

Society for American Baseball Research Baseball Records Committee Newsletter

Lyle Spatz, Editor

October 1998

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

BASEBALL GETS LUCKY AGAIN, BUT...

Despite the naysayers, I'm convinced that the emergence of Babe Ruth and the excitement he began creating in 1920, "saved" the game after it had gone through its darkest period. Well, after going through another dark period, baseball has again gotten lucky as the home run race between Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa has brought it the kind of positive attention it deserves. The fact that McGwire and Sosa have comported themselves the way they have, and the way that Cal Ripken did in 1995, is a bonus that has warmed all of our hearts, particularly those of us with young children or grandchildren.

Although awesome is a word much overused, especially in sports, it is the only way to describe what McGwire has done. Nevertheless, I do think there is a down side to all this focus on the home run record that the owners should be aware of. I know I'm not alone in resenting the way the media has treated baseball as if the games were being played strictly to give individuals a chance to break glamorous records, and that the winning and losing of those games was just a sideshow. I still believe that meaningful pennant races, especially those experienced when you are young, are the key ingredient in the making of lifetime fans. And no one can convince me that the fervor created by the race to see who is the fourth best team in each league can be called a "meaningful pennant race."

In recent years the "sideshow" aspect of attending a major league game has continually increased, making a night at the ballpark a less and less enjoyable experience for serious fans. I don't have to repeat the litany of all the objectionable things we are forced to endure. I've been told it's a "generational thing," but I disagree. Serious fans come in all ages, and it's serious fans that the game needs to thrive; not the ones who got caught up in the McGwire-Sosa race, but who will forget about baseball until the next time the media hypes some individual achievement.

Off the soapbox. On a lighter note, you may have noticed that the home run race brought not only McGwire and Sosa into the nation's living rooms, it also brought us David Vincent. To paraphrase an old joke, I imagine in years to come when children see a picture of the three of them they will want to know who are the two guys with Dave Vincent. As you know, Dave and Bob McConnell are the keepers of SABR's home run log, with Dave assuming the role of spokesman. No one could have done it better. If any of you haven't caught his act, I can assure you he has done SABR proud.

The committee welcomes three new members: **Jerry Gregory**; 3409 Reedy Drive; Annandale, VA 22003; 703-573-1702; **Ken Richard**; 15370 Paseo Ajanta; San Diego, CA 92129; 619-672-8946 and **Gerald Wachs**; 1 Lincoln Plaza; New York, NY 10023; 201-376-8500. Note this new address for **Ted DiTullio**—111 Watchung Terrace; Middlesex, NJ 08846.

ARMS AND THE MEN

Most outfield assists by team in a season is a category that does not appear in either *The Sporting News Complete Baseball Record Book*, or in *Elias's The Book of Baseball Records*. However, after researching post-1900 outfield assists, Clem Comly says that were there such a record, the "record-holder" would be the 1923 Boston Red Sox, with 91. Ira Flagstead led with 33, and four others reached double figures: Shano Collins (17), Joe Harris (13), Mike Menosky (12), and Dick Reichle (10).

WHAT ELSE CAN YOU DO?

Scott Flatow, with help from Sean Lahman, compiled this list of players who hit at least 20 home runs in the only season they spent with a particular club. Given the increase in player movement, this list is likely to increase.

