

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

ON THE COMING INCONGRUITY OF LEAGUE RECORDS

As we all know, baseball's new labor agreement includes a provision for interleague play in 1997 and 1998. I'm assuming the interleague games will draw well and be very popular with many fans. I'm assuming also that they will continue beyond 1998, with the number of interleague games increasing over time. Furthermore, it is no longer inconceivable, as new teams are added, that in not too many years baseball will realign itself in a way that places what are now National League and American League teams in the same division. I consider the possibility of the Cleveland Indians and the Cincinnati Reds competing for a Division title no less likely than the possibility of them competing in a regular season game was ten years ago. The point is that whether as individuals we are for or against these notions is no longer relevant. One is already here and the other may soon be on the way. As people concerned with baseball records, we must decide how to deal intelligently and consistently with the new categories of statistics that these games will generate.

I don't know how much thought the baseball establishment has given to the effect that interleague play (or interleague realignment) will have on league records, or if they even care. But I've been thinking about all the statistics that are going to be out of balance, and I'm sure you have too. For instance, if Andy Pettitte strikes out 21 New York Mets one night this June, he will hold the American League record for most strikeouts in a game. Yet the Seattle Mariners and Detroit Tigers will still hold the record for most strikeouts by an American League team's batters, with 20. The Mets would hold the National League record for most strikeouts by a team's batters with 21, yet no National League pitcher has ever struck out more than 19 in one game. Many other examples exist, and this one may be far from the best, but you get the idea.

The question now becomes one of incorporating the present changes, and quite possibly even more revolutionary ones in the near future, into a system that has remained basically unchanged for more than a century. How do we recognize the game's new realities while maintaining respect for its accumulated knowledge and valued traditions? Obviously, something has to give, and perhaps that something should be the de-emphasizing of National and American League records for the increasingly meaningful designation "Major League records." I grant you this is a radical idea, yet it is one that seems especially appropriate for career records in a time when so few players spend an entire career in just one league. Think about how representative of their abilities the National or American League career totals for players like Frank Robinson, Dave Winfield, or Dennis Martinez are as compared to their major league career totals. Hoyt Wilhelm, who pitched in both leagues, doesn't hold the record in either one for most games pitched. However, he does hold the major league record, which to me seems much more significant.

As for individual season marks, am I the only one who finds Willie McGee's 1990 NL batting title somewhat suspect. McGee, you may remember, was batting a league-leading .335 when the Cardinals traded him to the Athletics late in the season. McGee batted .274 for the A's, which brought his combined season's average down to .324. Nevertheless, because his National League numbers were "frozen," he was recognized as the league batting champion although three other National Leaguers had higher averages. But why should his numbers have been frozen? McGee didn't go to some higher or lower league; he continued to bat against major league pitching in Oakland.

LA's Eddie Murray (.330) had the highest batting average in the big leagues in 1990, but McGee and George Brett (.329) won the batting titles. A similar thing happened to David Cone in 1992. Cone had the most strikeouts (261), but because he split them between the Mets and Toronto, Randy Johnson (241) and John Smoltz (215) won the strikeout titles. Or take the case of Hank Borowy in 1945. Borowy was a twenty-game winner (21-7) and one of the best pitchers in baseball that year. But you have to check the footnotes to find that he won 21 games. According to AL records he was a 10-game winner (10-5 with the Yankees) and according to the NL he was an 11-game winner (11-2 with the Cubs). Joe McGinnity (1902), Patsy Flaherty (1904), and Rick Sutcliffe (1984) are other 20th century 20-game winners who've ended up as footnotes because they pitched for clubs in both leagues that year.

Individual game records by league may be the most easily convertible to major league records. I don't think much would be lost if instead of listing the Braves' Eddie Moore and the Yankees' Willie Randolph as the NL and AL second

baseman with the most chances accepted in an extra-inning game, the Record Books listed them as the two leaders in that department. Maybe they could list the top five, regardless of league. That actually would be more informative.

