

KELTNER'S HOT CORNER



Ken Keltner Badger State Chapter

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Upcoming Events

SABR Board Candidates Forum
Wednesday, April 10 @ 7 PM CT
Zoom Registration [Here](#)

Old Time Ballplayers Jamboree
Thur. April 18
New Berlin Ale House
Info: Contact [Greg Ebbert](#)

Keltner Spring Meeting
Saturday, May 18 @ 11 AM
J&B's Blue Ribbon Bar & Grill

Virtual Meeting with Lee Kluck
Author of a new book on
Harry Dalton
Thursday, May 30 @ 7PM CT
Zoom Info in May *Hot Corner*

SABR 52

August 7 - 11

Direct questions or comments to:
Dennis D. Degenhardt
bovine9@icloud.com • 262-339-9968

Baseball is Back!

NEW MEMBERS

Caleb Heneghan – University of Wisconsin
Braden Gasser – UW – Oshkosh
Mike Lessiter – Brookfield
Dominic Goodenough – South Milwaukee

UPCOMING EVENTS

Spring Chapter Meeting
Saturday, May 18 @ 11 AM
[J&B's Blue Ribbon Bar & Grill](#)
5230 W Bluemound, Milwaukee



Special Guests: Mario Ziino, Ken Bartelt, and Lee Kluck

Join us for our Ken Keltner Spring Chapter Meeting at J&Bs on Saturday, May 18th. We will meet as usual at 11 AM and anticipate running until about 3:00 with lunch off the menu.

Do you want to talk baseball? How about Brewers baseball? Then [Mario Ziino](#) fills the bill. Ziino spent over 25 years

with the team as Director of Publications and Assistant Director of Media Relations and has written about the Brewers for 40 years including [Bud Selig's SABR BioProject](#) which appeared in [Harvey's Wallbangers The 1982 Milwaukee Brewers](#). He has been around thousands of players, managers, coaches, front office personnel, ownership, sportswriters, and fans. Mario has all kinds of stories and opinions about the game. He is also a member of our Baseball Memories Team.



Most of the local SABR members are aware of Milwaukee's Negro League team, the Bears, who played in 1923. Unfortunately, we have not done much research to learn more. We have a newer member who has, **Ken Bartelt**, a PhD candidate in History at UWM studying



the intersection of race/ethnicity and baseball in the United States. His master's thesis, supervised by our old friend Neal Pease, titled *Brew City Black Ball: Milwaukee as Microcosm of the Early-Twentieth Century Black Baseball Experience* was about Milwaukee's two Negro League teams, yes two and more. He is also volunteers and coachs with Milwaukee's [Beckum-Stapleton Little League](#) and is working on a public history project that may become his PhD dissertation. Ken has a very interesting presentation based on his research including Milwaukee history.

Ken Keltner member, **Lee Kluck** has been working on a book for several year on the late Brewer's general manager, Harry Dalton, *Leave While the Party's Good: The Life and Legacy of Baseball Executive Harry Dalton*. And we have been waiting almost as long to read it. Good news the book will be here soon, publishing date schedule for June 1st. Dalton's major league career started with Baltimore before moving to Anaheim before finishing with Milwaukee. He was the mastermind behind the late 70's and early 80's Brewers culminating with the Crews only World Series appearance.



Lee will give us a preview of the book, his process, and the adventure of getting to know Harry Dalton and his family. We will hold a special drawing to give a copy of the book to an attendee.

And...

If you are unable to make the Spring Meeting, we will have a second opportunity to see Lee.

Virtual Meeting with Author Lee Kluck
Leave While the Party's Good: The Life and Legacy
of Baseball Executive Harry Dalton
Thursday May 30, 2024 @ 7 PM CT

Zoom info will be included in the May *Keltner Hot Corner*. Plus, we will give another copy of the book to an attendee of the Zoom meeting.

You can preorder the book at [Thrift Books](#), [Amazon](#), locally at [Boswell Books](#), and [University of Nebraska Press](#) or wherever you purchase your books.



Recap March Meeting

Scott Doffek – Retired UWM Baseball Coach



Stay Home With Scott Doffek: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee baseball coach

We had the pleasure of having Scott Doffek the retired baseball coach at UW-Milwaukee, the states only D1 baseball program, join the chapter on Thursday March 21. The coach spent 29 seasons with the Panthers, 12, as Assistant Head Coach under former Brewer [Jerry Augustine](#). During his tenure, the Panthers won 785 games, 438 as the Head Coach Doffek retired following the 2023 season.

Scott is a very thoughtful and humble person who talked about his four years in the Dodger's organization, he couldn't believe he was being paid to play baseball. Learn how and why he went into coaching, and you will hear his philosophy throughout the

video. He talked about the challenges of coaching in northern climates and how recruiting is now done nationwide, so sneaking in a Wisconsin recruit is tougher. Other topics included UWM's tournament game versus Rice in 1999, Daulton Varsho, how the game has changed and the usage of analytics. He was asked about the state of baseball in Wisconsin and how it has changed for the better. And the state of college baseball is also growing as is the cost to compete. What is he doing now, its baseball related. Plus, how has the college game changed and coaching, very interesting comments.

If you like good stories, a frank open discussion with a true coach putting the players first, you'll enjoy the recording. It's a recording I thoroughly enjoyed listening to again. Click on Scott's picture or [here](#) to listen to it.

Keltner Hot Corner Archives

You can now view or download past copies of the Keltner Hot Corner at: [Ken Keltner Badger State Newsletters](#)

Use of Links

Links in the *Keltner Hot Corner* are used to enhance the articles with the majority going to players SABR [BioProject](#) and [baseball-reference.com](#) as well as other related sites.

[Who is Ken Keltner? See his SABR Biography.](#)

**Recap Keltner Book Club Virtual Meeting
With Special Guest Mitch Nathanson
*Under Jackie's Shadow - Voices of Black Minor Leaguers Baseball Left Behind***



Author Mitch Nathanson joined our Zoom meeting on March 27 to discuss his book *Under Jackie's Shadow*, the first writer to make a second Keltner Book Club appearance. He joined us previously to talk about [Bouton: The Life of a Baseball Original!](#)

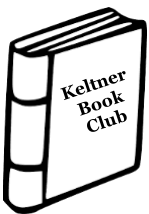
Attorney and Law Professor, Nathanson started with *Browns v Board of Education* which had a second portion where the states were required to make changes and failed to do so. His book picks up from there with 13 Black players during the 1960s and '70s. Some mentioned position discrimination, they couldn't be middle infielders but forced to 1B or the OF which he explains. They were held back in the minors to be there for other new Black players coming into baseball even though qualified to advance recognizing they weren't superstars but good players. They knew to advance to "Keep their mouths shut." It was a fascinating discussion on racism in the game really not that long ago. Mitch also discusses Branch Rickey who he thinks gets too much credit.