Rocky Colavito; 1964 A's; (34)	Jack Clark; 1988 Yankees; (27)	Gene Freese; 1959 Phillies; (23)
Dick Allen; 1970 Cardinals; (34)	Tony Phillips; 1995 Angels; (27)	Dick Allen; 1971 Dodgers; (23)
Bobby Bonds; 1975 Yankees (32)	Danny Tartabull; 1996 White Sox; (27)	Franklin Stubbs; 1990 Astros; (23)
Matt Williams; 1997 Indians; (32)	Rogers Hornsby; 1927 Giants; (26)	Moises Alou; 1997 Marlins; (23)
Richie Zisk; 1977 White Sox; (30)	Dave Winfield; 1992 Blue Jays; (26)	Rogers Hornsby; 1928 Braves; (21)
Nick Esasky; 1989 Red Sox; (30)	Hank Greenberg; 1947 Pirates; (25)	Steve Balboni; 1988 Mariners; (21)
Benito Santiago; 1996 Phillies; (30)	Don Mincher; 1969 Pilots; (25)	Dave Parker; 1990 Brewers; (21)
Chili Davis; 1997 Royals; (30)	Bobby Bonds; 1979 Indians; (25)	Jay Bell; 1997 Royals; (21)
Bobby Bonds; 1978 Rangers; (29)	George Bell; 1991 Cubs; (25)	Orlando Cepeda; 1973 Red Sox; (20)
Ron Gant; 1995 Reds; (29)	Jack Graham; 1949 Browns; (24)	Hubie Brooks; 1990 Dodgers; (20)
Dick Stuart; 1965 Phillies; (28)	Roman Mejias; 1962 Colt 45's; (24)	Todd Zeile; 1990 Phillies; (20)
Reggie Jackson; 1976 Orioles; (27)	Joe Carter; 1990 Padres; (24)	Julio Franco; 1994 White Sox; (20)

LCS FIELDING RECORDS

The Sporting News Complete Baseball Record Book lists Joe Morgan as holding the National League record for most LCS career double plays by a second baseman, with 14. Steve Kanehl found that Mark Lemke (two in 1991, three in 1992, one in 1993, five in 1995, and three in 1996) also has 14 and should be listed as the co-holder of the record.

The Sporting News Complete Baseball Record Book also lists Manny Sanguillen as holding the National League record for most LCS career double plays by a catcher, with three. Steve found that Terry Kennedy (one in 1984 and two in 1989) also has three and should be listed as the co-holder of the record. Steve sent his findings to Craig Carter, the editor of the Complete Baseball Record Book, and Craig agreed to make the changes in the 1999 edition. (*Elias's The Book of Baseball Records* shows Kennedy as co-holder of the catcher record, but omits Lemke.)

MORE ON NOLAN RYAN

In the August newsletter we ran a table furnished by Cappy Gagnon that Cappy used to suggest that Nolan Ryan was "the most over-rated great pitcher ever." Herm Krabbenhoft, citing Ryan's head-to-head record against other 300-game winners and several other Hall of Fame members, says he agrees with Cappy's assessment. Against the other 300-game winners (Steve Carlton, Phil Niekro, Gaylord Perry, Tom Seaver, and Don Sutton), Ryan had a combined 3-4 record with three no-decisions. The interesting thing here is that Ryan had only ten of these confrontations. None of the others had fewer than 25.

Ryan's record against a group of Hall of Famers who'd won fewer than 300 games was 3-6, with three no-decisions. He was 1-0 vs Jim Bunning, Ferguson Jenkins, and Bob Gibson; 0-1 vs Juan Marichal; 0-2 vs Jim Hunter; and 0-3 vs Jim Palmer.

I'm not sure how to interpret Ryan's reduced number of starts against the other team's ace, nor do I think head-to-head combination is the best way to measure a pitcher's ability. On the other hand, the fact that Seaver (8-5) has the highest winning percentage among the Hall of Famers going against each other, and at 27-14 also has the most wins and highest percentage among the 300 game winners reinforces my personal belief that on a career basis, he was the greatest pitcher of his time, and in the top five all-time.

A PREMATURE CELEBRATION

On September 26, 1948, after beating the Giants, the Boston Braves celebrated their "clinching" of the National League pennant. The standings at the end of play that day read:

Boston	87-60
Brooklyn	82-67
St. Louis	81-67

The Dodgers were six games back and the Cardinals were six and a half back. But, you might say, if Brooklyn won their five remaining games, or if St. Louis won their six remaining games, and Boston lost their remaining seven games, there would be a tie for first place. But although the Braves had played only 147 games, they did not have seven remaining games, they had only six. Boston had an unplayed game against Cincinnati that was not going to be made up, and thus they could lose no more than 66 games.

