

SOCIETY FOR AMERICAN BASEBALL RESEARCH BASEBALL RECORDS COMMITTEE

LYLE SPATZ, EDITOR

AUGUST 2002

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

A GREAT WEEKEND IN A GREAT CITY

Thanks to Seamus Kearney, Paul Wendt, and all the New England members who helped make SABR's 32nd convention not only the biggest ever, but also among the best run. The annual meeting of the Baseball Records Committee was highlighted by Joe Dittmar's PowerPoint presentation highlighting some of the records that we on the committee consider "unbreakable." We also heard from Herm Krabbenhoft, who gave us a detailed description of his discovery and eventual proving of Ted Williams's two missing 1941 walks, and Mark Armour, who described the upcoming biography project and appealed to committee members to contribute by doing bios and/or serving as fact-checkers. Finally, we learned from Steve Gietschier, the Senior Managing Editor at *The Sporting News*, that TSN and STATS Inc., will be combining to produce several sports publications, including the TSN Guide, Register, and Record Book. Steve solicited written suggestions as how these publications might be improved.

WHAT WE DO AND WHY WE DO IT

I am using this space to respond to ESPN columnist Rob Neyer's reaction to Herm Krabbenhoft's discovery of Williams's two missing 1941 walks. It's also an opportunity to reiterate briefly what we at the Baseball Records Committee do. Citing the Williams correction, along with the recent revision to Babe Ruth's walk totals, Rob concluded that "baseball statistics are approximations...close approximations, but they're only approximations."

On behalf of the Records Committee and the people who work on the Encyclopedias and Record Books, I respectfully, but categorically, disagree with that blanket assessment. Does that mean that I believe every number in baseball is "set in stone?" Of course, not, but the vast majority, especially those in more recent times are. No one is going to discover that Joe DiMaggio hit safely in 55 or 57 games in 1941, just as no one is going to discover an uncounted home run for Mark McGwire in 1998. The existential concept that "nothing can be proved," or "there is no such thing as truth" doesn't apply here. DiMaggio hit in 56 games, and McGwire had 70 home runs.

On the other hand, if Rob had simply said that errors and inconsistencies remain in baseball's historical record, and especially so in the earlier years, he'd be absolutely correct. (See the corrections to the triples record on another page of this newsletter.) The Baseball Records Committee mandate, "to establish an accurate set of records for organized baseball," deals with those errors and inconsistencies on an ongoing basis. The errors are of two major types: (1) those that deal with accomplishments, positive or negative, that have been accepted as major league or individual league records: the most, the highest, the fewest, the lowest, etc., or (2) errors in the yearly and lifetime records of an individual, or a team. But again, the overwhelming mass of individual, team, and league statistics one finds in the commercial Encyclopedias and Record Books are in agreement and are correct. Assembling these volumes is such an enormous undertaking, that it is not surprising that occasional errors or omissions occur. That there are so few is to the everlasting credit of the folks that do the work. Those of us who do baseball research understand how great a debt we owe them.

Nevertheless, as this is an evolutionary process, and as part of our quest is to make the historic record as accurate and consistent as possible, when we find an error in one of those publications we make it known. We don't do it as an endorsement of one publication over another: I know of no serious researcher who does not make use of multiple sources. Rather it is our obligation to make the case for each proposed change sufficiently convincing that each of the record books and encyclopedias will accept it on merit. As the great English philosopher John Locke said, "It is one thing to show a man that he is in error and another to put him in possession of the truth."

We have always offered and will continue to offer these corrections and reconciliations in a spirit of collegiality and cooperation. We trust that they will always be received in the same way.

JIM BUNNING'S NO-HITTER

On July 20, 1958, Detroit's Jim Bunning pitched a no hitter against the Boston Red Sox in the first game of a doubleheader at Fenway Park. In *The Elias Book of Baseball Records* listing of no-hitters (p. 349) they list the city where the no hitter occurred if it was a road game. For Bunning's no hitter, Ed Brown noticed the "at Boston" designation was missing. *The 2002 Sporting News Complete Baseball Record Book* listing of no hitters (p. 206) does show this game taking place in Boston.



