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2023



The Bob Broeg Baseball Banter

Newsletter of the Bob Broeg Chapter of SABR
St. Louis, Missouri

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A message from the President

By Allison Levin



As we head into the bulk of free agency and gear up for spring training much is going on with our Bob Broeg Chapter. We have our final monthly meeting of the year at the Sports Café on December 11. If you have never been to one of our meetings, I encourage you to try it out. People arrive any time after 5 pm if they want to order dinner off the menu, with the business portion of the meeting starting at 6 pm. I am always looking for members who have research to present or topics or books to discuss. Never hesitate to email me if you have ideas. The chapter is also gearing up for our SABR Day event on February 3—mark your calendars to come celebrate with us! More information will be sent out soon and will also be found at sabr.org/sabrday.

At the National level, I encourage you to explore the benefits of your membership at SABR.org, including access to Newspapers.com, The Sporting News archives, the Black Newspapers database, not to mention all the SABR published books, biographies, and game stories. If you want a primer of all the membership benefits, I encourage you to sign up for a monthly new member zoom—don't let the title fool you, it is open to everyone. If you are looking for a fun way to engage with SABR regularly, check out the monthly show 'Ballpark Figures' where Shakeia Taylor spends an hour talking to a person of interest to SABR members.

Keep enjoying SABR and feel free to email if you have questions, Allison Levin, Bob Broeg STL SABR Chapter President
SABR Board Member

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By the numbers: 100 years ago

- 119:** AL/NL World Series played
- 40:** Times the Yankees participated
- 27:** Number of Yankees championships
- 100 years ago:** Yankees first championship- 1923

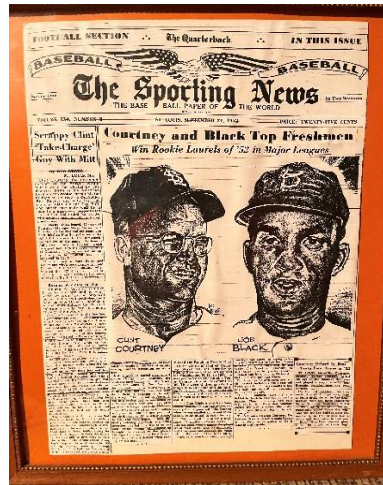


In 1923 the Yankees played the New York Giants for the third consecutive year, this time winning. That's the only time in AL/NL history that the same two teams have played in the World Series three years in a row.

My meeting with Steve Gietschier

By Bob Giovanni

Being a St. Louis Browns fan since childhood, with catcher Clint Courtney as my favorite player, I was overjoyed to acquire a Clint Courtney catcher's mitt around 1990. That acquisition inspired me to get every bit of biographical data that I could find. I discovered that Clint was selected as *The Sporting News* (TSN) American League Rookie of the Year for 1952 and decided I wanted a printed copy of the article from the microfilm section of the St. Louis County Library. The library told me I could view it but not print it without permission from TSN. I went there and met their archivist.



Print of the article from TSN hanging in Bob's Sport's Room. Photo courtesy of Bob Giovanni

While chuckling as to why anyone would want anything about Clint Courtney, he gave me the permission I requested. I returned to the library, printed the article, took it home, framed it, and hung the finished product in my Sports Room.

Thirty years later I joined SABR, and one of the first guys I met was Steve Gietschier. I immediately recognized him as "the guy at TSN who allowed me to print the article on Clint." So, at our most recent SABR meeting I brought my framed TSN article to share with the membership to acknowledge the gracious gesture Steve afforded me in 1991. Thank you, Steve.

SABR visits The Browns Memorabilia exhibit at the Field House Museum

By Brian Flaspohler

The St. Louis Browns moved to Baltimore and became the Baltimore Orioles after the 1953 baseball season. Now, 70 years later, the St. Louis Browns Fan Club remains one of the most active fan clubs in the country. Currently headed up by SABR member Ed Wheatley, the fan club holds an annual luncheon, sends out a monthly newsletter, and also sponsors special events and exhibits such as the St. Louis Browns Memorabilia Exhibit featured at St. Louis' Field House Museum this summer.



Eleven SABR members from Bob Broeg and Central Illinois chapters at the Browns Exhibit.

Photo courtesy of Brian Flaspohler.

been restored and hosts exhibits honoring the Field family's history. The Field House Museum, adjacent to the home, presents rotating exhibits with St. Louis connections. The Browns Memorabilia was on display all summer at the museum.

On October 21, eight members of the Bob Broeg Chapter (Craig Carter, Brian Flaspohler, Jeremy Gibbs, Clem Hamilton, Bill Marston, Dave Sloan, Bob Tiemann, and Rick Zucker) met three members of the Central Illinois Chapter (Chad Kahl, Tony Parker, and Bill Peach) at the museum and toured the exhibit. A huge amount of Brown's history and artifacts were displayed in a relatively small space.

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The Field House is the historic home of Roswell Field, the attorney closely involved in the Dred Scott lawsuit. His son, the poet Eugene Field, was born in the home. The 1852 mansion has



1902-1953



Some of the group’s favorite items were the collection of game used bats, part of the Eschenbrenner collection, a 1992 Leaf Cal Ripken Jr. baseball card featuring him in a throwback Browns Jersey, the displays on the 1944 Trolley Car World Series, the Hank Thompson and Willard Brown exhibit, the multitude of pennants and clothing on display, including a game used uniform - complete with knee rip repair job! Giveaways and promotional items, scorecards, baseballs, and so much more! Even Brownie player patches, swatches of cloth each featuring a Brownie, perfect for being sewn into quilts.

The number of artifacts of this historical period of baseball in one place about one team is absolutely incredible.

Big thanks go to the Browns Fan Club and president Ed Wheatley for



*Memorabilia are from the John “Bud” Thomas collection and the John Eschenbrenner collection. Thomas played briefly for the St. Louis Browns.
Photo courtesy of Brian Flaspohler.*



preserving these memorabilia and, even better, making arrangements for it to be displayed so all can enjoy.

