



Society For American Baseball Research

Baseball Records Committee

Trent McCotter, Editor
trent.mccotter@gmail.com

Fall 2023

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 was held **July 6 in Chicago**. **Herm Krabbenhoft** served double duty, agreeing to be Chair pro tem for the meeting and also giving a presentation titled *"Revisiting the Psychology of 'Round Numbers as Goals': Achieving a .300 Batting Average."* Our thanks to Herm for his continued excellent research and willingness to share his work.

MORE OHTANI

Almost every newsletter features another feat by **Shohei Ohtani**. This time we look at his performance on June 27, when he hit two homers from the batters box and struck out ten opposing batters while on the mound. Since 1893, only five other players have had two homers as a batter and 10+ strikeouts as a pitcher in the same game:

Zack Greinke, Arizona, Apr. 2, 2019 (2HR, 10K)

Madison Bumgarner, San Francisco, Apr. 2, 2017 (2HR, 11K)

Rick Wise, Philadelphia, Aug. 28, 1971 (2HR, 11K)

Pedro Ramos, Cleveland, July 31, 1963 (2HR, 15K)

Milt Pappas, Baltimore, Aug. 27, 1961 (2HR, 11K)

NOT SINCE 1894*

The 1894 season marked the high point for offense in major league history. Many records were set that year that still stand, with no real shot at every being topped.

But as **Bill Arnold** reports, modern players were recently able to match one interesting feat. On July 18, 2023, there were twelve teams that scored double-digit runs in a single game, with the Cubs leading the way with 17 runs plated. It was the first time since July 4, 1894, that a dozen or more teams scored double-digit runs in a single game.

Now, I know you're thinking that the 2023 feat is cheating a bit, as there are 30 teams now, but only 12 teams in 1894. But 1894 had its own trick: there were six double-headers played on July 4, 1894, so there were actually 12 games total that day, compared to 15 in 2023. And several teams scored 10+ runs twice that day. Chicago again led the scoring, with 16 runs plated against Philadelphia.

JULIO RODRIGUEZ'S NEAR-MISSES

Last newsletter, we noted that **Luis Arraez** had three separate five-hit games in June 2023, a feat that only three other players had pulled off.

Not to be outdone, in August, **Julio Rodriguez** had five separate four-hit games. Although not a record, it has been surpassed only three times:

SIX GAMES WITH 4+ HITS, MONTH

Billy Hamilton, PHI NL, August 1894, 29 games

Ross Barnes, CHI NL, June 1876, 13 games

Ty Cobb, DET AL, June 1921, 33 games

The last player to have five such games in a month before Rodriguez was **Zeke Bonura** in August 1938.

Rodriguez's streak in August 2023 featured several other near-miss records. He had 13 hits over 3 games (Aug. 16-18), which has been topped only twice. **Cal McVey** had 15 hits over 3 games in 1876, and **Mike Benjamin** had 14 hits over 3 games in 1995. Numerous other players have matched Rodriguez with 13 over 3.

Rodriguez also had 17 hits over 4 games (Aug. 16-19), which was reported widely as setting a new MLB record. It set a new post-1900 mark. But **Cal McVey** again takes the all-time record, with 18 hits over 4 games in 1876. And **Guy Hecker** had 17 hits over 4 games in 1886.

A DIFFERENT KIND OF LATE BLOOMER

Committee member Dan Hill sends along these interesting notes about Arizona's **Christian Walker**, who became the first player since 2001—and only the fourteenth ever—to record the first two 30-HR seasons of his career in back-to-back fashion beginning in at least his age-30 season.

But the first baseman's experience level entering his first 30-HR campaign in 2022 is what sets him apart from almost all the other 13 players in MLB history to accomplish this feat.

Before 2022, Walker had 3,243 plate appearances (PA) in the minor leagues and 1,390 in the majors, meaning 70 percent of his professional pre-MLB power surge PA took place in the minors. That percentage places him second among the 14 qualifiers, trailing only slugger Hank Sauer, who finished at 96% ahead of his 35-HR season for Cincinnati in 1948.

Here is a chart of the 14 qualifiers detailing career MLB career HR totals and breakthrough season information, ordered by highest percentage of professional PA in the minor leagues ahead of his first MLB 30-HR campaign:

Name	Career MLB HR	HR/Season/Age	Minor Lg PA%
Hank Sauer	288	35 in 1948 @age 31	96
Christian Walker	121	36 in 2022 @age 31	70
Jim Lemon	164	33 in 1959 @age 31	58.4
Dante Bichette	274	40 in 1995 @age 31	50.7
Andres Galarraga	399	31 in 1994 @age 33	40.2
Mickey Tettleton	245	31 in 1991 @age 30	39.6
Jay Buhner	310	40 in 1995 @age 30	39.35
Moises Alou*	332	38 in 1998 @age 31	39.34
Cecil Cooper	241	32 in 1982 @age 32	36
Ray Lankford	238	31 in 1997 @age 30	35.8
Ellis Burks	352	40 in 1996 @age 31	29.9
Graig Nettles	390	32 in 1976 @age 31	27.1
Roy Sievers	318	42 in 1957 @age 30	26.4
Luis Gonzalez	354	31 in 2000 @age 32	19.9

*Alou qualifies with back-to-back seasons in 1998 and 2000 because he missed the 1999 season due to injury.

Interestingly, only two of these players—Sauer and Lemon—lost time due to military service. I would've expected more of these later bloomers to be explained by World War II and Korea military duties.

ERRATA

In the summer newsletter, we noted that **Zack Greinke** had become just the fifth pitcher in history to strike out at least 1,000 different batters over his career. We gave the date as May 20, 2023, but Committee member **Pete Ridges** noted that the date was actually May 13.