JIM BUNNING

LOU GEHRIG IS "TRIPLE-DOUBLE" LEADER

In 1992, the *New York Times* responded to a question that asked which major leaguer achieved the most triple-double seasons in his career. Defining the triple-double as reaching double figures in doubles, triples, and home runs in a season, the *Times* answered that six players: Earl Averill, Jim Bottomley, Joe DiMaggio, Lou Gehrig, Goose Goslin and Stan Musial, had each done it



LOU GEHRIG

eight times. However, a few years back, researchers found that a double credited to Lou Gehrig on August 12, 1929 was actually a triple, raising his triple total for the year to ten. That, says Tom Assicurato, makes 1929 a triple-double year for Gehrig, and added to triple-doubles in 1925-28, 1930-31, 1933, and 1935 raises his total to nine triple-double seasons, making Gehrig the all-time leader.

DEFEATING ALL 30 MAJOR LEAGUE TEAMS

Bill Arnold reported that when Al Leiter of the New York Mets defeated the Arizona Diamondbacks on April 30, he became the first major-league pitcher to have wins over all 30 big-league teams. Two other pitchers have wins over 29 teams: Randy Johnson and Kevin Brown. Johnson, of the Arizona Diamondbacks, needs a win over Arizona, and that's not likely to happen soon, if ever. Brown needed a victory against the Tampa Bay Devil Rays but did not pitch against them during the Dodgers-Devil Rays interleague series in June. The chart below shows Leiter's record against each major league club when he reached the milestone on April 30.

AMERICAN LEAGUE		NATIONAL LEAGUE	
Team	Record	Team	Record
Anaheim	4-2	Arizona	1-3
Baltimore	3-1	Atlanta	6-8
Boston	5-5	Chicago	5-3
Chicago	3-2	Cincinnati	6-6
Cleveland	3-4	Colorado	7-3
Detroit	1-2	Florida	8-1
Kansas City	2-1	Houston	2-6
Minnesota	5-0	Los Angeles	6-4
New York	4-7	Milwaukee	8-2
Oakland	1-1	Montreal	7-4
Seattle	2-1	New York	3-2
Tampa Bay	2-1	Philadelphia	6-3
Texas	1-6	Pittsburgh	4-1
Toronto	3-2	St. Louis	4-3
		San Diego	5-3
		San Francisco	3-2

UNASSISTED DPs BY A FIRST BASEMAN

Greg Beston pointed out an error in *The 2002 Sporting News Complete Baseball Record Book* listing of the record for Most unassisted double plays, game, by a first baseman (p. 101). The record is two, held by many players, but TSN's listing of the last to do it--Dave Kingman on July 25, 1982 in the NL, and Dave Martinez on June 21, 1997 in the AL is incorrect. As shown in *The Elias Book of Baseball Records* (p. 104), the most recent are two men more noted for their offense (as pictured below) than their defense. Richie Sexson of Milwaukee did it last in the NL, on October 7, 2001, and Jason Giambi of Oakland did it last in the AL, on August 2, 2000.



AL LEITER



RICHIE SEXSON



JASON GIAMBI

TEN ADDITIONAL AT BATS FOR JACK BURNS IN 1931

Jack Burns, a rookie outfielder for the 1931 St. Louis Browns, is listed in *Total Baseball* and other source books as having 570 official at bats that season. But in looking at Burns's day-by-day sheets, Ron Selter found an addition error that missed ten of Burns's at bats.

The cumulative at bats show:

Through games of September 26 (1G): AB = 567

Game of September 26 (2G): AB= 5, cumulative = 572

Game of September 27 (1G): AB= 5, cumulative = 577

Game of September 27(2G) AB=3, cumulative = 570

September 27 was the final date of the season, and obviously, $577 + 3 = 580$, not 570. Burns's at bats should be changed to 580 in 1931 and 3,516 for his career. His batting average should be changed from .260 to .255 in 1931 and from .280 to .279 for his career.