The group then walked a block south and ate lunch at Broadway Oyster Bar, swapping more baseball stories and tackling a trivia quiz presented by Dave Sloan. To finish off the day, a small group walked to the Cardinals Hall of Fame and Museum and toured that excellent museum the Cardinals maintain in Ballpark Village, adjacent to Busch Stadium.

This marks the second joint event the Bob Broeg chapter and the Central Illinois chapter have held. All attendees agreed we should do more in the future!

Fantasy draft day: Mikolas or Senga

By Jeremy Gibbs

Background



Miles Mikolas

On the evening of March 1, 2023, the St. Louis SABR chapter met for our annual social event at Duffy’s. I had started a slow draft the Friday before on February 24th. Each participant had up to four hours to make their picks. That being said, I found myself “on the clock” as we were eating dinner. I thought it might be fun to ask the group who I should draft. I offered them two choices - Miles Mikolas (STL) or Kodai Senga (NYM).

According to my pre-season rankings, I had Senga 46 and Mikolas 47. Either would have been an acceptable choice to me. Senga had not pitched in the U.S., so all we had to consider were his statistics in Japan. Mikolas had pitched in St. Louis the past five seasons, so we all were quite familiar with his career.



Kodai Senga

Later that night, I told my wife, “Even if I ended up making the wrong decision, it will make the season more enjoyable to allow my SABR friends to make the pick, giving them some investment in my team.”

Jim Leonard was the first to speak up. He confidently said, “Pick Senga. I just read an article about him in the Wall Street Journal. He is going to be good.” A couple of others disagreed with Leonard’s opinion of advocating for Senga.

I chose Senga. However, I was able to pick up Mikolas five picks later since I was near the end of the round (13) and the nature of snake drafts reverses the order of picks each round.

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I finished second in this league which is a nice accomplishment considering that it is connected to a podcast - "The Fantasy Gospel" - and thus has a pretty large audience invested in the final results. (I finished fourth in 2022 and first in 2021 in this same league.)

Statistics

In rotisserie fantasy baseball, the only pitching categories that matter are wins, strikeouts, saves, WHIP, and ERA. Even though Senga threw 30 fewer innings than Mikolas, Senga bettered Mikolas in four of those pitching categories, with neither man earning a save.

Senga had 12 wins vs. Mikolas's nine wins. Senga accumulated 202 strikeouts, 65 more than Mikolas (137). Senga had an impressive 2.98 ERA (42% better than the average MLB pitcher) compared to 4.78 ERA for Mikolas (9% worse than the average pitcher). Senga had the 27th best WHIP (1.22) while Mikolas had the seventh worst (1.32) among qualified starting pitchers.

Accomplishments

Mikolas started 35 games, one of three pitchers to do so since 2011, with David Price (2016) and Jhoulys Chacin (2018) being the others. Being able to get 35 starts out of a starter is quite helpful to a fantasy team. Not only did Mikolas start the most games in 2023, but he also threw the fourth most innings.

Senga was named to the 2023 All-Star team but did not appear in the game.

Final Verdict

Hands down, Senga was far and away the better draft pick. I felt confident putting him in my lineup week after week. After five starts, Mikolas had an ERA of 7.46 with no wins while Senga already had three wins with a 4.15 ERA. I found it difficult to put Mikolas in my lineup and typically only did when he was scheduled to start two games that week, or I had no better options available. On the flip side, Senga was exceptional the rest of the season earning 13 wins with an impressive 2.76 ERA. He was the correct player to draft. Thanks, Jim!

2023 payroll vs winning percentage

By Morris Buenemann

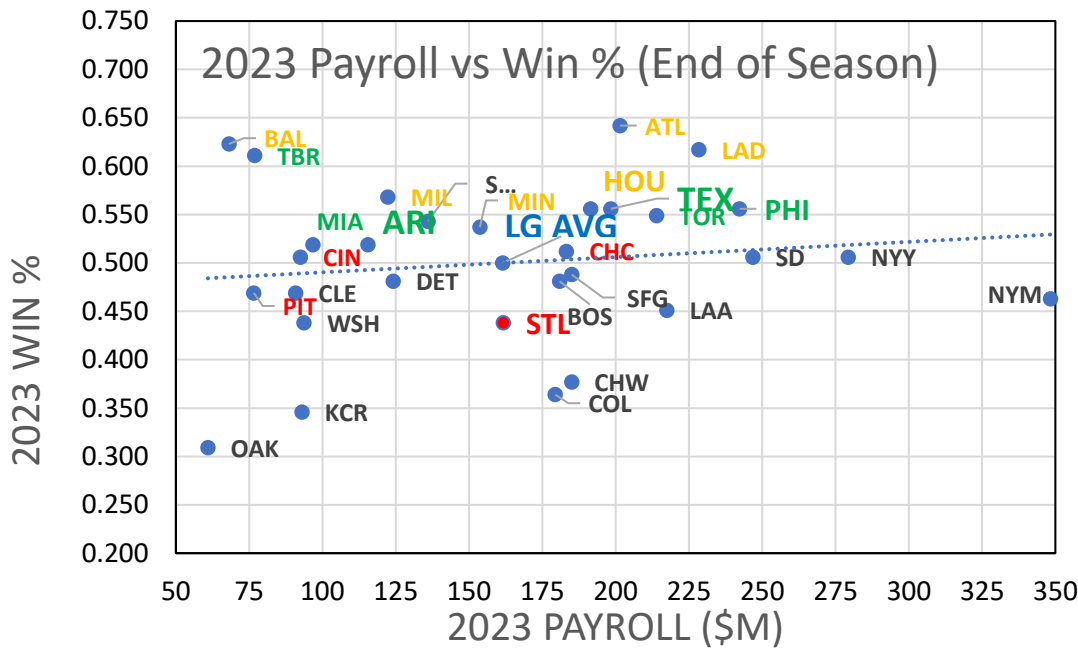
With all of the huge signings and payrolls of various MLB teams in 2023, especially the Mets, Yankees, Padres and Phillies, I decided to track how well payroll spending correlated to winning. For 2023 the plot showed poor correlation between payroll spending and winning percentage.

