

Society for American Baseball Research Baseball 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

MCGWIRE AND MCGEE

While the owners have yet to agree on the precise number of teams that will move from one league to another next season, it seems likely that some form of realignment will take place. That, along with the arrival of interleague play and the ever-increasing movement of players between leagues all point to the growing homogeneity of the two leagues. In my opinion these structural changes make this an opportune time to recognize that these are the "major leagues," and as such should have one set of leaders and records. Take for example the home run feats of Mark McGwire. McGwire will not lead either league in home runs this season, but he could possibly have more than anyone else. (As I write this, he trails Ken Griffey, Jr. by one.) The press has trumpeted the fact that he is the only player besides Babe Ruth to have back-to-back 50 home run seasons, and thankfully no writer has suggested putting an asterisk next to his name because he hit some with Oakland and some with St. Louis. If he overtakes Griffey they will acknowledge him as the home run champion of the "major leagues," and rightfully so. But then so too should David Cone be recognized as the strikeout king of the "major leagues" for 1992. Like McGwire, Cone led neither league, but he did have the most overall. And let us not forget those pitchers whose 20 wins in a season are split between the two leagues, thus relegating them to footnotes.

The new realities of baseball scheduling should force us to at least take a look at how we handle the awarding of statistical honors. Remember 1990, when Eddie Murray had the best batting average in the major leagues (.330), but only serious fans seemed to know it. George Brett (.329) won the American League batting title, and Willie McGee won the National League batting title. As I mentioned in the February newsletter, McGee was batting a league-leading .335 when St. Louis traded him to Oakland late in the season. He batted .274 for the Athletics, which brought his combined season's average down to .324. Nevertheless, because his National League numbers were "frozen," McGee was recognized as the league's batting champion although Murray and two other National Leaguers (Dave Magadan and Lenny Dykstra) had higher averages. Now we all know that Eddie Murray is going to the Hall of Fame with or without the 1990 batting championship. And I'm not advocating taking Willie McGee's batting title away retroactively. He deserves it for having won it under the then existing rules. But what if such a scenario occurs in the new era of interleague play. Suppose after going to Oakland, McGee, had gone two-for-twenty or so against National League teams. Would it still make sense to "freeze" his N L average. Whether we like it or not, realignment and interleague scheduling will blur the identities of the two leagues. In doing so, it may make having National League and American League leaders as superfluous as having Eastern, Central and Western Division leaders would today.

Things are changing at an unusually rapid pace in baseball. I'm not sure the powers-that-be understand the affect their structural changes will have on baseball statistics and record-keeping nor how important those aspects of the game are to the fans. My proposal of replacing of AL and NL records with Major League records may be a bit revolutionary, although certainly no more revolutionary than what else has gone in the past few years. However, it's one possible solution; I'm sure there are others. The point is that the time has come to at least start talking about what lies ahead and begin attempting to deal with it in an intelligent manner.

RECONCILING ALLAN RUSSELL'S PITCHING RECORD

In the August newsletter I reported a correction to Herb Pennock's won-lost record. **Walt Wilson** and **Pete Palmer** found that Pennock, then with the Red Sox, should have been credited with the win in a June 3, 1921 game against Cleveland. The win was incorrectly given to his teammate, Allan Russell. At the time I mentioned that there were other discrepancies in Russell's numbers between the 1997 edition of The Sports Encyclopedia-Baseball, the fifth edition of Total Baseball, and the tenth edition of The Baseball Encyclopedia, and that **Frank Williams** was doing further research to try to ascertain the source of these discrepancies. Using newspaper accounts and the official sheets supplied by the Hall of Fame's **Scot Mondore** and verified by **Pete Palmer**, Frank made the following determinations. By the way, I would like to thank Scot on behalf of all the researchers whom he has cheerfully and efficiently assisted.