Visit [Nathanson's website](#), which includes info on this book, the author, and his other books.

Under Jackie's Shadow is available at Milwaukee's independent bookstore, [Boswell Books](#), as well as [Amazon](#) or wherever you buy your books. The winner of the drawing for a copy of the book was Jack Liebl.

To enjoy the recording, click on Mitch's picture or [here](#).

**Keltner Book Club News
By Mary Shea**



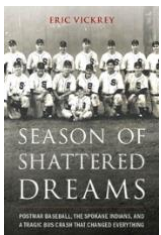
Hey Keltner Bookworms,

Here's a short list of suggested baseball books that will be published in the coming months, and also a new Wisconsin team announcement.

First, thanks again to Mitch Nathanson for a fascinating discussion about his new book, *Under Jackie's Shadow*. More info can be found on his [website](#). And here's a [link](#) to some of his scholarly works.

As mentioned in the Upcoming Events, Wisconsin SABR member Lee Kluck has a new book about Harry Dalton, *Leave While the Party's Good: The Life and Legacy of Baseball Executive Harry Dalton*, which is due to come out on June 1st. Lee gave an excellent virtual presentation during SABR Day in 2023.

Up for consideration as our next book club selection is Melissa Ludtke's *Locker Room Talk - A Woman's Struggle to Get Inside*, which is coming out in August. As a writer for *Sports Illustrated*, Ludtke sued for and won clubhouse access for female reporters. You can read more about her on her [website](#), and her book is available for preorder at [Boswell Books](#) and [Rutgers University Press](#). Watch for more details on a fall meeting.



There's also an interesting book coming out about a fatal bus crash involving the 1946 Spokane Indians, *Season of Shattered Dreams: Postwar Baseball, the Spokane Indians, and a Tragic Bus Crash That Changed Everything*. From the author, Eric Vickrey:

"It is being published by Rowman and Littlefield and tells the forgotten story of the Indians' 1946 accident in which nine players died. One of the players who survived was actually from Wisconsin. There are fascinating stories surrounding this tragedy which I bring to light in the book. "You can find more info on the author's [website](#).

Also, exciting news: collegiate softball is coming to the Midwest with four teams, including a team launched by the Madison Mallards of the Northwoods League. They'll be playing at the Duck Pond starting June 16th. The name of the team and their logo will be unveiled at an event at the Orpheum Theater on April 20th, at 5 PM. More info and the schedule can be found [here](#).

Is there a baseball book that really interests you? Consider doing a book club meeting! Please contact [Mary](#) or [Dennis](#) if you're interested.

No matter who you root for, I hope you enjoy the season, and happy reading! - Mary

April 4, 2024

Keltner's Hot Corner

DDD's Discursive



Dennis Pajot has a fun article this month, “A Trade Involving a Dog.” Pajot was concerned that the article may be a bit long, it wasn't, and I replied with my usual, it's music to my ears when articles are submitted but even if it had been long, how could I reject a story with that title. Thanks, Dennis.

I received an email from Keith O'Brien our February meeting guest informing us that the *Wall Street Journal* reviewed his new book *Charlie Hustle* calling it "[comprehensive, compulsively readable, and wholly terrific.](#)" Also he wrote a piece for *The Atlantic* “about the historical parallels of the Ohtani case about how the investigators who pursued Rose in 1989 have long predicted this current scandal.” That's why he recommends *Charlie Hustle* as a great read to start the 2024 baseball season—and also a perfect way to refresh your memory about baseball's last gambling crisis, 35 years ago.” You can order *Charlie Hustle* on [Amazon](#) or order signed copies [here](#).

Summertime is the time of year when we are all busy, vacations, ballgames to attend, just stuff to do. So, trying to schedule chapter meetings is a challenge. But can we get together to attend a game or two.

Last year we had a game in Fond du Lac and the year before we tried for Oconomowoc without any luck. And before that a successful Madison Mallards game. For 2024, as we continue our tour of Badger State baseball, how about the Green Bay Rockers, also in the Northwoods League or the Wisconsin Timber Rattlers in Appleton for our members in the Valley. And then maybe a Brewers game to?

Here's where I need your help. What is the interest in attending any of these games or a recommendation for another? When is it convenient for a game. Or not a good time. With some guidance, I will find some dates and see where it goes. Please [email](#) me your thoughts?

Our good friend, Adam McCalvy, has an article on a phone interview he conducted with Robin Yount on the 50th anniversary of his debut on April 5, 1974. Yes, the kid is 68! You can read the MLB.com post [here](#).



Keltner Chapter Wins SABR Local Grants

Dave Bancroft Local Grant Cemetery Acknowledgement

The Keltner Chapter was awarded an \$800 SABR Local Grant to place a small in-ground granite marker next to Hall of Famer Dave Bancroft's plot at Greenwood Cemetery in Superior.

What's this all about? Tom Alesia, the author of *Beauty at Short: Dave Bancroft, the Most Unlikely Hall of Famer and His Wild Times in Baseball's First Century*, is also a big fan working to keep the memory of the Hall of Famer alive. After helping Sioux Falls, Iowa, Bancroft's birthplace, with a marker, (see picture) he set his sights on Superior where Beauty is buried after living there for 60 years.

Bancroft does not have anything about his baseball career at the gravesite with the marker only stating, “He was a Good Husband.” Tom started researching and working with the cemetery to fix that receiving approval for a design last summer notifying visitors that he is a member of the Baseball Hall of Fame. He then turned to SABR for financial support completing the paperwork for a Local Grant to cover the cost. He was successful as we saw in *This Week in SABR*.



Alesia is now working with the monument maker and cemetery to finalize placement of the stone. When we have a dedication date, we will include that in the *Keltner Hot Corner*, hoping some SABR members can attend.