On the next page is the scatter plot of 2023 MLB winning percentage vs payroll. I found the payroll numbers online (Spotrac.com). Though slightly different numbers were shown on other sites, this one seemed to be around the average of the various listings. The winning percentage (actually, win rate shown to three decimal places) is plotted on the Y axis and the

beginning-of-season payroll in Millions (M) is plotted on the X axis.

The division winners are shown in **orange**, and the wild card teams in **green**. LCS and WS teams get progressively larger fonts. Teams from the NL Central are shown in **red** to highlight where the Cardinals stood, with the exception of Milwaukee which got upgraded to orange. The chart shows major league average spending of \$161.5M. Note that our Cardinals are right at league average payroll (\$161.7M), the second highest payroll in their division, but sadly the worst record.

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Year	r
2013	0.32
2014	0.25
2015	0.21
2016	0.62
2017	0.25
2018	0.28
2019	0.41
2020	0.16
2021	0.40
2022	0.61
2023	0.14

2013-22
AVG **0.351**

Win percentage vs payroll correlation coefficients for each year 2013-2023

Following are some observations:

1. Although the average is pulled up by the two high-spending outliers, only 14 teams spent below league average, 15 were above, and one team (STL) was right on the average.
2. Six of the 12 teams of the new expanded playoff structure spent more than league average, and six spent less, some significantly less.
3. Three of the division winners spent above league average, and three spent less. Same is true for the Wild Card teams: three spent more, three spent less.
4. If you divide the list of 30 teams spending into thirds of 10 each, six playoff teams came from the top third, two from the middle third, and four from the bottom third.
5. The four lowest payrolls, all less than 1/2 the league average, include the team with the worst record (Oak) and two of the four best records (Balt and TBR), with the Pirates more in the middle.
6. The three highest payrolls (NYM, NYY and SD) all failed to make the postseason, which now includes 12 of the 30 teams (40%).

The regression line for winning percentage against payroll is indicated by the dotted line. The correlation coefficient (r) calculated by excel is only **.136**. This is an extremely weak correlation, and clearly shows that, for 2023, there is more to winning than simply having a high payroll.

The correlation coefficient for 2023 is the lowest in the last 11 seasons. The values from the prior 10 years are shown above at the right (I found these values online and did not independently calculate or otherwise verify them.) Please note that 2020 was the shortened (60 game) Covid season, which makes that season a bit different from the rest.



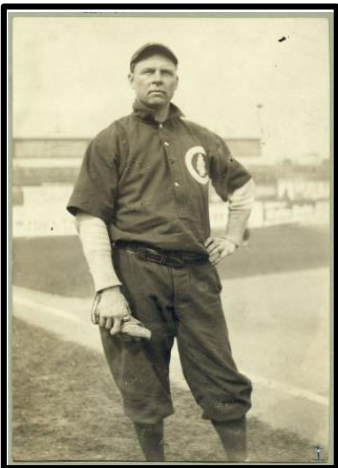
Brown for Taylor

By Rick Zucker



St. Louisans love to remember the Brock-for-Broglio trade of June 1964, where the Cardinals acquired young Lou Brock in exchange for veteran pitcher Ernie Broglio, whose best days were behind him. A future Hall of Famer, Brock became a catalyst who spurred the Cardinals to three NL pennants and two world championships over a five-year period. The fact that the archrival Cubs were on the wrong end of the deal made it even sweeter.

But long before Brock-for-Broglio, in fact 120 years ago in December, there was Brown-for-Taylor, also a Cardinal-Cub trade. But this time the shoe was on the other foot. On December 12, 1903, St. Louis sent young Mordecai Brown to the Cubs in exchange for veteran pitcher Jack Taylor. Brown would become a Hall of Famer and the Cubs' ace, leading them to four NL pennants and two world championships over a five-year period.



Mordecai "Three-Finger"
Brown
Photo courtesy of SABR

Mordecai Brown was born in 1876 in Indiana. Multiple childhood accidents left the right-hander with a deformed pitching hand. He had a stub of an index finger, a bent middle finger, and a paralyzed baby finger, but his arm was fine. The combination of a strong arm and deformed fingers resulted in fast pitches with bewildering movement.

Let's look at this trade chronologically:

1902

Brown pitched for Class-A Omaha of the Western League. He threw 352 innings, registering a 27-15 record with a 2.22 ERA. The Omaha media nicknamed him "Three Finger" and he caught the attention of Patsy Donovan, player-manager of the sixth-place St. Louis Cardinals. Donovan signed Brown for 1903.

Taylor was one of the NL's top pitchers. He was 23-11 and led the league in ERA (1.29!) and shutouts (8).

1903

Brown made his major-league debut on April 19, starting for the Cardinals against the up-and-coming Cubs. Brown baffled the Cubs over five innings in a rain-shortened game, shutting them out on one hit as St. Louis won, 3-0. The Cubs' Frank Chance, who was 0-2 with a strikeout, was mesmerized by the rookie. Brown finished the season with a reasonable 9-13 record for the last place Cardinals who were a disastrous 43-94. The Cards were last in the NL in runs scored, and seventh in fielding percentage and ERA. But Brown easily led Cardinal pitchers with a 2.60 ERA (126 ERA+) and led the entire team with 2.6 WAR.

Taylor followed his brilliant 1902 season with a 21-14 record and a 2.45 ERA for the third-place Cubs. But Chicago believed Taylor was crooked and wanted to unload him. Cubs' owner James Hart suspected Taylor was being paid by gamblers to throw games, including some to the White Sox in the Chicago City Series following the 1903 season. Taylor would later admit that he got \$100 from the Cubs for beating the White Sox, but \$500 for losing to them.