1. In 1919, Russell's Innings-Pitched total should be 212: TB has 212; Mac and TSEB have 211. Russell's official sheet shows him with 211, but there is an addition error. If you add the innings-pitched for each of his individual appearances, you get 212. (Russell's correct lifetime innings-pitched total is 1394.1)
2. In 1921, Russell had seven complete games: TB has seven; Mac and TSEB have eight. The dates of Russell's 1921 complete games are April 20, May 30, June 22, July 2, July 6, July 13, and September 10.
3. In 1923, Russell had five starts and four complete games: TB has five and four; Mac has six and three; TSEB has six and four. The dates of Russell's 1923 complete games are June 1, July 19, August 16, and September 1. The one start that he didn't complete was on June 23.
4. In 1923, Russell had seven losses: TB and TSEB have seven; Mac has eight. Russell's record in 1923 was 10-7, not 10-8. The loss charged to Russell should actually be charged to another Washington pitcher, Cy Warmoth. Warmoth's record in 1923 should read 7-5 (as shown in TB and TSEB) and not 7-4 (as shown in Mac). Frank went back to the Reach Guide and added up Washington's losses that year; they came to 77 including seven for Russell and four for Warmoth. But Washington lost 78 games in 1923 (75-78) and there were no forfeits. It turns out that the scorers failed to assign a Washington pitcher a loss in their 17-4 defeat by the Yankees on April 30. Warmoth started, pitched 5.1 innings and left trailing 5-4. Neither Russell, who replaced him, or Slim McGrew, who mopped up, were effective, but Frank says the loss clearly belongs to Warmoth.
5. In 1923, Warmoth had three complete games: In the course of his research, Frank discovered that Warmoth had only three complete games in 1923, not the four shown by each of the three encyclopedias. The error is in the May 13 game against Cleveland. Warmoth started this game but was later relieved by Jim Brillheart. Pete Palmer has said he will make this change in the sixth edition of Total Baseball.
6. Russell's relief record in 1923 was 9-3, with nine saves. Mac is correct on the wins and saves, but incorrectly show Russell with seven defeats in relief. In actuality, four of the defeats were as a starter (three of which were complete games) and only three losses were in relief. Dropping Russell's relief losses from seven to three also means that he is no longer the league-leader in relief losses for 1923. That distinction now belongs to Boston's Bill Piercy (0-4) and Philadelphia's Ed Rommel (3-4) with four losses each.
7. Allan Russell's lifetime relief record should now read 33-17.

The Baseball Encyclopedia is the only one of the three major encyclopedias that includes pitcher's won-lost records in relief. We hope that whomever it is that takes **Ken Samelson's** place will make this change. For those who didn't already know, Ken is leaving Macmillan to take a position with Masters Press. We all wish him well. Ken has always been fair and open-minded, and his departure is a loss to SABR in general and to the Records Committee in particular.

A BASEBALL RARITY

At a time when every game is so thoroughly scrutinized and reported on, it's not often that a record-tying performance gets overlooked. Yet, that's exactly what happened in the August 20 Cincinnati-Colorado game at Riverfront Stadium. In that game, Reds' fielders made no assists. A check of the TSN and Elias Record Books show that this has happened in the major leagues only three times previously: by the Indians against the Yankees on July 4, 1945 (1G); by the Yanks against the Indians on September 11, 1995; and in the only NL occurrence, by the Mets against the Phillies on June 25, 1989. (TSN also shows the Browns doing it against the Indians on Aug. 8, 1943 (2G), but the Browns were in the field for only eight innings.)

The credit for this discovery goes to SABR member Alan Baker. Mr. Baker called me about three weeks after the game was played to say he was there, kept score, and was sure that the Reds had no assists. He knew that this was unusual and was surprised that neither to see nor hear any mention of it on radio, tv, or the newspapers.

After checks by Joe Dittmar and Dave Smith confirmed Mr. Baker's accuracy, I called Charles Henderson of the Reds publicity department. I asked him to review the Reds' official scorecard for that game, the one that goes to the National League office. He did and said that Mr. Baker was indeed correct, that it had gone undetected, and he was grateful to SABR for pointing it out.

27 BATTERS FACED, BUT NOT QUITE PERFECT

When Philadelphia's Mike Grace shutout the Yankees on September 2, he allowed three hits, yet faced the minimum 27 batters. That inspired home run maven Dave Vincent to remove his batting helmet temporarily for a look at the defensive side of baseball. Using data from *Retrosheet*, Dave supplied this list of post-1980 games in which a pitcher faced only 27 batters without pitching a perfect game.

May 3, 1982	Mike Flanagan	BAL vs SEA	Allowed 3 hits, 1 BB; 1 GIDP, 1 picked off, 2 outfield assists
May 2, 1984	LaMarr Hoyt	CHI vs NY-A	Allowed 1 hit; 1 GIDP
April 26, 1985	Orel Hershiser	LA vs SD	Allowed 1 BB; 1 CS
May 17, 1985	Bret Saberhagen	KC at MIL	Allowed 2 hits; 2 GIDP
June 7, 1988	Kelly Downs	SF vs ATL	Allowed 2 hits; 1 GIDP, 1 CS
Sept. 21, 1988	Bob Knepper	HOU vs ATL	Allowed 1 hit; 1 CS
April 23, 1989	Bob Milacki	BAL vs MIN	Allowed 3 hits, 2 BB; 4 GIDP, 1 CS
July 6, 1990	Jack Morris	DET vs KC	Allowed 1 hit; 1 GIDP
Aug. 15, 1990	Terry Mulholland	PHI vs SF	Allowed 1 E; 1 GIDP
Sept. 29, 1992	Dennis Rasmussen	KC at CAL	Allowed 1 hit; 1 CS
Sept. 2, 1997	Mike Grace	PHI vs NY-A	Allowed 3 hits; 2 GIDP, 1 CS

