

Society for American Baseball Research

Records Committee Newsletter ©

Lyle Spatz, Editor

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Not everything that counts can be counted;
not everything that is counted is worth counting.
—Albert Einstein

Thanks to Ed Luteran, and all the men and women who helped him, we had another terrific national convention. The annual SABR Conventions get better every year. Like a lot of people, I left with a very positive impression of Pittsburgh.

Welcome to new Records Committee member David Nemeč; 1517 Irving Street, San Francisco, CA 94122; 415-564-6506. New addresses for Hiroshi Takagi; 29-5-B310 Komatsu-cho; Fukui-shi; Fukui 910 Japan. John McMurray; PO Box 1434; Mentor, OH 44061. Jerry Kahn; 124 White Plains Ave; West Harrison, NY 10604; 914-993-0908.

Correction on Father Gabe Costa's phone number. It should read 201-763-4738.

Among the items we discussed at the committee meeting was Bob McConnell's plan to produce a SABR publication with information from the Tattersall/McConnell Home Run Log. It would contain data that does not get into the Home Run Encyclopedia that Macmillan is publishing from that source. Ken Samelsen, the Sports Projects Manager for Macmillan, was at the meeting and said the company had no problem with SABR doing so. Both Ken and Bob agreed that while much of the data in the Encyclopedia would have broad appeal, some of the more intriguing lists, left out of the Encyclopedia, would have a special appeal to SABR members in general and Records Committee people in particular. Both of these publications will be great additions to a researcher's library.

We finally had the long-awaited Records Committee debate on the inclusion/exclusion of the forfeited games of 1910-1919. Bob Tiemann and Rich Topp spoke for including the individual player records for these games, and Pete Palmer spoke against including them. Members of the audience weighed in on both sides, and given the esoteric nature of the debate, it was quite spirited. I want to once again thank Bob, Rich and Pete, as well as the other committee members and all those in the crowd who voiced opinions. The case for each side was argued mostly on its merits, with the potential changes in batting champions not intruding too much on discussion. The potential controversy here was largely defused by the "Compromise at Kingston" in which *Total Baseball*, newly designated by major league baseball as their official encyclopedia, will change the numbers while allowing the affected player to retain his "title." Overall, I find this a wise and thoughtful solution. In an informal show of hands after the debate, I counted about 75 percent in favor of continuing to exclude these ten games.

Dave Smith and the people involved in Retrosheet held their annual meeting, which is now conducted in conjunction with the SABR convention. They have made great progress, but there is still a long way to go. This project is of inestimable value to researchers, so if you can help please do. When you come across a play-by-play account of an old game, take the time to copy it and send it off to Dave.

Dick Beverage chaired a meeting of the committee chairmen where the major topic was committee membership. Most of us were against charging money for newsletters, but all agreed that there were too many non-contributing members on their committees. I don't think this is much of a problem on the Records Committee. However, there are a few people, whom I haven't heard from in several years. If, for some reason, we haven't spoken or written to each other in that time, would you mind getting in touch with me to tell me if you would like to remain on the Records Committee.

Ron Rakowski, who found that Roger Maris was credited with an undeserved RBI in 1961, has recently discovered that Mickey Mantle was incorrectly credited with a run scored that same year. Ron's first discovery meant that Maris now shares the 1961 RBI lead with Baltimore's Jim Gentile, each with 141. However, his newest find makes Maris the league leader in runs scored with 132. He had been tied with Mantle.

Ron discovered the error while working on the 1961 season for Retrosheet. It occurred in the second game of a doubleheader against Cleveland at Yankee Stadium on September 10. Mantle's "official sheet" shows him with two runs scored in this game, when he actually scored only one—a third inning solo home run. In his other three at bats, Mantle walked in the first (left stranded at third base), struck out in the fifth, and grounded to third in the seventh. The run mistakenly given to Mantle actually belongs to Bill Skowron, whom the "official sheet" shows with no runs-scored. Skowron singled in the sixth inning, and scored on Clete Boyer's double.

Ron confirmed the above by checking the scoresheets of New York sportswriters, Dick Young, Phil Pepe and Leonard Koppett, as well as the Yankees' team scoresheet and the *Associated Press* boxscore. As a result, give Mantle 131 runs-scored in 1961 and a lifetime total of 1,676. Skowron gets 77 runs in 1961, and 682 lifetime.