It was as simple as this: Hart wanted to get rid of Taylor; Frank Chance coveted Brown. So, in December, when the Cubs offered the established star Taylor for the rising, but unproven Brown, the Cardinals jumped at it. To even up the trade, St. Louis threw in its main catcher, light-hitting Jack O'Neill, in exchange for minor-league catcher, Larry McLean.

1904

Taylor performed well for the Cardinals. He was 20-19 with a 2.22 ERA and a league-leading 39 complete games, as the Cardinals vaulted from eighth place to fifth under their new manager, ace pitcher and future Hall of Famer, Kid Nichols. In Brown's second big-league season, he was 15-10 with a team-leading 1.86 ERA (142 ERA+). The Cubs finished second behind the Giants.

Continued on next page

1905

The Cardinals' prosperity was short-lived. Nichols faded and was shipped to Philadelphia in July. Taylor's ERA ballooned to a subpar 3.44 and he finished 15-21, although he led the team in games and innings pitched. The Cardinals slipped to sixth place, at 58-96. Suspicion of dishonest play continued to follow Taylor, but the league never officially established his guilt.

Brown continued his upward path. He won 18 games with a 2.17 ERA (137 ERA+). The Cubs had another stellar season, finishing third at 93-60.

1906

The roof caved in for the Cardinals on the Brown-for-Taylor trade. Taylor started out well enough. He was 8-9 with a 2.15 ERA when the Cards traded him on July 1, back to Chicago of all places, for two young players and cash. Hart no longer owned the Cubs, so they were open to reuniting with Taylor. The two young players were Fred Beebe, a promising righthanded pitcher, and Pete Noonan, a catcher/first baseman. Beebe topped the NL in strikeouts while going 9-9 with a 3.02 ERA for the Cardinals. He would prove a serviceable but mediocre hurler for the Cardinals through 1909. Noonan didn't amount to much.

After the trade Taylor was 12-3 for the Cubs with a superb 1.83 ERA, but Brown was better. Had there been a Cy Young award, Brown would have won it.

Brown was 26-6 and led the league with a *1.04 ERA* (253 ERA+), nine shutouts, and a .934 WHIP. The Cubs set a record with 116 wins, taking the pennant by 20 games, but lost to the White Sox in the World Series. Taylor did not appear.



Jack Taylor
Photo courtesy of SABR

1907–1910 (Four Seasons)

The Cardinals had little left from the Brown trade.

Meanwhile, Brown was 101-38 with a 1.51 ERA (170 ERA+). He led the league in several categories. Perhaps his best year was 1909, when he led the league with 27 wins, 32 complete games, and 7 saves. Even Taylor won seven games for the Cubs in 1907 before fading into the minors. The Cubs won three pennants and two world championships over these four seasons.

The Cubs hammered the Cardinals in the Brown-for-Taylor trade. Six decades later, Brock-for-Broglio was a dish the Cardinals best served cold.

Sources

Baseball-reference.com;

SABR Bios on Brown and Taylor;

Cindy Thomson & Scott Brown, *Three Finger, the Mordecai Brown Story* (Lincoln, Nebraska:

University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 22-26.

By the numbers: 50 years ago

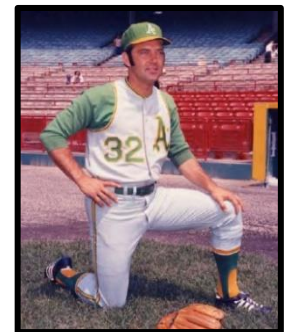
50: Fifty years ago in 1973, Darold Knowles (a native of Brunswick, MO) became the first pitcher in AL/NL World Series history to pitch in all seven games of a World Series, as the Oakland A's defeated the New York Mets four games to three.

In the seven games, Knowles pitched 6 1/3 innings, earning two saves. The only run he allowed was unearned.

Knowles finished his 16-year career with the St. Louis Cardinals in 1980.

2017: This feat was matched forty-four years later by Brandon Morrow of the Los Angeles Dodgers who pitched in all seven games of the 2017 World Series as the Dodgers lost to the Boston Red Sox.

Morrow pitched a total of 5 1/3 innings in the 2017 Series, allowing five runs.



Darold Knowles
Photo courtesy of SABR

2023 MLB season and playoffs predictions**Bob Broeg Chapter****By Jeremy Gibbs, Secretary**

At the March meeting, members of the Bob Broeg Chapter shook their Magic 8 ball as they attempted to predict what would happen during the 2023 MLB season. Participants were asked to predict the division winners in the NL East, NL Central, NL West, AL East, AL Central, and AL West. Each correct answer would award the participant two points.

Only one participant, Rick, correctly predicted that the Orioles would win the AL East.

Five participants correctly predicted that the Twins would win the AL Central.

Thirteen participants correctly predicted that the Astros would win the AL West.

Mark, Jeremy, George, Rick, and Bill all correctly predicted two AL division winners earning four points in the process.

Predicting how the National League would play out proved to be a greater challenge, with our hometown bias being the greatest detriment to finding success with this exercise.

Five participants correctly predicted that the Braves would win the NL East.

Two participants, Ed and Steve, went against the grain and correctly predicted that the Brewers would win the NL Central. Twelve predicted that their hometown St. Louis Cardinals would repeat as NL Central champions. Not only did the Cardinals not win the division, but they also finished last in their division for the first time since 1990 finishing five games behind the Pirates.

Four participants correctly predicted that the Dodgers would win the NL West.

George, Ed, and Brian correctly predicted two NL division winners earning four points in the process.