JACK BURNS

MOST TRIPLES IN A SEASON BY A RIGHTHANDED BATTER

I would guess that most SABR members know that the major league record for most triples in a season belongs to Owen Wilson, who hit 36 three-baggers for the 1912 Pittsburgh Pirates. Many would also know that the American League record is 26, shared by Joe Jackson of the 1912 Cleveland Indians and Sam Crawford of the 1914 Detroit Tigers. All three were lefthanded, and perhaps because of that *The Sporting News* lists a record for Most Triples, Righthander, Season. However, Sean Holtz of *The Baseball Almanac* noticed that the listing in *The 2002 Sporting News Complete Baseball Record Book* of 33 in the NL, by St. Louis's Perry Werden in 1893, and 23 in the AL by Baltimore's Jimmy Williams in 1902 is inconsistent with recent findings that show Werden with 29 and Williams with 21. Thus, Werden still holds the NL record, with 29, but the AL record is 22, held jointly by Cleveland's Bill Bradley (1903) and New York's Birdie Cree (1911) and George Stirnweiss (1945).



PERRY WERDEN



OWEN WILSON



BILL BRADLEY



BIRDIE CREE



GEORGE STIRNWEISS

EDDIE JOOST

Total Baseball shows Eddie Joost as having played one game at shortstop for the 1943 Boston Braves. But Greg Beston found two games for Joost at short in '43. Both were against the Giants at Braves Field, one on April 24, and the second on May 5 (1G). On both occasions Joost moved from second to short in the ninth inning as a replacement for Whitey Wietelmann.



EDDIE JOOST

YAZ

Mark Armour noted that Carl Yastrzemski was missing from the June newsletter list of those who had homered in the most consecutive seasons. Ty Cobb and Rickey Henderson each did it in 24, but Mark correctly points out that Yaz's name should be added to those of Hank Aaron, Carlton Fisk, and Rusty Staub, who did it in 23 consecutive seasons. Yaz had at least one homer (actually, his low was seven) in every season of his career, which began in 1961 and ended in 1983.

CATCHING KID NICHOLS AND VIC WILLIS

Walt Wilson's listing of battery mates for Hall of Fame pitchers during their starts and shutouts continues with two Boston National League greats, Kid Nichols and Vic Willis.

CATCHING KID NICHOLS

Kid Nichols pitched for Boston (NL) 1890-1901; St. Louis (NL) 1904-05; and Philadelphia (NL) 1905-06. He made 562 starts and pitched 48 shutouts.

	Starts	Shutouts
Charlie Bennett	124	14
Marty Bergen	105	9
Charlie Ganzel	101	3
Jack Ryan	38	4
Mal Kittredge	30	4
Boileryard Clarke	26	3
King Kelly	24	2
Fred Tenney	16	0
Mike Grady	15	0
Billy Sullivan	14	2
Red Dooin	11	1
George Yeager	9	2
Others	49	4

The 49 games Nichols started that were caught by others were by 13 different catchers. The four shutouts caught by others were by Larry McLean, who caught two, and by John Butler and Lou Hardie, who caught one each.

CATCHING VIC WILLIS

Vic Willis pitched for Boston (NL) 1898-1905; Pittsburgh (NL) 1906-09; and St. Louis (NL) 1910. He made 513 starts and pitched 50 shutouts.

	Starts	Shutouts
George Gibson *	126	16
Pat Moran	90	9
Mal Kittredge	74	9
Marty Bergen	40	2
Boileryard Clarke	38	4
Tom Needham	28	0
Ed Phelps	22	4
Roger Bresnahan	12	1
George Yeager	12	1
Billy Sullivan	11	1
Heinie Peitz	5	2
Others	13	0

The 13 games Willis started that were caught by others were by ten different catchers. One of his shutouts was caught by more than one catcher.



Kid Nichols



Charlie Bennett



Vic Willis



George Gibson

BASEBALL RECORDS COMMITTEE RELOCATES

As of August 1, 2002, the new address for the Baseball Records Committee is 8413 Grand Messina Circle, Boynton Beach, FL 33437. The new phone number is (561) 740-4710, and the new fax number is (561) 740-4974. The email address, lspsz@att.net, remains the same.