Thank you, Tom, for taking the initiative and obtaining the grants. We have watched other chapters receive grants over the last few years and proud to see the Keltner Chapter listed this year. But we all know it was really Tom Alesia.

Contribute to the Keltner Hot Corner

Do you have an article or topic you would like to publish in the newsletter? If so, that's great. Please contact [Dennis](#).

April 8th – 50th Anniversary of Aaron’s 715th homerun



Where were you 50 years ago on April 8^h when Henry Aaron swatted his 715th home run? What a special night and moment for Henry, baseball, and fans nationwide. Who better to recall the Hammer’s big night than rewatching the call by the late, great Vin Scully at 9:10 PM.

Moments to remember, Mrs. Aaron running to jump into her son’s arms and giving him a big kiss surrounded by his teammates. The Dodger opponents shaking his hand as he runs the bases. The look of relief on his face that the chase was finally over. And were you concerned for Hank’s safety when the two kids started chasing him around the bases?

You can relive that wonderful evening by clicking on the picture as Aaron lofts the ball towards the left field bullpen.

Get to Know

Get to Know...Bill Pearch

As avid baseball fans, we all can easily answer the question, what is your earliest baseball memory. The same applies to Bill Pearch who recalls, “I was in my basement in Westchester, Illinois watching Bozo on WGN when the Cubs game came on and I was mesmerized.” Did the Cubs save Pearch from a career of jumping out of small cars wearing a red nose and oversized shoes?

William Christopher Pearch, Bill, was born in Chicago on September 20, 1973 (The same day as The Battle of the Sexes tennis match between Billie Jean King and Bobby Riggs at the Houston Astrodome). He was the first of two children born to William J. Pearch and Mary ann¹ (Jaszczysyn) Pearch. His younger sibling is his sister Jessica. Both of Bill’s parents were educators. Mom started in home economics eventually transitioning to a special needs role while dad followed the traditional route as a principal, superintendent, and college professor.

Although Pearch started life in Chicago, he grew up in cities throughout Illinois as his father’s positions in education required relocating. His early years were in Westchester, as we learned, where he transitioned from Bozo to baseball. There was a brief stopover in Normal until they settled in Dwight² where his parents still reside. Bill’s education included several elementary schools finishing eighth grade at Dwight Grade School and then moving on to Dwight High School where he graduated in 1991.



He played baseball, from Little League in Westchester through high school mostly in the outfield. Bill’s most memorable game was when he hit two triples in the same inning playing on the Dwight Pony League team vs. Lexington, in 1990 - at Dwight. Pearch went out for football as a freshman but decide to play golf instead. “What was I thinking playing football at 5-foot, 1-inch?” He golfed through high school into his first year at Elmhurst College. He’s now a Sunday golfer, “I’m still waiting for my first hole-in-one. In 2023, I came about four feet from my first on #18 at Chick Evans in Morton Grove.”

No surprise, after being mesmerized by the Cubs as a youngster, he’s a fan of the Northsiders. But he grew up in an extended White Sox family much to his grandmother’s dismay. “My maternal grandmother said our family’s recessive gene kicked in with me.” Pearch’s favorite player was [Ryne Sandberg](#). Why? “He made the game look effortless in the field and at the plate.” The ChiSox family members appreciated his Cubs fandom. “The coolest thing my dad did for me was buying tickets for the two of us to see Sandberg’s final game at Wrigley Field in 1997.”

¹ Yes, Bill’s mom’s first name is two words with the lowercase “a”.

² Dwight is about 77 miles southwest of Chicago on I-55.

Following high school, Bill continued his education earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in Interdepartmental Communications.³ He then continued at Roosevelt University obtaining his Master's in Integrated Marketing Communications in 1998. "I was drawn to marketing communications because it was hyped as the "major of the '90s" and that every industry would need my skills. I wanted a career that required an element of creativity." Putting his knowledge to good use, Pearch has worked in marketing and communications since 1995. "I've held roles with suburban park districts, a community foundation and currently for an engineering firm."

While working at the Elmhurst Park District, Bill met Susan Wilson the daughter of one of his co-workers. They married in 2003. She works in compensation and is a Milwaukee Brewers fan. How did the family of Chicago baseball teams accept a Brewer fan? "My family loved it. My uncles instantly latched on to sharing stories of Molitor, Yount, and the '82 club." Although they don't have children, they enjoy eight nephews and one spoiled niece.

When did you join SABR and why? "I joined in late 2016 after the Cubs had a remarkable season. For way too many years, I assumed SABR was just an analytics organization. I was wrong. No matter how you enjoy baseball, there's a community for you." He serves as Secretary of the Emil Rothe Chapter and editor of their excellent newsletter. Bill has attended two SABR conventions, 2022 in Baltimore and Chicago in 2023. How were the events? "Absolutely fantastic experiences. Where else can you casually walk up to Bill James in a hallway and talk baseball for an hour? Pearch contributed to the Chicago convention issue of *The National Pastime*, "[Boodle and Barnstorming: When Politics and the National Pastime Convened in Dwight, Illinois.](#)"

In addition to being active with his primary chapter, Bill has authored three SABR BioProject articles, including long time Braves pitching coach [Leo Mazzone](#) that appeared in the SABR BioProject book, "[Braves Win! The 1995 World Champion Atlanta Braves.](#)" When he saw SABR was looking for writers for the book and Mazzone was available, he snatched him up, "He seemed like such a quirky guy, there had to be an equally bizarre story to share." Bill also penned biographies on two obscure characters from Dwight, Illinois, [Colonel Frank L. Smith](#) and [Eddie Higgins](#). "I had no idea about the town's rich baseball history when I lived there. My writing has led to volunteering with the Dwight Historical Society to help them uncover the community's baseball stories." Bill also wrote a Games Project article on [September 6, 1918](#), the second game of the WWI World Series, a game won by the Cubs.



Pearch is working on a spring training game story for an upcoming SABR book. "I'm sharing the story about when our nephew was a bat boy during a Brewers-Padres spring game in 2011." He's also writing the SABR biography of Doc Marshall, a backup catcher on the 1908 Chicago Cubs.

Does Bill have any special or unique baseball interests? Yes. "I enjoy Chicago Cubs history, but I've developed a unique interest in Deadball Era baseball. I never expected to follow that path for research projects. That's inspired me to tell stories about people and players who never truly had the opportunity to share their own stories."