ADJUSTING THE RECORD BOOK

While entering games, for *Retrosheet*, Clem Comly found that on September 26, 1977, in a 9-5 win at St. Louis, Montreal used four pinch runners in an inning. In the Expos ninth, Pepe Frias ran for Chris Speier, Sammy Mejias ran for Tony Perez; Del Unser ran for Ellis Valentine; and Jerry White ran for Warren Cromartie. This set a National League record for Most pinch runners used, inning. This game is missing from both Elias's The Book of Baseball Records (p. 119) and The Sporting News Complete Baseball Record Book (p.9). Elias does show the game of August 10, 1978 where the Padres tied the record against Cincinnati (seventh inning), while TSN shows the record as three, held by many clubs. Clem also found that in their Sept. 21, 1977 game against the Phillies, the Cubs tied the NL record for Most left fielders used, nine-inning game. They used four: Jose Cardenal, Larry Bitner, Mike Adams, and Greg Gross. TSN omits this game (see page 10.) Elias doesn't list this category.

LONGEST NATIONAL LEAGUE WINNING STREAKS

This is just one of the many categories of historical winning and losing streaks that Bob Tiemann has uncovered during his innumerable hours researching the topic. Others will appear in future newsletters. I am including only winning streaks of 15 games or more, although Bob's list goes down to ten-game streaks.

Won	Team	Year	First Win	Last Win	Position at Start	Position at End	Home/Road
26*	New York	1916	Sept.7	Sept. 30 (1G)	4 th -13 1/2	4 th -4 1/2	26/0
21*	Chicago	1880	June 2	July 8	1 st +3 1/2	1 st +13 1/2	11/10
21	Chicago	1935	Sept. 4	Sept. 27 (2G)	3 rd -2 1/2	1 st +6	18/3
20	Providence	1884	Aug. 7	Sept. 6	2 nd -1/2	1 st +7	16/4
18	Chicago	1885	June 1	June 24	2 nd -2 1/2	1 st +2 1/2	14/4
18*	Boston	1891	Sept. 16	Oct. 2	2 nd -6 1/2	1 st +3 1/2	16/2
18	Baltimore	1894	Aug. 24	Sept. 16 (1G)	2 nd -3	1 st +4	13/5
18	New York	1904	June 16	July 4 (2G)	1 st +1/2	1 st +10 1/2	13/5
17	Boston	1897	May 31	June 21	T 4th -5	1 st +1/2	16/1
17	New York	1907	April 25	May 18	3 rd -1/2	1 st +1	14/3
17	New York	1916	May 9	May 29	8 th -8 1/2	2 nd -1 1/2	0/17
16*	Philadelphia	1887	Sept. 15	Oct. 8 (E)	4 th -9 1/2	2 nd -3 1/2	5/11
16	Philadelphia	1890	July 8	July 26	3 rd -5	1 st +2 1/2	14/2
16	Philadelphia	1892	June 11	June 28	T 6th -9 1/2	2 nd -5	11/5
16	Pittsburgh	1909	Sept. 9	Sept. 27	1 st +5	1 st +10	12/4
16	New York	1912	June 19	July 3(2G)	1 st +10	1 st +16 1/2	11/5
16	New York	1951	Aug. 12 (1G)	Aug 27 (2G)	2 nd -13	2 nd -5	13/3
15	Detroit	1886	May 8	May 29	T 3rd -2	1 st +1 1/2	12/3
15	Pittsburgh	1903	June 2	June 25 (1G)	3 rd -4 1/2	1 st +2 1/2	11/4
15	Brooklyn	1924	Aug. 25	Sept. 6 (1G)	3 rd -7 1/2	1 st +1/2	3/12
15	Chicago	1936	June 4	June 21 (1G)	4 th -8	2 nd -1/2	11/4
15	New York	1936	Aug.11	Aug. 28	3 rd -4 1/2	1 st +3	7/8

(*) Streak includes one tie game.

(E) Streak continued through the final game of the season.