



Society For American Baseball Research Baseball Records Committee

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

2023 SABR CONVENTION IN CHICAGO

The annual Records Committee meeting will start at **4:15 pm on Thursday July 6 in the State Ballroom on the 4th floor**. Longtime member **Herm Krabbenhoft** will serve as Chair for the meeting, as I am unable to attend this year.

Herm has also graciously agreed to give a presentation titled "*Revisiting the Psychology of 'Round Numbers as Goals': Achieving a .300 Batting Average.*"

Here is Herm's abstract:

In a 2011 article in *Psychological Science*, with the title "Round Numbers as Goals: Evidence from Baseball, SAT Takers, and the Lab," Devin Pope and Uri Simonsohn concluded the following: "Overall, the behavior of baseball players proved consistent with the hypothesis that a round number, such as a batting average of .300, can act as a goal that influences behavior." The salient words are "influences behavior," which to a baseball enthusiast can be interpreted as "hitting in the clutch." Pope and Simonsohn reported that their study (of the 1975-2008 ML seasons) found that "batters are nearly 4 times as likely to end the season with a .300 batting average as they are to end the season with a .299 average. The authors further suggested "that players find a way in their last few scheduled plate appearances to ensure they finish above .300." They did not mention any specific "ways" the players utilized to achieve a .300 batting average. They conjectured that batters will "exert effort to improve their measured performance." They did not state what the "exerted effort" was that allowed them to improve their performance, although to me, "exerted effort" sounds like "hit in the clutch." I have revisited the Pope and Simonsohn study (1975-2008) and also extended the timeframe back to 1920 and up through 2022. The results of my investigation essentially confirm Pope and Simonsohn's numerical findings, although I also found that there is a significant chronological effect. Most significantly, I provide a viable specific explanation of the "influences behavior" and "exert effort" terms expressed by Pope and Simonsohn.

THE NEXT .400 HITTER?

The **Miami Marlins' Luis Arraez** maintained a .400 average on the season through his first 307 plate appearances, although he has recently dropped into the .390s. He's already cracked the top 10 for longest stretch maintaining a .400 average into the season since **Ted Williams** hit .406 in 1941:

MAINTAINING .400 AVG FURTHEST INTO SEASON, SINCE 1941 (by # of plate appearances)

532 PA: **Todd Helton**, COL NL, thru 3rd PA 8/21/2000 (178-for-445)

460 PA: **George Brett**, KC AL, thru 5th PA 9/19/1980 (161-for-402)

450 PA: **John Olerud**, TOR AL, thru 4th PA 8/2/1993 (146-for-365)

409 PA: **Larry Walker**, COL NL, thru 2nd PA 7/19/1997(G1) (138-for-345)

395 PA: **Tony Gwynn**, SD NL, thru 1st PA on 7/15/1997 (143-for-357)

355 PA: **Tommy Holmes**, BOS AL, thru 5th PA on 7/8/1945(G2) (125-for-312)

343 PA: **Stan Musial**, STL NL, thru 2nd PA on 7/15/1948 (120-for-300)

319 PA: **Nomar Garciaparra**, BOS AL, thru 2nd PA 7/20/2000(G2) (112-for-278)

The minimum required to qualify for a full season is 502 plate appearances, meaning Helton—had he stopped immediately after his third PA on August 21, 2000—would've qualified as the first .400 hitter since Williams.

MORE ARRAEZ

There are still a few days left in June 2023, but the **Marlins' Luis Arraez** already has three separate 5-hit games during the calendar month. The Elias Sports Bureau reports that only three other players have had three separate 5-hit games in a calendar month:

George Sisler (August 1921)

Ty Cobb (July 1922)

Dave Winfield (June 1984)

Honorable mention to **Cal McVey**, who had two 6-hit games, plus a separate 4-hit game, in July 1876.

A THOUSAND VICTIMS

Bill Arnold notes that on May 20, Zack Greinke became just the fifth pitcher in history to strike out at least 1,000 different batters over his career. The others:

MOST DIFFERENT BATTERS STRUCK OUT, CAREER

1182: **Nolan Ryan**

1123: **Randy Johnson**

1049: **Greg Maddux**

1022: **Roger Clemens**