



SABR Nineteenth Century Committee

Overlooked Legend Award

2017 Nominees

Charlie Bennett

Bob Caruthers

Jim Creighton

Paul Hines

Dummy Hoy

Bobby Mathews

Dickey Pearce

Al Reach

Jimmy Ryan

Chris Von der Ahe

Biographies compiled by Adam Darowski and Joe Williams.

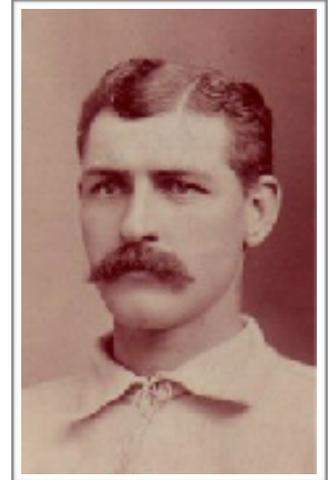
All references to Wins Above Replacement (WAR) use the version published on Baseball-Reference.com.

Charlie Bennett

Born: November 21, 1854, **Died:** February 24, 1927

Years as Player: 1878, 1880–1893

Position: Catcher



Charles Wesley Bennett was one of the greatest catchers of the Nineteenth Century, starring for the Detroit Wolverines in the National League (and playing every season of the franchise's existence). He was a powerful hitter who often ranked among the leaders in home runs and slugging percentage while finishing in the top ten in bases on balls six times. His .256 batting average was below the league average, but his .340 on-base percentage and .387 slugging percentage were both well above average.

Bennett, a leader on the field, also provided stellar defense behind the plate. He led National League catchers in fielding percentage seven times, putouts three times, and ranked in the top five in games caught ten times. He caught Lee Richmond's perfect game in 1880, the first perfect game in baseball history. Bennett is also credited with inventing the catcher's chest protector, though he deflected much of the credit to his wife, Alice. Alice sewed strips of cork inside a vest which Bennett wore under his uniform.

While traveling on a hunting trip with John Clarkson during the offseason in 1894, Bennett suffered a terrible train accident and lost both of his legs. He ended his career with the most games caught in history with 954. In 1896, Detroit's new ball park (Bennett Park) was named after the city's beloved hero. Bennett caught the ceremonial first pitch at the stadium every year from 1896 until 1926.

Bennett was an Overlooked Legend finalist from 2014–2016, finishing tenth last year.

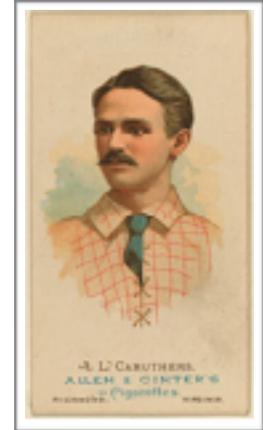
Sabermetric slant: Bennett has a very impressive WAR total of 39.1 despite playing in only 1,062 games. While he was a very strong hitter (75 batting runs above average), his 142 fielding runs above average are second all-time among catchers (behind Ivan Rodriguez's 146. When you consider that Rodriguez played 2,543 games, Bennett's total looks even better. Gary Carter and Charlie Bennett are the only two catchers in history with 75+ batting runs and 75+ fielding runs.

Bob Caruthers

Born: January 5, 1864, **Died:** August 5, 1911

Years as Player: 1884–93

Position: Pitcher, Outfield



Born in Memphis, Tennessee and raised in Chicago, Illinois, Robert Lee Caruthers was among the greatest all-around players of his day. He was an outstanding pitcher with a deceptive right-handed delivery and a hard-hitting outfielder who had a solid reputation as a defensive player and a base-runner. Before signing with the St. Louis Browns of the American Association in 1884, Caruthers played for Grand Rapids (1883) and Minneapolis (1884) of the Northwestern League. The 5'4", 140-pound twenty-year-old made his major league debut for the Browns on September 7, 1884 and went 7-2 in 13 games to close out the season. In 1885, he teamed with Dave Foutz to lead the Browns to the pennant, going 40-13 and leading the league in wins, winning percentage (.755) and ERA (2.07). After the 1885 season he went to Paris, France and became engaged in a trans-Atlantic salary dispute with Browns' owner Chris Von der Ahe, earning his nickname "Parisian Bob" and settling for a \$3,200 salary. The Browns won the pennant again in 1886 with Caruthers going 30-14 with a 2.32 ERA (second in the league) while hitting .334, slugging .527 and leading the league with .448 on-base percentage. The 1887 season was much of the same with a pennant, a 29-9 record and a league-leading .763 winning percentage, at the same time hitting .357, slugging .547, scoring 102 runs, stealing 49 bases and getting on base with a .463 percentage.

