



Society For American Baseball Research

Baseball Records Committee

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Spring 2020

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

SHORTENED SEASON TRIVIA

Usually the Spring newsletter is dedicated to trivia about the upcoming season or Opening Day records. But as of the writing of this newsletter, it is unclear when the MLB season will begin in 2020 due to the nationwide virus outbreak. There are also rumors that the season may extend into the winter to make up for lost games.

Which got us thinking about what historical benchmarks that 2020 may challenge:

Latest Opening Day

MLB record: May 2, 1882 American Association

NL record: May 1, 1878/1879/1880/1882/1883/1884

AL record: April 26, 1995

The last year with zero April MLB games was 1883, when the NL and AA both started on May 1.

Latest Closing Day (regular season)

MLB record: October 21, 1876 National League

AL record: October 10, 1904

Fewest Games Played

There is also a prospect of playing far less than the usual 162 games. Here are the last years when no team played at least 'X' games:

- no team played 150 games: 1995 (most was 145 games)
- no team played 120 games: 1994 (most was 117 games)
- no team played 100 games: 1882 (most was 86 games)
- no team played 75 games: 1878 (most was 63 games)

BACK TO YU (DARVISH)

In the Fall 2019 newsletter, we asked whether **Yu Darvish**'s 24 strikeouts over 9 innings on September 12-17, 2019, was an MLB record. We noted that **Josh Hader** had struck out 25 batters over a 27-out stretch (including partial innings in relief).

Loyal reader **Jayson Stark** reports that he had asked a similar question of STATS, Inc. back at the time. Jayson reports that, at least as far back as 1974 and *counting only full innings* (i.e., no stacking of partial innings to create 1 IP), Darvish's 24 strikeouts was the most by any pitcher in any 9-inning span. The next most by a starter was 22 by **Chris Sale** in May 2019. Thanks Jayson and STATS!

THE FLIP SIDE: THE HARDEST K

Joe Sewell is known primarily for being the hardest man ever to strike out. He had only 117 in his career (Retrosheet research has identified several missing strikeouts, added to his well-known total of 114).

But there are two oddities in rare club of pitchers who struck out Sewell.

The first is **Arlas Taylor** of the Philadelphia Athletics. He pitched only one MLB game in his entire career. He lasted only 2 innings, giving up 7 hits, 5 runs, and 2 walks. He had only strikeout in the game--and indeed in his entire MLB career. And it was of Joe Sewell, to end the 1st inning on September 15, 1921.

This would be like a batter hitting his only career home run off **Walter Johnson**--and doing so in his one and only MLB game. (For the record, **Luke Stuart** almost did this. He played 3 MLB games, had 3 ABs, and his one and only hit was a homer off Walter Johnson on August 8, 1921.)

The second is **Cy Warmoth**. Unlike Taylor, Warmoth pitched for a few years in MLB, racking up 129 innings pitched in his career. Warmoth's claim to fame is that Sewell had only 2 ABs against him--and struck out both times. The only time they faced off was May 13, 1923, when Warmoth walked Sewell in the 2nd inning, then struck him out with the bases loaded to end the 3rd, then walked him again in the 6th, then struck him out again in the 7th. So for their career face-to-face, that's 0-for-2 with 2 strikeouts by the hardest man ever to strike out. At least Sewell managed to work 2 walks in the process.

ERRATA TO DECEMBER RECORDS LIST

Many readers wrote in to express appreciation and wonderment at former Chair **Lyle Spatz**'s annual list of baseball records, which was presented in the Winter 2019 newsletter and spanned 17 pages.

A few readers passed along some errors they noticed among the hundreds of listings:

MLB Records

--the record for most consecutive seasons with 200+ strikeouts is 8 by **Max Scherzer** (not "5" by **Chris Sale**, who actually has 7)

Team and Franchise Records

Baltimore Orioles

--the team record for most triples in a game is 3 by **Al Bumbry** on September 22, 1973 (not 2 by numerous players)

Houston Astros

--**Jose Altuve** set the team record with 31 homers by a second baseman (not 31 doubles)

St. Louis Cardinals

--**Paul DeJong** set the record for most home runs by a shortstop (not third baseman)

--the team record for most home runs in a game is 4 by **Mark Whiten** on September 7, 1993 (not 3 by numerous players)

Thanks to **Bill Deane**, **James Leefers**, and **Jeff Orner** for passing these along.