"I would like to see Gabby Hartnett's "[Homer in the Gloamin](#)," if Bill had a time machine moment. "It's a must-see event. Just how dark was it at Wrigley Field that afternoon?"

What else would you like us to know? "I've been able to attend games at 40 different MLB parks." And final words of wisdom? "Getting involved with SABR was such a wonderful experience. I've been fascinated to learn about so many people and their unique connections with the game."

Do you have a baseball story – everyone does!

We all have great baseball stories, often shared with family and friends for years. So, when will you share it with your SABR family? We all love stories and want you to share yours with all of us.

If you're ready to share yours, contact [Dennis](#).

Random Facts/Thoughts on Strikeouts and Home Runs

by Tom Rathkamp

Fans, former players, and media often grouse about the meteoric rise in strikeouts over the last few decades, corresponding to an increase in home runs over a similar span. Strikeout rates have increased steadily since the 1970's. The biggest spikes occurred in the late 90's and persisted into the 2000's. North of 20,000 strikeouts for the AL and NL are now commonplace.

Facts:

- 1953 was the first year the NL surpassed 1,000 home runs (**1,197**). In the AL, it was 1956 (**1,075**). For perspective, the 2023 totals were **2,943** for the NL and **2,925** for the AL.
- In 1976, the total number of strikeouts in the majors was **18,745**. In 2023, there were **41, 626**.
- In 2023, the Milwaukee Brewers strikeout rate was **23.2%**. Ten years earlier in 2013, it was **19.5%**. This isn't just a Brewers trend. From 2005-2009, the league strikeout rate increased by **9.7%**.
- In 2005, the strikeout rate was **16.4%**. In 2021, it was **24.1%**. A 2021 study by FanGraphs revealed that the strikeout rate when there are TWO strikes was increasing, but at a slower rate than in other ball-strike counts.
- In 2023, the AL surpassed the 21,000 mark for the second time with **21,261** (good for a **24.5%** strikeout rate). The NL record is **21, 415** in 2019. The leagues have crawled towards this trend for years. The 2023 Minnesota Twins hold the record for most strikeouts as a team with **1,654** (a whopping **10** whiffs per game). They still managed an **87-75** record. Twins Manger Rocco Baldelli offered this:



“The strikeouts, they are an issue and there’s no way around that,” Twins manager Rocco Baldelli said Tuesday night. “I think I’d be sitting here feeding you something if I told you it wasn’t something that we’re thinking about and talking about because we can say, ‘Oh yeah, we can still be productive and strike out.’ But I think the consistency at which we’re not making the decisions that we want at the plate, it has to change because I think it actually kind of bleeds over a little bit into just the quality of the types of at-bats that we’re having.”

- 2018 was the first season in MLB history when there were MORE strikeouts than hits. One can hardly find a better indicator for this meteoric trend. During that season, the overall batting average reached its lowest level since 1972 – the year before the AL implemented the DH. (Ironically, in the 1990s when strikeout rates really soared, batting averages also increased.)
- In Game 7 of the 1960 World Series in which the Pirates beat the Yankees 10-9, there were NO strikeouts. Game 1 of the Reds-Braves wild-card series in 2020, which lasted 13 innings, saw a combined **37** strikeouts.
- In 2023, the Phillies Kyle Schwarber clouted **47** home runs and drove in **104** – all while sporting a **.197** batting average (albeit a **.343** on-base percentage). He whiffed **215** times and walked **126** times. Does any player exemplify the modern hitter more than him?
- 2018 was the first full season in MLB history in which NO team ever went an entire game without striking out.

Thoughts:

Any historical trend involves a myriad of causes, including – but not limited to – smaller ballparks, the use of aluminum bats in college (more on this later), cavernous strike zones, and more flame-throwing arms. The simple fact that more players “try” to hit home runs leads to the confidence that the probability of success is real.

- **Defense:** With the prevalence of high strikeout rates, logic says that defense is not quite as vital as it used to be. Sure, when the ball is put in play, defense needs to make plays. Higher walk rates have eaten into the hit totals. In those instances, defense with runners on base is heightened; still somewhat diminished by the dearth of stolen bases and station-station offense.
- **Launch Angles:** The tracking of “launch angles” has been interesting. Tracking something and

implementing something are two different things. It's not unreasonable to conclude that hitters employ more of an upward path when swinging. They also have their hands more "up" than "back." We no longer have home run specialists such as Rob Deer and Dave Kingman (similar to basketball, which had three-point specialists). Nearly every hitter can park a baseball over the fence.

- **Oh Yeah, Pitching:** More pitchers are throwing harder and harder, which has probably led to more strikeouts "and" home runs. With more pitchers appearing in a game, no starter logs 300 innings anymore, barely even 200. Stick-out-the-bat opposite field dingers are also more prevalent. Largely extinct are the days of "shortening" up a swing with two strikeouts. In *The Bill James Historical Abstract* in his views on the 1990s, the author suggested that because there are more pitchers used in a game, the quality of pitching has suffered. This might have been truer back then. In my view, hitters have to do more "adjusting" to different pitchers within a game, which might negate some of a hitters' advantage.
- **Band Box Ballparks:** There is little doubt that smaller ballparks have nurtured the home run surge. There are exceptions, but we are a far cry from the gigantic dimensions of Ebbets Field and Shibe Park. We already know that, in most sports, changes benefit the offense (see the NFL). Lots of doubles, home runs, and strikeouts, what Whitey Herzog coined "sit-on-your-ass baseball."
- **Aluminum Bats:** What? How would bats not allowed in the majors affect hitting and pitching? Years ago, hitters were universally taught to A) lay off the high stuff, and B) don't fish for the outside pitches. Pitchers pounded the inside of the strike zone. However, since aluminum bats were introduced into college ball, brushback pitches waned because inside pitches have less of an effect on those bats (i.e., the handle side is less susceptible than with a wood bat.) Consequently, an entire generation of pitchers never learned how to bust a hitter inside. To hitters, the outside pitches they previously shunned now look juicier because hitters stand on top of the plate.
- **Player Physiques and Training:** It's no secret that players are in better shape than in the good ole days. Weight training and the like are commonplace now, especially with the exorbitant salaries of today; human assets must be preserved. Of course, weightlifting was always deemed taboo because a tightly wound ballplayer was counterproductive. One such victim was Ruben Sierra, considered by some to be the next Roberto Clemente. Someone never told him "everything in moderation."
- **Entertainment Value:** This varies from fan to fan, but as a longtime baseball fan, I am enjoying the game less and less. I try not to fall into the old man's claim that "nothing is as good as it used to be." However, I had similar sentiments in men's tennis years ago, when exciting rallies gave way to 130 mph serves, resulting in quicker points. Scott Bradley, baseball coach at Princeton, agrees:

"I love baseball," Bradley said, "but there are times I won't watch it because it's a little dull."