I know there are people who object to these types of corrections, even when they are done to rectify an obvious error such as a faulty computation or putting a number in a wrong column. This is especially true when the correction changes a league leader in a particular category. For those of you that do (I hope there aren't too many on the Records Committee) let me restate an obvious truth. Mickey Mantle was one of the game's great players. Does finishing his career with 1,676 runs-scored rather than 1,677 make him any less a great player. Will anybody's assessment of Mantle's place in history be changed by the fact that he did not lead the league in runs-scored in 1961? I don't think so. We should try to get the numbers as accurate as we can, but we must also, as Neil Postman, a Professor at NYU and critic of technology run wild, says, "free ourselves from the belief in the power of numbers, and not regard calculation as an adequate substitute for judgement, or precision as a synonym for truth."

I would like to expand on two items that appeared in the June newsletter. In one, I passed along Chris Wait's suggestion that Catfish Hunter made two relief appearances in 1972 and has been credited with only one. Chris claimed that according to the boxscore in the *Oakland Tribune* Hunter pitched two innings (the 7th and 8th) in relief on June 2 in the first game of a doubleheader in Baltimore. Seymour Siwoff checked this against the American League sheets and found that it was actually Diego Segui who pitched those two innings. Chris checked and found that not only the *Oakland Tribune*, but also the boxscores in the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Washington Post* showed Hunter pitching in this game. On the other hand, the *San Francisco Chronicle* and *Chicago Tribune* boxscores had Segui as the pitcher.

All of us who use and depend on boxscores in our research are aware that they are not always dependable. We all know this, but sometimes we need to be reminded. This is just such a reminder. Chris and I both apologize for this mistaken claim.

The other item concerns Walt Wilson's claim that there were only 68 people at Fenway Park for the Boston-Cleveland game of July 14, 1922. Walt got his information from the *Chicago Tribune*, which he sent me, and which makes the 68 people in the stands the focus of their story. Two excellent researchers from the Boston area, Bob Richardson and Dixie Tourangeau have tried to verify this in the Boston newspapers but have been unable to do so. I checked the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, and they say there were fewer than 1,000 people at the game. This one remains temporarily unsolved.

At the convention, Ray Gonzalez handed me a sheet of paper that contained information on unassisted double plays that he said contradicted the records for these categories as shown in The Sporting News Complete Baseball Record Book (1995 edition). On page 108, TSN lists the Major League and American League record for most unassisted double plays in a career by an outfielder as four. Tris Speaker holds the AL record and shares the ML record with Elmer Smith. Ray gave me a list of six unassisted double plays by Speaker, which I have checked and confirmed. Four of them were when Speaker was with Boston and two when he was with Cleveland. Elias's The Book of Baseball Records (1995 edition) has this correctly listed on page 62.

<u>Boston</u>		<u>Cleveland</u>	
June 1, 1909 (2G)	at PHI	Apr. 18, 1918	vs DET
Apr. 23, 1910	vs PHI	Apr. 29, 1918	vs CHI
Apr. 21, 1914	vs PHI		
Aug. 8, 1914	at DET		

On page 102 of The Sporting News Complete Baseball Record Book (1995 edition), the National League record for most unassisted double plays in a season by a third baseman is listed as two--held by many with Mike Shannon the last to do it in 1968. Ray's list (which I also checked and confirmed) says that both Harry Wolverton of Philadelphia (1902) and Heinie Groh of Cincinnati (1915) each had three unassisted double plays. Elias's The Book of Baseball Records (1995 edition) has this correctly listed on page 51. TSN also says that no National League third baseman ever made unassisted double plays in consecutive games (p. 102), which Wolverton did on July 25 and 26, 1902. Elias does not carry this record.

<u>Harry Wolverton</u>		<u>Heinie Groh</u>	
July 25, 1902	at BOS	May 1, 1915	at STL
July 26, 1902	at BOS	July 24, 1915 (1G)	at PHI
Sept 5, 1902 (1G)	vs STL	Aug. 15, 1915 (1G)	vs PIT

Since 1991, Herm Krabbenhoft and Jim Smith have presented triple play data in Herm's excellent publication, Baseball Quarterly Reviews. Along with detailed description, by park, of every triple play ever made there, Herm and Jim list summary tables for the batters, runners and fielders involved. The Summer 1995 issue has triple-play summary data for the American League, such as most regular season triple plays by position: Catcher--Luke Sewell (4); First Base--George Sisler (7); Second Base--Eddie Collins (6); Third Base--Gary Gaetti (7); Shortstop--Donie Bush (9)-- Outfield--Charlie Jamieson and Harold Baines (2); Pitcher--thirty-eight pitchers have one each. This issue, and previous ones, are for sale by Herm (518-399-7890).