There are three Wild Card teams for each league. For each Wild Card team predicted correctly, participants

earned two points. If they had predicted that a team would win its division, but they made it in as a Wild Card team, participants were awarded one point. This same formula would apply to participants that predicted that a team would make the Wild Card even though they ended up winning their respective division. They still made the playoffs and thus the participant is awarded one point for this prediction.

The three Wild Card teams in the AL were the Tampa Bay Rays, Toronto Blue Jays, and the Texas Rangers who went on to win the 2023 World Series over the Arizona Diamondbacks.

One participant, Larry, correctly named all three AL Wild Card Teams earning six points for doing so.

Two participants, Ed and Mark, correctly named one AL Wild Card team and earned an additional point since one of their division winners ended up making it into the playoffs as a Wild Card team. This prediction awarded them three points.

Three participants, Rick, Bill, and Allison predicted that the NL Wild Card teams would be the Braves (NL East winner), Dodgers (NL West winner), and the Phillies (WC team). Correctly predicting the Phillies as a WC team earned them two points and one point each for the Braves and Dodgers which did make the playoffs as a division winner rather than a WC team as they predicted.

Larry stood above the rest earning eight points for his WC predictions.

Predicting the Championship teams would earn the participant three points for each correct prediction. In the AL, those teams were the Astros, correctly predicted by eight participants, and the Rangers, correctly predicted by no one. In the NL, the Championship teams were the Phillies, correctly predicted by Mark and no one else, and the Diamondbacks.

Continued on next page

Mark earned six points for his Championship team predictions.

No one earned the four points available for predicting each league champion or the five points available for predicting the World Series champion.

As a result, your starting nine 2023 MLB predictors are shown to the right.

Congratulations, Mark!

1. Mark 16 points

2. Jeremy	14 points
3. Carl	13 points
4. George	13 points
5. Larry	13 points
6. Rick	11 points
7. Ed	10 points
8. Brian	10 points
9. Bill	10 points



10 Rings

by James Rygelski and Robert Tiemann

Book review by Bill Marston

As one of the six presenters at this year's Rygelski Research Conference, I received a gift from fellow presenter, Bob Tiemann, of his book, Ten Rings, that he coauthored with James Rygelski. [Editor's Note: You can read about James Rygelski and our SABR chapter's annual research presentation conference which is named in his honor, in Brian Flaspohler's article on page 10 of this newsletter.]

I found the book to be an enjoyable and easy read appropriate for any baseball fan, but especially well-suited to uplift the spirits of St. Louis Cardinals fans after a dismal 71-91 last-place finish by the 2023 edition of the Cardinals. As you might deduce from the title of the book, each chapter recounts one of the Cardinals' World Series championships.

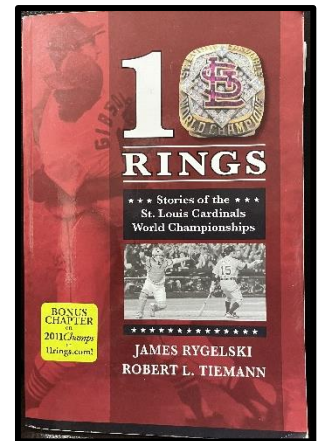
Wait... shouldn't the title be 11 Rings? The book was published in 2011 prior to the 11th championship. I couldn't get access to the website for the bonus chapter that the sticker on the cover advertises, but Bob was kind enough to include an insert of the 2011 chapter with each book.

Each chapter begins with four tables which present the scores of each game of the Series, a typical regular-season St. Louis lineup, the top pitchers, and the key bench players. These are followed by a brief overview of how the Cardinals made it to the World Series that year, and a little information about the opposing team.

Highlights of the season are written in an entertaining and informative way, and not surprisingly, given the authors, include fun facts that only a trivia expert would know. I learned where some player nicknames came from – why Burleigh Grimes was called “Boily” for instance. The authors also set the record straight on apocryphal stories – Grover Cleveland Alexander wasn't really drunk or hungover when he entered Game Seven in relief in 1926.

Most of each chapter covers the post season and gives thorough accounts of the key plays in each game of the Series. At the end of the chapter, line scores and a brief summary of each World Series game are given. I loved looking at the length of time for each game. In 1931, six of the seven games were played in under two hours, and the longest game was only ten minutes over the two-hour mark.

It's hard to pick out my favorite chapter. The first championship in 1926 had an exciting finish including details of which I was unfamiliar.



Front Cover of 10 Rings.

Photo courtesy of Bill Marston

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The two championships in the 30's had some colorful players that the authors brought to life. I relived some childhood memories with the two chapters in the 60's. It was fun to be reminded of some of the names I'd forgotten from the Cardinals in the 80's and reading the description of Game Six in the 2011 chapter gave me goosebumps all over again.

My only nitpick with the book – it was Bob Sykes and not Bob Shirley whom the Cardinals traded to the Yankees to obtain Willie McGee.

If you're looking for a good baseball book to pass the time until Spring Training, I highly recommend 10 Rings as an enjoyable read. I just hope that next winter, Bob has some serious work to do writing another bonus chapter for 12 Rings.

Eighth Annual James Rygelski Memorial Research Conference

By Brian Flaspohler

On September 30, 2023, a brace of baseball history fans showed up at the Sverdrup Hall at Webster University in Webster Groves, Missouri for the 8th Annual James Rygelski Research Conference, sponsored by the SABR Bob Broeg Chapter and by Webster University.

James Rygelski was a long time Bob Broeg Chapter member and always appreciated new research presented by chapter members.

This conference was started after he passed away and is a great outlet for members to present their research, no matter how big or how small. It also provides a connection to Webster University students and encourages them to present their baseball research papers to an appreciative audience. Webster University provides the location in one of their state-of-the-art classrooms in Sverdrup Hall, the primary focus point for their sports communications program.

This year, six presentations were featured, covering a varied list of topics.

Jeremy Gibbs led off the conference with “The Perfect Recipe: Ingredients for Throwing a Perfect Game.” Using historical perfect games, he determined what factors were most important when a perfect game is thrown.