- In a 2021 article for ESPN.com, Tim Kurkjian wrote this:
 1. Pitchers' stuff is spectacular. It is violent and, when located properly, largely unhittable.
 2. Many pitchers hunt strikeouts; hitters don't care if they strike out as long as they hit.
 3. The baseball industry has taught, encouraged and incentivized players to play this style.
- Here is another viewpoint by a longtime baseball executive in 2018:

"Years ago, if a player had more strikeouts than hits, they didn't get out of Class A ball," said Dan Duquette, the Baltimore Orioles' executive vice president of baseball operations, who went on to suggest his solution.

Ted Williams had some good ideas: three balls and you go to first base; make home plate smaller so you don't have to defend as much territory," Duquette said.

"It's something to consider, because, really, it's an entertainment business, right? That's what the fans want to see. It's a good place to start the discussion. Who am I to argue with the greatest hitter that ever lived?"

Baseball will never go back to the pre-whiff, pre-power surge time period. As fans, we either accept it or find another hobby. The mere suggestion is blasphemous. (My apologies to my baseball brethren who read these pages.)

SABR Baseball Memories Program - 2023



In the summer and fall of 2023, on the recommendation of chapter president Dennis Degenhardt, the Ken Keltner chapter initiated a Baseball Memories Program with the Wisconsin Alzheimer's Association serving as a co-sponsor thanks to Executive Director David Grams. The purpose of the program is to engage senior baseball fans dealing with the effects of dementia and, using baseball as a topic of reminiscence, to stimulate pleasant memories as a means of enhancing their quality of life.

After establishing a team of volunteers, we held three sessions at the Azura Memory Care and Assisted Living facility in Fox Point, WI, in October, November, and December. The sessions were attended by six or seven participants, all baseball fans recruited by the staff at Azura, and ran for one hour. Our volunteer team included Dennis Degenhardt, Sue Shemanske, Mario Ziino, Mary Shea, Gael Cullen, Judy Scott, and me.

The first meeting, which was discussed in some detail in the September 2023 Keltner Hot Corner newsletter, focused on getting to know the participants and making them feel comfortable with us. We wanted to make it clear that we were there to speak *with* them, not to them, and that we were all there for the same reason: our love of baseball.

Since most of our participants were Brewers fans, our second session focused on the 1982 season, particularly the ALCS championship game and the World Series. We began by playing a video of the Brewers' former theme song, "Brewer Fever," then showed brief videos from the dramatic final game of the ALCS and asked participants to share their memories of the game.

Knowing that music is a good means of stimulating engagement, our "Seventh Inning Stretch" featured a video of Miller Park fans singing "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" and "Roll Out the Barrell" while we and the participants all sang along. In the second half of the program, we showed slides of that season's infielders, outfielders, and pitchers, asking participants to identify their favorite players.

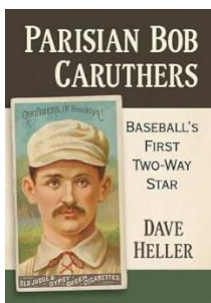
For our third session we decided to focus on music and humor. We opened with "Joltin' Joe DiMaggio," a major hit song from 1941, the year of his 56-game hitting streak, followed by John Fogerty's "Centefield." We then showed "Baseball Bugs," a 1946 Looney Tunes cartoon in which Bugs Bunny single-handedly defeats a team of ruffians called the Gas-House Gorillas. Then, turning to TV, we showed a 1963 episode of *Mister Ed*, in which the talking horse and his owner, Wilbur, are visiting with Dodgers manager Leo Durocher at Dodgers Stadium. In the closing scene, Ed, wielding a bat in his mouth, hits an inside the park home run off Sandy Koufax. Both the cartoon and the TV video generated lots of laughs from participants, which was very rewarding.

Following our usual sing-along during the "Seventh-Inning Stretch," we finished with a video of Robin Yount's 3,000th hit. Most of the participants selected Yount as their favorite Brewer.

While the Baseball Memories experience was new and challenging for each of us, we discovered that, as the Azura residents became more familiar and comfortable with us, their participation increased in each successive session. The program couldn't have succeeded without the invaluable support of Bridgette Bartlett, Azura's Quality of Life Director. She recruited the participants, sat in on each of our sessions, and provided valuable advice throughout.

We look forward to returning to Azura this year, as well as beginning a series of sessions for the first time at St. John's on the Lake in downtown Milwaukee.

Larry Baldassaro
Local Leader, Baseball Memories Program



Ken Keltner Member Has New Book

Dave Heller has another new fascinating book. From the book blurb:

Before Shohei Ohtani and Babe Ruth there was Robert Lee "Parisian Bob" Caruthers (1865-1911). A wunderkind pitcher and right fielder known throughout the country, he was the star on the mound for five league championships in 10 years, and one of two players in history--along with Ruth--to lead the Major Leagues in ERA+ (adjusted earned run average) and OPS+ (on-base plus slugging plus).

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A Trade Involving a Dog By Dennis Pajot

With the 2024 baseball season about to begin, trades will be part of the news on sports pages. Trades are always of interest. Some are to improve a team. Some are for financial reasons. Others are for—well, read on.

On October 9, 1902, Joe Cantillon was signed to manage the Milwaukee Brewers of the American Association for the 1903 season. The Brewers would finish the season in third place, with a 77 and 60 record. The following story takes place late in the 1903 season, or spring 1904—if it did in fact happen. Joe Cantillon was born in Janesville, Wisconsin, but by 1903 made his home in Chicago. In 1910 Cantillon was managing the Minneapolis Millers. Alonzo Hedges, was 26 years old in 1903, and started the season with the Paducah Chiefs in the Kitty League.

On December 11, 1910, the *Milwaukee Sentinel* ran the following story in sportswriter Manning Vaughan's Diamond Small Talk column.



