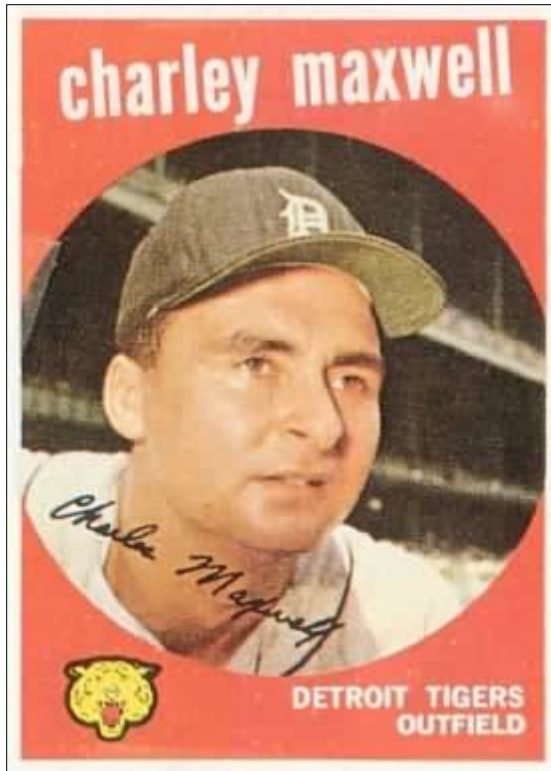
Maxwell also continued his strong hitting in 1957. Though his batting average dipped by 50 points to .276, he finished with a .377 on base percentage (8th in the AL), .482 slugging percentage, 24 home runs (7th in the AL). "I was a tougher clutch hitter late in the game," Maxwell recalled. "Sportswriter Hal Middlesworth told me that I led the team in game-winning hits in 1956 and 1957, even though other guys hit for higher averages." (*Charlie Maxwell*," by Jim Sargent)

After a less than stellar performance in 1958 (13 home runs and 65 RBIs), the Tigers signed Larry Doby to replace Maxwell for the 1959 season. But Doby fizzled with the Tigers (.218 in 18 games) and was traded on May 13, leaving the left field spot open for Maxwell to reclaim. Perhaps inspired by the competition, Maxwell posted career-highs in 1959 with 31 home runs (4th in the AL) and 95 RBIs (5th in the AL). Maxwell hit home runs in four consecutive at-bats during a Sunday afternoon doubleheader in May and hit 12 of his 31 home runs in 1959 on Sundays -- leading fans, writers and broadcasters to refer to him as "Sunday Charlie" and "the Sabbath Smasher."

In 1960, Maxwell's batting average dropped to .237, though he still hit 24 home runs and batted in 84 runs. Maxwell's defensive performance remained strong in 1960, as he led all American League outfielders in fielding percentage for the second time in his career. He committed only one error in over 1,000 innings in left field, for a .996 fielding percentage.

In 1961, slugger Rocky Colavito took over Maxwell's spot in left field. Colavito hit 45 home runs and 140 RBIs, and Maxwell was relegated principally to a pinch hitting role.

After batting .194 in 30 games in 1962, the Tigers traded Maxwell to the Chicago White Sox on June 25, 1962. Maxwell had a late season revival with the White Sox in 1962. By the third week of August, Maxwell was batting .352 for Chicago, and had a 13-game hitting streak, the team's longest that year. Maxwell wound up hitting .296 for the White Sox in 1962 with 9 home runs.



Maxwell also continued his "Sunday Charlie" tendencies with the White Sox, hitting 5 of his 9 home runs in 1962 on Sundays, including 3 home runs during a Sunday doubleheader in July.

Maxwell's batting average dropped to .231 in 1963, and he managed only 3 home runs. The White Sox released Maxwell in April 1964 after Maxwell went hitless in two pinch-hitting appearances.

In a 14-season career, Maxwell was a .264 hitter with 148 home runs and 532 RBIs in 1,133 games.

**After his baseball career ended, Maxwell returned to his home in Paw Paw, Michigan, where he sold automobile parts.**

**In 1997, Maxwell was inducted into the Michigan Sports Hall of Fame.**

**Selected as All Star:** 1956 and 1957.

**Highest Averages:** 1956 Batting Average .326; On Base Percentage .414; Slugging Average .541; and Home Runs (1959), 31.

**14 Year Career Averages:** Batting Average .264; On Base Percentage .360; and Slugging Average .451; Home Runs 148. His fielding percentage was .988. In 877 games, he had 2,016 fielding chances and just 25 errors. He made (started) 35 double plays.

*More information can be found about Charlie Maxwell on the Internet.*