*The six 2023 Rygelski presenters – from l to r: Jensen, Hamilton, Flaspohler, Gibbs, Marston, Tiemann
Photo courtesy of Brian Flaspohler*

Brian Flaspohler followed with “Comparing Win Shares and WAR.” This looked at player ranking differences using both Bill James’ and Baseball Reference’s WAR and tried to explain why the differences exist.

Bill Marston, following up his poster presentation at the National Convention, presented “World Series Results: Predictable or a Coin Toss.” His analysis shows most World Series outcomes can

be modeled by a coin flip. Bob Tiemann closed out the morning presentations with “The 1973 Cardinals – On a Roller Coaster to .500,” which covered the ebbs and flows of the Cardinals only season in their history where they finished exactly .500.

After lunch, generously provided by Webster University for all registered attendees, Clem Hamilton authored, “A New System for Fairly Evaluating and Comparing Jim Crow-era Black Ballplayers’ Careers.” He is working on the system to help evaluate candidates from that era for Baseball’s Hall of Fame.

Finally, to complete the day, Webster University professor Scott Jensen showed his film study, “Dads, Baseball, and Awakenings: Baseball Films as Stories for Defining Legacies of Fatherhood.” Clips from baseball films highlighted typical father/son themes in those movies.

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All the presentations were excellent, and the judging was not easy. In the end, the James Rygelski Research Conference award was presented to Brian Flaspohler for his efforts comparing Win Shares and WAR player rankings. The award includes a \$200 stipend as an

incentive for further research. Attendees enjoyed the conference as always. Special thanks to Allison Levin and the students at Webster University for their efforts organizing and executing a great event!

My first SABR convention

Reflections of a rookie

By Jeremy Gibbs

Upon hearing that the SABR 51 national convention was going to be about as close as it could possibly be (Chicago), I told my wife that I really wanted to attend knowing that the transportation expenses would be minimal.

Attire



*Jeremy's SABR convention wardrobe.
Photo courtesy of Jeremy Gibbs.*

After I figured out my travel plans, I started to plan my outfits for the four days that I would be at the convention. I wanted to represent St. Louis properly at this national baseball convention. I knew that I wanted to wear my Goldschmidt jersey to the Cardinals-White Sox game. Being a good St.

Louis Browns fan club member, I knew that I would want to properly represent that great franchise that left town 70-years ago. I also knew that I wanted to give the Negro League team St. Louis Stars a shout-out. The fourth team that I wanted to showcase was the 1942 St. Louis Cardinals with which I had become completely obsessed after playing dozens of simulation games on DynastyBaseball.com preparing for the SABR Games and Simulation tournament which would take place at the Convention.

I went looking online and quickly found a nice St. Louis Browns shirt on VintageApparel.com and a Stars shirt on RallyHouse.com. Although I did not have any

luck tracking down a 1942 St. Louis Cardinals shirt, I was happy to find a *Stan Musial and Biggie's* t-shirt to represent the team on which Musial played his rookie year.

Since I already had St. Louis Cardinals and St. Louis Stars hats (gifts from Father's Day), I wanted to see if I could track down hats to represent the other two teams.

I went fishing for these products on eBay. I had recently been reintroduced to eBay from my obsession with trying to track down a baseball card for all 342 Baseball Hall of Fame members. I was quite delighted to find a 1942 St. Louis Cardinals replica hat for \$12. Then, I turned my attention to tracking down the Browns hat. Several were offered on the site. I enjoyed making offers to see what kind of deal I could get. Eventually, I settled on a brand-new expandable hat for only \$15. I was quite pleased with the attire that I would be wearing at my first convention.

SABR 51 National Convention

SABR 51 was scheduled to begin July 5, 2023. Our train was scheduled to depart at 8:54 AM. Being an early bird by nature, I would have chosen the 7:21 AM train had I not been traveling with other SABR members. However, I did not want to miss out on traveling with the group, figuring that this would allow us more time to discuss baseball and get to know each other better. Little did I know how much time we would have to do just that!

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I got to the train station in Alton around 8:30 AM. Rick, Brian, and Steve had already arrived. Carl would arrive shortly after me. While I was inquiring about checking my bag, a gentleman noticed my Browns shirt. He said that he had attended games as a kid. I told him where we were going and invited him to come talk to the others. We enjoyed our conversation and recruited his wife to take our group picture.

The Tweet

Just before the train was scheduled to arrive, I asked the lady to take our group picture. I tweeted it out using my personal account, @JeremyGibbs2. Little did I know, it would be the most viewed tweet that I have ever sent garnering more than 4600 views!

The Train Ride



*The "Train Crew" – from l to r
Gibbs, Zucker, Flaspohler,
Gietschier, Riechers
Photo courtesy of Jeremy Gibbs*

Raise your hand if you have ever taken a 14-hour train ride? How about a train ride that took three times as long as it was scheduled to take?

We boarded the train shortly before 9:00 AM. Within minutes, the train was rumbling down the tracks while we were still searching for seats. We dropped off our suitcases, climbed the stairs and

started walking through the cars hoping to find five seats relatively close. We went to the last car realizing that we would not be so lucky, so it was time to retreat. Steve, Rick, and Brian found three relatively close. I found one in the car behind them. Carl ended up farther back. We may have started in this scattered seating arrangement, but we would end the ride all together.

The train ride was quite pleasant. Approximately every thirty minutes, we would stop at a small Illinois town

for one or two people to board or depart. It really was not much of a disruption to our trip. I read two issues of *Pop Flies* and one issue of *Baseball Digest* during this time. Rick came back to me to see how I was doing. He was trying to complete the Immaculate Grid for the day. I told him to try Milton Bradley as a player who played for both the Cubs and Mariners. That fit the grid.

1:00 PM, our train came to a sudden stop. We were not exactly sure why. The conductor made an announcement explaining that we clipped a truck and would have to wait for the authorities to give us the ok to proceed.