Look, I realize that circumstances like the Murray and Cone examples are anomalies, something we could easily live with if the leagues continued to retain their historically separate identities. But are they? Is it an "American League" game when Detroit is playing St. Louis, or San Francisco, or Pittsburgh? I don't even want to think about Mexico City and Tokyo. What I have proposed above is really an attempt to begin a discourse with one possible approach, a far from ideal one. For one it would only work well if both leagues played by the same rules. That, of course, means the DH. I've never liked it, and I would hope the AL dumps it. But if they don't, I'd rather see the NL adopt it then go on as we have for the past 24 years. For example, as things stand an AL pitcher would find it extremely difficult to lead the majors in earned run average.

Ultimately, it will be the leagues and the commercial record books and encyclopedias that decide how to classify the records set in and affected by interleague games. That's as it should be. Nevertheless, I think the voice of the Records Committee should also be heard, and I welcome your comments on this proposal and any others you have on the subject.

MORE ON RBI'S BY LEADOFF HITTERS

In the last newsletter, I reported Madison McEntire's "Runs Batted In Highlights From 1996." One of Madison's items, the one that said Brady Anderson had 100 RBI's from the leadoff position to set a major league record, is incorrect. (Unfortunately, it was reprinted in the January 1997 SABR Bulletin.) Thanks to Bill Deane and Herm Krabbenhoft, both long-time followers of leadoff batting achievements, we finally determined that only 69 of Anderson's 110 RBI's came as a leadoff hitter. Bill sent a day-by-day listing of Anderson's at-bats, runs, hits, home runs, and rbi's. Herm, the first to ascertain the correct number for Anderson's leadoff RBI's, also sent the date, inning, opposing pitcher, and out-on base situation for each of the 35 home runs that Anderson hit from the number-one slot in the batting order. Anderson's 35 home runs broke Tommy Harper's American League record of 31 set in 1970, when Harper played for the Milwaukee Brewers, and it tied Bobby Bonds's major league mark set as a member of the 1973 Giants. Thanks also to Mike Attiyeh for first calling my attention to the problem and to Bill Stetka, of the Orioles public relations department, for his cooperation. The record for the most RBI's from the leadoff position still belongs to Harvey Kuenn of the 1956 Detroit Tigers with 85 (of his total 88).

SOME OTHER FOLLOW-UPS TO THE LAST NEWSLETTER

Frank Williams wants to add the San Francisco Giants to his list of teams that squandered big leads. The 1993 Giants had a ten-game lead over Atlanta on July 22, but finished a game behind the Braves. That ties the 1979 Astros for the biggest lead blown in National League division-play. No one had an answer to Walt Wilson's question concerning the switch-pitching of Ed Summers, but William Ruiz pointed out that Summers is one of the few players to have hit just two career home runs with both coming in the same game. William says also that Keith Hernandez (1986 Game 7) is the only player to bat three times with the bases loaded in one World Series game. Scratch Tony Lazzeri from that list.

THE LEGENDARY ROB DEER

In February 1996, I passed along Tim Kurkjian's "I wonder" question as to whether Rob Deer had surreptitiously surpassed Dick Allen's listed career record of 15 four-strikeout games. No one seemed to know and the question remained unanswered. Then, in November, an item I saw in a daily baseball calendar said that Deer had struck out four times in a game 17 times. I sent the item to Craig Carter, editor of The Sporting News Complete Baseball Record Book, for his consideration while cautioning him that I had on several occasions seen items in this calendar that I knew were mistaken. Craig said he knew of 14 such games through the 1992 season, but did not have any information for 1993. If we could come up with the additional three games, he said, he would gladly change the all-time leader from Allen to Deer. I casually mentioned this exchange to Dave Smith of Retrosheet, forgetting that Dave never takes casually any opportunity to demonstrate how valuable Retrosheet has become to us all. The next day I had the three 1993 games in which Deer struck out four times. Deer started the 1993 season with Detroit and was traded to Boston on August 21. His four-strikeout games in 1993 (all with the Tigers) were on April 7 in Oakland, May 12 in Toronto and August 5 in Cleveland. Deer did not play in the majors in 1994-1995, although he did play some last season.

THE YOUNG AND THE OLD

Recently, I got a letter asking for the youngest and oldest players to accomplish certain home run feats. I checked with Bob Davids and Dave Vincent who combined to supply the following lists. Bob threw in the steals of home as a bonus. Players' ages are listed in years and months except for "Lead the League in HR's," which is in years only.