Charles Sheldon Havenor, boss of the Brewers, has a picture on his desk of Joe Cantillon and his favorite hunting dog. One of Uncle Sam's mercurys brought the photo in the other morning along with a letter from the Minneapolis wizard.

"The mother of the dog on the picture is the one I received in exchange for Alonzo Hedges, the pitcher," penned the card. And thereby hangs a tale.

During the pennant race of '03 when Cantillon was manager of the Brewers, half his pitching staff was on the ailing list and he was burning up the telegraph wires with C.Q.D. messages. But the help did not show up and as a last resort he decided to give [Alonzo] Hedges a trial.

Hedges had been recommended by a friend of Joe's in Paducah, Ky. He was a long, lean southerner with the dimensions of a lemonade straw and a thirst like a Pittsburg millionaire. He blew into town and Joe was so pinched for boxmen that he grabbed Hedges off the train and stuck him on the rubber the day he reached here. Much to everyone's surprise, the slat pitched a wonderful game, holding Columbus to one hit and shutting them out.

"Pitched great ball today, kid," piped Joe after the game, in the clubhouse.

"Only faih, sah, only faih," drawled the Kentuckian. "If Ah had been suah that catchah could hold me, Ah wouldn't have allowed a hit, sah."

A few days later Joe trotted out the "phenom" again, and sure enough he pitched another wonderful game, holding the opposition to two or three hits and scoring another shutout. By this time the papers were raving over him, and a big crowd turned out to see him when he went on the slab for the third time. Naturally, every one was looking for something that would put Matty to shame. But shades of Frank Schneiberg, what a drubbing! They biffed them on the nose, broke down the fences and did everything but kill all the fielders. Joe let him take the medicine for three or four innings, and then yanked him out. He was sent back a few days later and the bombardment was renewed with increased fury. It was the same thing the next time.

A couple of days later Cantillon went to Springfield, Ill., to see a friend of his who owned the Springfield club and ran a café on the side. During the course of the afternoon the friend showed Joe a couple of dandy setter puppies.

"Fine pups," quoth Joe, and he began to think. "O, by the way, have you a pitcher you can let us have," asked the Springfield man. Joe was all business in an instant and he offered to sell Hedges.

"What do you want for him?" questioned the minor leaguer.

"Well, you're a good friend of mine, etc., so if you are willing I'll let you have this fellow for one of those dogs," answered generous (?) robin redbreast. The bargain was made then and there.

Mr. Hedges may not have been much of a bear cat as a pitcher, but he probably has the distinction of being the only ball player in captivity ever traded for a dog.¹

BOW, WOW, WOW, THIS TWIRLER
WAS TRADED FOR A DOG BY
THE NAME OF SUE--AL HEDGES



Milwaukee Journal, January 23, 1915

The story found its way into the press again a little over four years later. On January 20, 1915, *Milwaukee Sentinel* sportswriter J.J. Delany told his readers that Joe Cantillon had told him a dozen times how he had traded Hedges to Dick Kinsella of the Springfield club for a bird dog. According to Delany, Hedges was never worth a rip to Kinsella, but the dog was a valuable setter. Cantillon often laughed loud and long over the trade, readers were told.²

Three days later the *Milwaukee Journal*, published another version of Joe Cantillon's trading of Hedges for a canine. Joe Holland, who had been the secretary of the Brewers in 1903, remembered the incident and talked about it. Holland's version was a little different from the other two. He told the *Journal* the trade happened during Hedges' second season with the Brewers. On a cold, rainy day, Cantillon sent Hedges out to warm up during the game. This affected the youngster's arm and he was of little use after that. The Brewers were playing spring games with the Springfield (Illinois) club of the Three-I League at that time and Frank Donnelly, who was managing the Springfield club, wanted a pitcher. Here is the rest of the story, directly from the *Journal*:

During the three visits to the Illinois city, Cantillon, accompanied by Holland went out to Donnelly's farm, where he had a number of English bull terriers. Cantillon took a fancy to one of the dogs and told Donnelly that he wanted it.

Frank soon told him that the dog was worth \$250 and then Joe wanted the dog worse than ever. Frank informed Joe that he wanted a pitcher and Cantillon, calling Holland aside, informed him that he was going to trade Hedges for the dog. No sooner said than done and the deal was closed on the spot. The dog was brought to Milwaukee, where Cantillon gave her the name of "Sue". The dog is still with Cantillon and can be seen at the Minneapolis ball park.

Holland has one of the pups and says that he never saw a finer dog. When the team came home, the late owner, Charles Havenor, of the club, called Cantillon into the office one day and informed him that the club had never been paid for Hedges. When he asked Cantillon about it, Joe told him that he got "Sue" for the pitcher. Havenor nearly fell of his chair, says Holland but that everything came out all right in the end.³

The reason these last two stories were in the press was a lawsuit in regard to the Federal League. Pitcher Mordecai Brown had recently submitted an affidavit in Chicago that Joe Cantillon once traded a professional ball player for a bulldog. Brown also claimed that Roger Bresnahan, while manager of the St. Louis Cardinals, traded a pitcher named Hopper to Richard Kinsella, the Springfield manager, for a bird dog.⁴

The above three stories in the Milwaukee newspapers named the seller of the dog as: (1) the owner of the Springfield club, who also ran a café on the side; (2) Dick Kinsella, owner of the Springfield club; and (3) Frank Donnelly, manager of the Springfield club. It could be the 1915 versions were a mixing of Mordecai Brown's affidavit, which told of two separate incidents—one being Cantillon's trading a player for a dog; the other Bresnahan trading Bill Hopper to Kinsella for a dog. But the original 1910 story, that reported the (unnamed) owner of the Springfield club sold the dog, was printed four years before Brown's affidavit was given.

So, was this trade for a dog really made, and, if so, with whom?



ALONZO HEDGES.
(The Paducah (Ky.) Boy, Who Is Pitching
Great Ball for the Brewers.)
Photo by Klein & Gattensett.