1:10 PM, I sent my wife a text stating, "Oh my! We hit a truck. Minor damage to the engine. We are stopped. Won't move until local authorities allow us to. We are like 30 minutes from Chicago!" She replied, "Wow! Did the driver die?"

We were fewer than 27 miles away from the Palmer House. We did not find out the answer to my wife's question for another 9 hours. We did not move for more than 10 hours!

3:02 PM, I texted my wife "Train is still sitting here 22 miles from Chicago. No real update." She responded, "You guys seriously might miss that reception [scheduled to start at 6:00 PM]." I did not believe her. Shortly after, I informed her that the crew walked down the aisles offering us water and a "snack pack." Not long after this, Rick came back to let me know that there was an open seat up near Steve and Brian. I believe the person sitting next to Brian had gotten off the train at the stop before our accident. We all wished we had been so lucky!

During this period, we engaged in lively baseball conversations to fill our time. A fellow passenger from Texas, captivated by the baseball banter, eagerly joined in the fun. We delved into various baseball-themed games such as *Pickle*, *By the Numbers*, and *Baseball Reference's Name the Player*, among others.

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Animated discussions unfolded as we debated the eligibility of players for the Hall of Fame. We even perused a Hall of Fame picture book available on my Kindle. I had initially looked forward to immersing myself in baseball discussions over these four days, but the experience surpassed all my expectations!

4:37 PM, I sent a text: "We're still on the train. They're bringing someone out to cut the front so it doesn't grind the rails." It was around this moment that the rain began to pour heavily. Interestingly, the Blue Jays vs. White Sox game, initially set to start at 7:10 PM, was canceled due to the rain. What remained undisclosed to us was that this downpour would impede them from completing the task at hand.

6:30 PM, they announced that they were going to give us one food item and one warm soda. For the longest time, I had been trying to hold out on going to the restroom or eating the food offered hoping to eat when I got to the hotel. I finally gave in to both around 7:30 PM. After using the restroom, I went to the front of the train to retrieve my food item. Steve, Rick, and Brian were already there eating in the booth where they were handing out food. The gentleman in front of me placed his pocketknife on the counter. After receiving his food, he tried to retrieve his knife. The large Amtrak worker tackled the man fearing that he was going to be stabbed. Things were tense. We felt like we were in a hostage situation. I texted my wife, "This is like living through those crisis movies that you've watched." I chose the cheeseburger and a Sprite and sat in the booth with the others.

9:06 PM, I texted my wife with an update. "Weather delayed their work this afternoon with the blowtorch. Not sure why they didn't use an umbrella or pop-up tent. They cut the front of the plow. Now they are working on the back. They are hoping to be done within the hour."

9:27 PM, we saw a lady walk from the train to a vehicle waiting for her. I texted, "It seems that someone with luggage escaped the train." We did not know the circumstances that allowed her to disembark, while the rest of us remained on board. Earlier, a passenger had requested to exit the train to smoke a cigarette, but his request was denied.

9:57 PM, I let my wife know that "five passenger trains have passed us going the opposite direction. One cargo train passed us going our direction (using the other track). Now, one passenger train passed us using the other track." We were starting to lose hope. The gentleman sitting next to me at this time was trying to get back to Michigan for his 12-year-old daughter's funeral which was scheduled for that night.



*The damaged front of the train.
Photo courtesy of Jeremy Gibbs.*

10:55 PM, we finally got some real information for the first time all day. An Amtrak employee that handles situations like this walked through the train explaining the situation and

answering any questions that the passengers might have. He explained that they now have a second welder working on this job. The engine is hanging too low. They are trying to correct that issue. Typically, when a train hits a car, it bounces off the train. This truck got caught under the train causing damage to the front of the train. The driver was taken to the hospital. He is responsive, so he will survive this accident. "Did the driver die?" No. We just learned the answer.

11:14 PM, our nightmare was finally almost over. I texted, "We're rolling!" I didn't make it to my hotel room until well after midnight. The "train crew" became closer having experienced a once-in-a-lifetime event together.

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The Convention: The Question

On Friday, Ozzie Guillen gave the keynote address. Ironically, at the SABR convention, he took aim at sabermetrics. Using many expletives in the process, he expressed his disdain for analytics.

Having just finished the Games and Simulation Committee meeting, I had gained some confidence to ask a question if the opportunity presented itself. When it came time for the question-and-answer session, I knew exactly what I wanted to ask. “Ozzie, this is related to your sabermetrics rant. What player did you play with or manage that you think is most worthy of the Hall of Fame, and why is it Mark Buehrle?” Ozzie replied, “We laugh. And you are going to hate me for this one. Sammy Sosa.” Polite applause followed. “The reason is because of that era. Sammy was supposed to be cheating, but we don’t know.” After Chuck Garfien, the moderator, responded, “We know,” Guillen went on to clarify, “When Sammy was playing, 90% of the guys were doing it.”

This is how Tom Stone described the question in his *Now Taking the Field* substack blog:

When asked which player he played with or managed who is not in the Hall of Fame but should be, Guillen said Sammy Sosa, giving his view that because so many players used PEDs during that era, the best of them should be in the Hall.



*Jeremy (standing with his back to the camera) asking his question at the Games and Simulation meeting.
Photo courtesy of Jeremy Gibbs.*

At the end of Guillen’s session, I had hoped to get his 1987 Topps rookie card autographed. A guy standing next to me had the exact same thought. He was successful in his pursuit; I was not.

The Committee Meetings

The committee meetings are sprinkled in with the rest of the program. Of particular interest to me were:

- Games and Simulations
- Baseball Cards
- Statistical Analysis

There were certainly others that might be of interest and/or would be of interest to me had I attended. These were the three that I made a point of attending and was quite delighted that I did.