Category	Youngest
Hit a Home Run	Tommy Brown; BKL (NL); August 20 1945; 17-8
Hit a Grand Slam HR	Tony Conigliaro; BOS (AL); June 3, 1964; 19-5
Hit an Inside-the-Park HR	Pat Callahan; IND (AA); July 6, 1884; 17-9
Hit a Pinch Hit HR	Gerry Moses; BOS (AL); May 25, 1965; 18-9:
Lead the League in HR's	Tony Conigliaro; BOS (AL); 1965; age 20
Steal home	Tommy Brown; BKL (NL); August 28 1945; 17-8

Mel Ott; NY (NL) July 18, 1927; 18-4 is the youngest 20th century player to hit an inside-the-park HR.

Category	Oldest
Hit a Home Run	Jack Quinn; PHI (AL); June 27, 1930; 45-11
Hit a Grand Slam HR	Carlton Fisk; CHI (AL); October 3, 1991; 43-9
Hit an Inside-the-Park HR	Jim O'Rourke; WAS (N); June 9, 1893; 42-9
Hit a Pinch Hit HR	Jim McGuire; BOS (AL); July 25, 1907; 43-8
Lead the League in HR's*	Cy Williams; PHI (NL); 1927; age 39
Steal home	Jimmy Austin; STL (AL); September 26, 1926; 46-10

Honus Wagner; PIT (NL); July 1, 1916; 42-7 is the oldest 20th century player to hit an inside-the park HR.

*Tied for the HR lead with Hack Wilson.



TOMMY BROWN



CY WILLIAMS

A REVISION TO BURT SHOTTON'S PLAYING RECORD

In researching his article on "Leading Leadoff Hitters" (1910-1919), which appears in the Winter 1996 edition of *Baseball Quarterly Reviews*, Herm Krabbenhoft encountered an error in Burt Shotton's 1916 playing record. That season, Shotton, known to those of us who grew up in Brooklyn in the late 1940's as "Kindly old Burt Shotton," was an outfielder for the St. Louis Browns. He is credited by the three major encyclopedias: *Total Baseball IV*, *The Baseball Encyclopedia* (10th edition), and *The Sports Encyclopedia--Baseball, 1996* with having played in 157 of the Browns' 158 games in 1916. But Herm has determined that he played in only 156 games that year. All newspaper sources, along with Shotton's official day-by-day record at the Hall of Fame, agree that he missed the games of June 9 and June 10 after suffering a broken nose in batting practice on June 8. (That game was eventually rained out.) The source of the error, that is the additional game, is from a doubleheader the Browns played against Philadelphia on July 26. Box scores from *The St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, and *The Sporting News* all show Shotton going 0-3 in the first game and 0-4 in the second game. However, on his day-by-day sheet at Cooperstown there are three entries for July 26. The first two agree with the newspaper accounts of games one and two, adding that Shotton had one walk and two strikeouts in each game. The third entry is a repeat of the second: 0-4, one walk and two strikeouts. The error, as Herm points out, is similar to the 1910 error in Ty Cobb's record where the results of one game were entered twice on his day-by-day sheet. Therefore, these changes should be made to Burt Shotton's 1916 and lifetime records.



BURT SHOTTON

Category	Incorrect 1916	Correct 1916	Incorrect Lifetime	Correct Lifetime
Games	157	156	1388	1387
At Bats	618	614	4949	4945
Walks	111	110	714	713
Strikeouts	67	65	382*	380*
Batting Average	.282	.283	.270	.271
Slugging Average	.343	.345	.333	.333

*Does not include Shotton's first three seasons: 1909, 1911 and 1912.

Shotton's four fewer at-bats and one fewer walk in 1916 do not affect his position as the American League's leader in those departments. However his walk total should be corrected in the league-leaders sections of the encyclopedias and in *The Sporting News Complete Baseball Record Book* and *The Elias Book of Baseball Records*.

How the adjustments to Shotton's numbers affect the season totals for the Browns, and for the league, we leave to the encyclopedias to assess. By the way, in that second game, Shotton had no putouts assists or errors in left field, so his fielding statistics are unchanged.

Herm would like to thank Keith Carlson, Bill Deane, and Jim Smith, each of whom provided valuable assistance in discovering and correcting this error.