Walt Wilson, who furnished this anecdote, says this type of scenario had happened several times before 1948. He wonders if all the above wins and losses had transpired, whether Commissioner Chandler would have (or could have) forced the Braves and Reds to make up that game.

UPDATING LISTS

Frank Williams found that Dickie Kerr of the Chicago White Sox belongs on Bob Davids' list of relief pitchers who won both games of a doubleheader. The list appeared in the June 1998 newsletter. Kerr's two wins came at Chicago against the Yankees on July 21, 1919.

Walt Wilson found another player to add to Bob Davids' list in the December 1997 newsletter of players who tripled and then stole home. Walt previously discovered that Alvin Dark of the Boston Braves did it on July 9, 1948 (see the June newsletter). Now he's found that Randy Hundley also belongs on the list. In the fifth inning of a game against Houston on May 19, 1966, Hundley tripled (off Dick Farrell) and stole home (against Gary Kroll).

HOME RUNS BY LEFT-HANDED BATTERS AGAINST LEFT-HANDED PITCHERS

Cappy Gagnon, with an assist from Dave Vincent, surveyed left-handed batters to see who among them had the highest one-season home run totals against left-handed pitchers. In one of those great baseball coincidences, he found that the two men who had the most through the 1997 season (each had 21) both were born in Donora, PA: Stan Musial and Ken Griffey Jr.

Before making the list final, I checked with Tim Hevly, the Mariners' Director of Baseball Operations, to see how many Griffey had this year. He had 20 then, but added one more to again reach 21.

The list of those who hit at least 15 follows. Note the following absentees, with their highest total in parentheses. Lou Gehrig (14 in 1927); Roger Maris (12 in 1961); Yogi Berra (12 in 1951); Ted Williams (8 in 1955); and Duke Snider (8 in 1951). Cappy points out that through the 1997 season only two right-handed batters have exceeded the Donora duos total of 21: both Dick Allen in 1966 and Cecil Fielder in 1990 had 25.

However, of the top ten home run hitters this season, only Griffey was left-handed, so there could likely be some new names on that list.

Player	Year	Team	HR	Off LHP	Player	Year	Team	HR	Off LHP
Ken Griffey Jr.	1998	SEA	56	21	Luke Easter	1950	CLE	28	16
Ken Griffey Jr.	1996	SEA	49	21	Ken Griffey Jr.	1994	SEA	40	16
Stan Musial	1949	STL (N)	36	21	Reggie Jackson	1969	OAK	47	16
Ted Kluszewski	1955	CIN	47	20	Mel Ott	1938	NY(N)	36	16
Babe Ruth	1926	NY (A)	47	20	Babe Ruth	1920	NY (A)	54	16
Darryl Strawberry	1988	NY (N)	39	20	Babe Ruth	1928	NY (A)	54	16
Reggie Jackson	1980	NY (A)	41	19	Eddie Mathews	1961	MIL(N)	32	15
Babe Ruth	1927	NY (A)	60	19	Johnny Mize	1947	NY(N)	51	15
Don Hurst	1929	PHI (N)	31	18	Stan Musial	1954	STL (N)	35	15
Don Mattingly	1985	NY (A)	35	18	Stan Musial	1955	STL (N)	33	15
Stan Musial	1948	STL (N)	39	18	Mel Ott	1929	NY(N)	42	15
Barry Bonds	1990	PIT	33	17	Babe Ruth	1922	NY (A)	35	15
Darrell Evans	1973	ATL	41	17	Babe Ruth	1932	NY (A)	41	15
Babe Ruth	1929	NY(A)	46	17	Darryl Strawberry	1987	NY(N)	39	15

In reporting Walt Wilson's discovery of an uncredited inside-the park home run for Larry Doby in the August newsletter, I reported the date as May 8, 1949. It should, of course (especially since I threw in the fact that it was Gene Bearden's first win), have been May 8, 1948. I apologize for the typo.