Looking for the truth, or at least some clarity on the differing stories, I checked what contemporary sources I could find on Hedges and the trade. Alonzo Hedges had played for the Paducah Chiefs earlier in 1903 and had been signed by the Brewers in late June. His first game was not against Columbus, as stated in the 1910 account, but in relief against Louisville. He did pitch well, and the Brewers won the contest.⁵ The game described in the 1910 article may have been on July 22, 1903. In the second game of a doubleheader against Columbus Alonzo Hedges pitched no-hit ball for 8 and 2/3 innings. However, the next Columbus hitter sent a sizzling shot through the pitcher's box and past second base to ruin the no-hit bid. The Brewers won the game 2 to 0.⁶

Hedges posted a 5 and 4 record in 13 games for Milwaukee in 1903. Unlike the original story, Hedges actually finished the 1903 season with the Brewers and reported to spring training 1904 with Cantillon's team. This corresponds with the second version of the story, in the 1915

Milwaukee Journal. It appears everyone was not as down on the pitcher as later stories tell us. There appeared to have been interest in Hedges during the off season. The *Paducah Sun* reported on January 6, 1904, that the

St. Louis Browns wanted Hedges and he was conferring with the club. There was also a report that the pitcher had been sold to the Cincinnati Reds but Hedges himself said he had heard nothing about this. The January minor league bulletin confirmed Hedges signed a 1904 contract with the Milwaukee Brewers.⁷

In April of 1904 the Brewers played four exhibition games with the Springfield team, Hedges pitching in the last one. On April 23, 1904, the *Milwaukee Journal* reported Joe Cantillon had turned over Hedges and infielder John Hankey to the Springfield club of the Three-I League. The *Paducah Sun* of April 26 reported Hedges had been sold by the Brewers to Springfield. Of course, there was no mention of a dog in any of these reports.⁸

In September 1904 it was reported both Alonzo Hedges and John Hankey had been sold back by the Springfield club to the Brewers for \$500 each, the draft price.⁹ Could it have been Joe Cantillon sent Hedges (and Hankey) to Springfield to hide them from other teams and the draft, rather than his affection for a dog?

There seems to be enough information from people close to the Brewers, and to Joe Cantillon, for us to believe a trade was made that involved a dog. Exactly how it happened is lost to time, but why ruin a good story with exact facts?

- 1) *Milwaukee Sentinel*, December 11, 1910
- 2) *Milwaukee Sentinel*, January 20, 1915
- 3) *Milwaukee Journal*, January 23, 1915
- 4) *Milwaukee Journal*, January 23, 1915
- 5) *Milwaukee Sentinel* July 16, 1903; *Milwaukee Journal*, July 16, 1903
- 6) *Milwaukee Journal* July 23, 1903; *Milwaukee Sentinel* July 23, 1903
- 7) *Paducah Sun*, January 6, 1904; *Sporting Life*, January 16, 1904 p.7
- 8) *Milwaukee Journal*, April 19, 23, 1904; *Paducah Sun*, April 26, 1904
- 9) *Sporting Life*, September 27, 1904, p.1; November 12, 1904, p.6



Schabowski's Super Stumpers

April Trivia
By Rick Schabowski

Rick has another good assortment of trivia questions ready for you. And as usual they are thinkers and challenging.

1. Who are the two players in a World Series who hit home runs in their first two plate appearances?
2. Who is the last MLB player to reach double digit figures in career steals of home?
3. Who is the youngest HOF to start on Opening Day?
4. Who is the oldest HOF to start on Opening Day?
5. Which pitcher holds the record with 14-consecutive opening day starts?

Good Luck!

Do you have a baseball trivia question or two, to stump Our Stumper? If so, send your questions to [Rick](#) to trip him up and he'll include it in a future *Keltner Hot Corner* giving you credit AND bragging rights.

Trivia Answers are [here](#)



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April 4, 2024

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Contribute to the Keltner Hot Corner

Do you have an article or topic you would like to publish in the newsletter? If so, that's great. Please contact [Dennis](#).

Wisconsin Born Players SABR Bios

With the addition of the three new Wisconsin born major leaguers in 2023 there have been 257* total and 94 have SABB Bios written on them. To get to know these guys better, we will include a SABR Bio monthly starting from the oldest with a completed bio to the most recent. Yes, that will take at least eight years to complete, and longer as new bios are finished. If you are interested in seeing the entire list of these players, or there is a Wisconsin born player that interests you and needs a SABR Bio, contact [Dennis](#).

(*Includes J.P. Feyereisen who was born across the river in Minnesota because that was where his mom's doctor's birth hospital was located. She left Wisconsin for the birth and returned upon release.)

This month's Wisconsin bio is Bill Sullivan from Oakland (Jefferson County) a Deadball Era player considered a "brainy backstop" who's "credited as the first catcher to position himself directly behind the batter and as the inventor of an inflatable chest protector.

Billy Sullivan Sr. by [Trey Strecker](#)

Though "never very strong in stick work," his Deadball Era contemporaries believed that Billy Sullivan's "brilliant performances behind the bat ... more than offset his weak hitting." Although his paltry .213 lifetime batting average is the second worst all-time (next to [Bill Bergen](#)) among players with at least 3,000 at bats, Sullivan developed a reputation as a brainy backstop with an uncanny ability to handle pitchers. Described by [Ty Cobb](#) as the best catcher "ever to wear shoe leather," Sullivan was "the best man throwing to bases in the American League," and "no man in the business [knew] more about getting the best work from a pitcher and holding an infield together." Sullivan also revolutionized the way his position was played; he is credited as the first catcher to position himself directly behind the batter and as the inventor of an inflatable chest protector.

William Joseph Sullivan was born on a farm near Oakland, Wisconsin, on February 1, 1875, the son of Irish immigrants. He first displayed his potential as a ball player at Fort Atkinson High School, where he starred in the infield. As a high school student, Sullivan played shortstop until an accident disabled his team's regular catcher. Without any previous experience, the young Sullivan was put in to catch, where his work behind the bat attracted the attention of the local town team's manager. Afterward, he caught for an independent team in Edgewater, Wisconsin, before he broke into the professional ranks with the Western Association's Cedar Rapids Bunnies in 1896. The next year, the 5'9", 155-pound right-hander played for Dubuque in the same league, managed by [Joe Cantillon](#). Purchased from Dubuque by Tom Loftus, Sullivan worked behind the plate for Columbus (Ohio) of the Western League in 1898. The next year he was transferred with his team to Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he hit .306 in 83 games before being sold to the Boston Beaneaters at the end of the season. Catching 66 games for Boston in 1900, Sullivan slugged eight home runs, fifth in the National League. It was the only time in his career he would make the top ten in any hitting category.