I was ecstatic to attend the Games and Simulation Committee meeting. As mentioned above, I have a lot in common with members of this committee. I also think that this committee can be used to recruit new members to SABR. I greatly enjoyed this meeting. I felt comfortable with the co-chairs of the committee having attended a few of their meetings via Zoom. I also had interacted with the featured speaker, Mike Cieslinski, creator of the Dynasty Baseball game that we would be playing later that afternoon.

During the question-and-answer session, I asked the fantasy baseball expert and former Yahoo employee, Geoff Reiss, about the “Ohtani Decision” where they made Ohtani two different players. Initially, ESPN followed suit but has since rectified the decision after seeing other platforms like Fantrax and NFBC treat him as one player. It boggles my mind why Yahoo still cannot get it right. Mr. Reiss responded, “It was a mistake.” Unfortunately, he no longer works at Yahoo and cannot fix the issue for those of us that play on that platform.



*The signed Ozzie Guillen baseball card.
Photo courtesy of Jeremy Gibbs.*

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The Baseball Card Committee meeting was the last session I was able to attend. I did not get to stay for all of it since I had to catch my train near the end of the session, but was excited by the presentation - "Death, Taxes, and Baseball Cards Litigation" by John Racanelli - and being connected to the group in general. Jason Schwartz, co-chair of the committee, had pulled together nearly 50 HOF cards for my personal collection. I was quite grateful.

The Statistical Analysis Committee was thrilling for me. The main speaker worked as a Data Analyst for the Twins. I was interested in hearing what specific programming tasks he had to do for his job. It was at this meeting that I got a chance to meet Bill James, lifelong hero of mine, and Dick Cramer. I was honored when Mr. Cramer came and sat next to me at the Awards Luncheon. His story is fascinating.

The Awards Luncheon



Steve Gietschier (left) receives the Henry Chadwick Award from SABR president Mark Amour. Photo courtesy of Jeremy Gibbs.

The Awards Luncheon was scheduled to start at 11:30 AM. I happened to come out of my last session earlier than the rest of the attendees and walked by the room where the luncheon was going to take place. Seeing an opportunity to be first in line, I took it. I texted Rick to try to get others from the Bob Broeg Chapter to come to the front to help me secure a table. Rick and Bill quickly followed. Thus, when the doors opened, we were able to

secure the table in the front of the room in the center. We probably had the best seats in the house! Keynote speaker Jason Benetti, Chicago White Sox announcer who is now employed by the Tigers, was inspiring! I think we were all motivated to be better people after that speech.

Of course, the true main event for us was watching Steve Gietschier receive the Henry Chadwick Award. Since he was the only award winner in attendance, he had the stage to himself. He made us all proud even if he did call our chapter the "Bad News Bears."

The Baseball Game

On paper, this looked like a fantastic pitching duel between Dylan Cease, ranked #5 in my preseason rankings, and Jordan Montgomery, ranked #60. At the time of the game, Cease was having a "decent season" coming off of a better than average June (3-2, 2.20 ERA, allowing no more than two earned runs in any start) according to Steve Stone. Montgomery came in hot having won four of his last seven with a 1.66 ERA. Montgomery ended up having the better season finishing as the 40th best starting pitcher in fantasy baseball while Cease finished 81st.

In this particular game, it appeared that the Cardinals were in charge. Chip Carey stated that "St. Louis has clobbered him [Cease] here in the first three innings." And you better believe we made sure to let our SABR friends around us know that we were delighted in the Cardinals' performance! Well, we were until the fifth anyway, when CBC alum Jake Burger hit a home run off of Montgomery.

Then, Montgomery tweaked his hamstring after his 1-and-1 pitch to Elvis Andrus, immediately motioning to his hamstring with his glove. Nonetheless, the Cardinals were still leading 5-1 after five.

Things soured even more in the bottom of the sixth when the White Sox scored five, boosted by the Cardinals poor defense and Jake Burger's offense. However, the Cardinals made believers of us in the seventh, retaking the lead on Nolan Arenado's 19th home run only to lose it again in the bottom of the seventh when Luis Robert hit a two-run home run off of Kyle Leahy who was making his major league debut. According to Baseball-Reference, there have been 23,114 major-league players in history. On that night, we saw one of them unceremoniously make his debut.

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It was around this time that Steve and I started discussing how odd this game was going. How often does a team get 15 (at the time) hits in a game? And still lose? Inquiring minds want to know

So, when I woke up the next morning, I queried using Baseball-Reference. I thought that the results were fascinating, so I sent the following email to my chapter members:

The Sunday morning newspaper

When I woke up Sunday morning, one of the first things I saw on my phone was a text from Jeff Copeland that read “You made the online *Post-Dispatch* this morning!!! Way to go! This is so cool! Jeff.” What?! I could not believe it, so I had to look it up myself. Sure enough, my little quip was used in the newspaper. If I had known they were going to use my query, I would have loved to check and recheck my math, not to mention the way I worded the email. Perhaps, I could have explained the scenario a little more fully. Nonetheless . . . if you read the Sunday morning paper July 9, 2023, this is what you read on page D5.

Good news, Cardinals fans! Since 2000, a MLB team has scored at least 7 runs with at least 16 hits and LOST the game 320 times. So, what several of us watched last night in person does happen, just not that often. ($320/114,210 = 0.0028 = 0.28\%$)

Conclusion

At a certain juncture, Steve inquired about my experience at the inaugural SABR convention. I enthusiastically responded, "I'm having the time of my life." Later, when my mother questioned what I gained from the convention, I hesitated. "There was nothing truly life-changing; it was more about the connections I made." The members of SABR are indeed a unique and special group. Witnessing the convergence of different facets of baseball in one location was captivating. I eagerly anticipate attending another one!



A portion of page D5 from the July 9, 2023, St. Louis Post-Dispatch. Jeremy's work is under the heading "A very rare outcome." Photo courtesy of Jeremy Gibbs.

Acknowledgements

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