Greg Beston wants everyone to know that the 13 runs scored by Detroit (5) and Boston (8) in the third inning at Fenway on July 2, 1995 is a new American League record for that inning. The record had been 12, held by Boston (8) and Washington (4), Aug. 12, 1949 (2G); and New York (12) and Washington (0), Sept. 11, 1949 (1G).

Frank Williams found this list in a newspaper under the heading of Baseball's Fastest Starts.

ATL (N) 1982 13-0	CLE (A) 1966 10-0	DET (A) 1984 9-0
MIL (A) 1987 12-0	NY (N) 1918 9-0	PHI (N) 1915 8-0
OAK (A) 1981 11-0	BKL (N) 1940 9-0	CIN (N) 1980 8-0
BKL (N) 1955 10-0	STL (A) 1944 9-0	CHI (A) 1982 8-0
PIT (N) 1962 10-0		

Frank says that this list (and others like it) fail to include Boston (NL), who won their first nine games in 1888. He would like to know if anyone has found another team, either before or after 1900, that started their season with at least eight consecutive victories.

John Schwartz alerted me to an omission in The Sporting News Baseball Guide (1995 edition). On page 10, where they list all the managers in the history of the Baltimore franchise, going back to their days in Milwaukee and St. Louis, they have left out Joe Altobelli. Earl Weaver is listed as the manager from 1968 to 1982 and then again for 1985 and 1986. Altobelli managed the Orioles from 1983 through the middle of 1985. In fact he managed them to a world championship in '83, equalling the number of world championships won by Weaver.

Ross Adell, with help from Ken Samelsen and William Ruiz, has compiled a four-page list of 1994's notable home runs; leadoff HR's, game-ending HR's, first major league HR's etc. If you would like a copy, send a SASE to Ross at 141-10 28th Ave. (Apt 3G); Flushing, NY 11354. Ross also has a list of Rickey Henderson's leadoff home runs.

A gentleman named Rich Adler wrote with a question concerning Roger Bresnahan's rookie season with Washington in 1897. He says that while Total Baseball and Macmillan's The Baseball Encyclopedia show Bresnahan with six hits in 16 at-bats and a .375 batting average. Adler sent boxscores from the Washington Post that show Bresnahan with six hits in 17 at-bats (.353). It's hard to say about this one: the Post could be wrong, but then so too could the researcher who logged these in on the ICI sheets. Here is Bresnahan's 1897 record according to the Post.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Opponent</u>	<u>At</u>	<u>At-Bats</u>	<u>Hits</u>
August 27	St. Louis	Washington	3	0
September 2	Pittsburgh	Washington	3	1
September 6	Louisville	Washington	2	0
September 8	Cleveland	Washington	2	0
September 11	Cincinnati	Washington	3	3
September 18	Brooklyn	Brooklyn	<u>4</u>	<u>2</u>
			17	6

Here, from Dave Vincent, are some more of the first home runs hit at selected major league parks.

Colt Stadium	TEX	04/10/1962	Ramon Mejias	HOU
Astrodome	HOU	04/12/1965	Dick Allen	PHI
Memorial Coliseum	LA	04/18/1958	Hank Sauer	SP
Dodger Stadium	LA	04/10/1962	Wally Post	CIN
National League Park	LOU	05/18/1876	Billy Hague	LOU
Eclipse Park II	LOU	05/23/1893	Jim Canavan	CIN
Milwaukee Baseball Grounds	MIL	06/25/1878	Jake Goodman	MIL
County Stadium	MIL	04/14/1953	Bill Bruton	MIL
Jarry Park	MON	04/14/1969	Mack Jones	MON
Olympic Stadium	MON	04/15/1977	Ellis Valentine	MON
Harrison Field (FL)	NWK	05/09/1915	Al Wickland	CHI