Before the 1901 season, an offer of \$2,400 enticed him to jump to the White Sox, where he caught the American League's first game as a major league, Chicago's 8-2 victory over Cleveland on April 24, 1901. Despite his impressive hitting for the Beaneaters in 1900, once in American League company Sullivan's offense quickly disappeared, as it did for most of the era's backstops. He batted .245 in his first season with the White Sox, a pedestrian average that would prove to be the highest of his American League career. From 1903 to 1912, he never batted higher than .229 in any season, and finished as low as .162. His abysmal hitting was coupled with a shortage of power and an inability to get on base via other means – for his career he finished with a .254 on-base percentage and a .281 slugging percentage. Sullivan was particularly dreadful in his only postseason appearance. In the 1906 World Series against the Chicago Cubs, he went hitless in 21 at-bats, including nine strikeouts. However, he caught every inning of every game and guided his pitchers to a collective 1.33 ERA in the Sox' six-game victory.

Somehow, the White Sox seemed a better team with the scrappy, resourceful Sullivan in their lineup. With Sullivan as their primary catcher, the White Sox won two pennants (1901 and 1906) and narrowly missed two others (1905 and 1908) while never finishing lower than fourth place. By contrast, in the two seasons in which he was injured, 1903 and 1910, the club finished in the second division both times, more than 30 games out of first place. During his years in uniform, Sullivan was particularly important in steadying Chicago's stalwart pitching rotation, which included the likes of [Ed Walsh](#), [Doc White](#), and [Nick Altrock](#). Four times a league-leader in fielding percentage, Sullivan placed himself directly behind the batter. In 1908 Sullivan was issued a U.S. Patent for an inflatable, contoured chest protector, which protected his body better and, thanks to hinging, allowed more freedom of movement than the normal model.

On October 24, 1905, Sullivan married Mary Josephine O'Sullivan, who had emigrated from Ireland five years earlier. The marriage lasted 24 years until her death in January 1930. A clean-living player who didn't swear, drink, or smoke, Sully replaced [Fielder Jones](#) as Chicago's playing manager in 1909, piloting the club to a 78-74 record and a fourth-place finish. It was Sullivan's only season as manager; the next year, [Hugh Duffy](#) took the helm and Sully returned to catching full time.

On August 24, 1910, Sullivan caught three baseballs thrown by Ed Walsh off the top of the Washington Monument as a publicity stunt, duplicating Washington catcher [Gabby Street's feat from two years earlier](#). Contemporary reports estimated that the balls sped at 161 feet per second toward Sullivan's pancake mitt. Remarkably, despite gusty winds, Sullivan caught three of the eleven balls Walsh threw. Following the stunt, Sully declined to attempt to catch a ball dropped from an airplane, saying he "might as well try to stop a bullet."

Sullivan was often sidelined by injuries. An errant foul tip broke his throwing hand in 1901. The next year he required an emergency appendectomy. He was hit by a pitched ball in 1904 and knocked unconscious. During the 1906 pennant chase, he re-injured his throwing hand. Perhaps the most serious injury Sullivan faced was a battle with the blood poisoning he contracted in 1910, after stepping on a rusty nail during a spring training trip. Following the dubious advice of a quack physician, he received a nearly-lethal dose of turpentine and almost lost a leg before receiving appropriate medical care. "This Sullivan man is a real hero," the *Atlanta Constitution* wrote after the 1908 campaign. "He begged permission to catch the final game in Cleveland although two rows of stitches had been removed from his right thumb only the day before... The nature of his injury must have made his work agony, but he stuck to his job."

In 1912, with Sullivan's performance and endurance declining, young backstop [Ray Schalk](#) emerged as his successor. Sullivan spent the 1913 and 1914 seasons as a Sox coach, assisting manager [Nixey Callahan](#), teaching Schalk, and managing the B squad in spring training. Chicago owner [Charles Comiskey](#) had promised Sullivan lifetime employment with the team as a reward for his years of service, but broke that promise on February 15, 1915, when he unconditionally released the shocked Sullivan. After trying and failing to land a job as an AL umpire, Billy joined the Minneapolis Millers – managed by his old skipper Cantillon – where he coached, batted .215, and caught 105 games of "fine ball" as they won the American Association pennant. Released by Minneapolis at the end of the year, he only appeared in a single game as a player-coach with Detroit in 1916.

At the end of the 1916 season, the 41-year-old Sullivan accepted his release and retired to a twenty-acre apple, walnut, and filbert farm outside Newberg, Oregon, where he spent the rest of his life with his wife, Mary. During the 1917 season, Sully attempted to catch on with Portland of the Pacific Coast League and Seattle of the Northwestern League, but he was unsuccessful.

Upon his retirement, Sullivan paid tribute to four of the foremost pitchers he caught. According to Sully, "[Kid Nichols](#), of the old Boston Nationals, possessed the greatest speed; Ed Walsh was the peer of the spit ball pitchers; [Jim Scott](#) tops all the curve ball experts, and for all-around mixing and slow ball delivery there never was a man who excelled 'Doc' White."

Although his son Joseph, a second baseman and captain on the University of Notre Dame team, turned down an offer from the White Sox in order to pursue a law career, his son, [Billy Jr.](#), began his own twelve-year major league career with the White Sox in 1931, playing with Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, the St. Louis Browns, Detroit, Brooklyn, and Pittsburgh. When Billy caught for Detroit in

the 1940 World Series, the Sullivans became the first father and son to have played in the Fall Classic. Baseball dopesters frequently remarked that if Billy Sr. could hit like his son, and if Billy Jr. could field like his father, they would be “the best catcher in the history of the game.”

Following Mary’s death in 1930, Sullivan married Myrtle Nash in June 1933 and the couple enjoyed many years together. Sullivan died of a heart ailment on January 28, 1965, only eight days after the death of his Chicago batterymate Nick Altrock, and just four days shy of his 90th birthday. Survived by Myrtle, he was buried in St. James Catholic Cemetery in McMinnville, Oregon.

Note

This biography originally appeared in David Jones, ed., *Deadball Stars of the American League* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, Inc., 2006).

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Schabowski Super Stumpers
April Answers:

1. Gene Tenace-1972.... Andruw Jones-1996
2. Paul Molitor - 10 in a career that ended in 1998
3. Robin Yount - 18-1974
4. Phil Niekro-1985 - Yankees
5. Jack Morris

[Return to Trivia Questions](#)

Neighbor Chapter Newsletters



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