After the season in a Von der Ahe shakeup, Caruthers was traded to Brooklyn where he would play for four seasons, winning 29, 40, 23 and 18 games, respectively, while contributing to pennant winners in 1889 and 1890, Brooklyn's first season in the NL. In 1892, he went back to the Browns, now a NL team, and played primarily in the outfield, having career highs in games (143), at bats (513), hits (142) and walks (86). The 1893 season was his last in the majors, playing briefly for the Chicago Colts and the Cincinnati Reds. He finished with a 218-99 record, an ERA of 2.83 and a .391 OBP for his career. He continued playing in the minors until 1898 before becoming an American League umpire in 1902 and 1903.

Caruthers was an Overlooked Legend finalist from 2010–2016, finishing second last year.

Sabermetric slant: Caruthers was worth 43.7 WAR in his nine years as a pitcher. While that total alone is impressive, he added another 16.8 WAR as a hitter and position player. This puts him in small group of players who provided sixteen or more WAR both at the plate and on the mound. Caruthers is joined by only Babe Ruth (163.1 WAR at the plate and 20.4 on the mound) and John Montgomery Ward (35.6 WAR at the plate and 28.1 on the mound). This, of course, makes Caruthers' Hall of Fame case a unique one. While his pitching was certainly impressive, how much should his offense help his case?

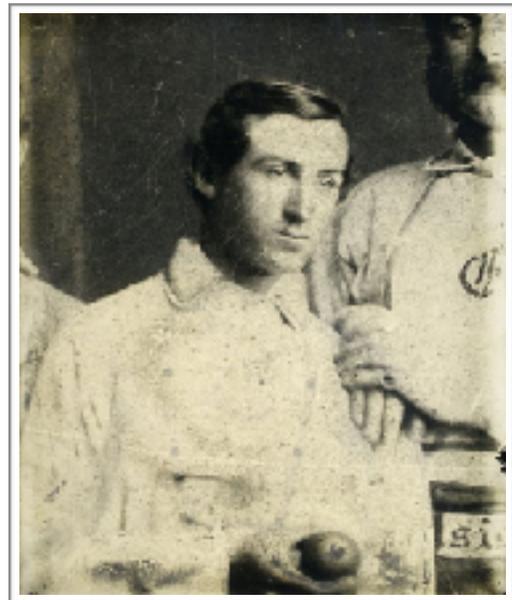
Jim Creighton

Born: April 15, 1841, **Died:** October 18, 1862

Years as Player: 1857–62

Position: Pitcher

James Creighton was baseball's first superstar and possibly its first professional. His life came to a tragic end just six months after his twenty-first birthday, making the young ballplayer a baseball legend and fueling the lore that makes baseball our national pastime. He was a tremendous hitter but made his mark on baseball history by revolutionizing the pitcher position with his swift and accurate pitching that didn't allow batters to get a solid hit on the ball.



Creighton grew up in Brooklyn, New York and took a liking to both cricket and baseball, for which he would excel at both sports. In 1857, he created a ball club with his childhood peers called Young America. The club played a few matches but lasted just one year. He then joined the Niagaras of Brooklyn and became their second baseman. In 1859, Creighton filled in for the Niagaras regular pitcher John Shields by taking the mound against the Star Club of Brooklyn. The rest is history (and lore).

Creighton threw with a sweeping low delivery and a wrist snap that increased the spin on the ball, causing the ball to rise to the catcher's shoulder. As John Thorn has written, "he possessed an unprecedented combination of speed, spin and command

that virtually defined the position for all those who followed". After the game, the Star Club snapped up the new pitching phenom and by the following year he was a member of the Excelsior Club of Brooklyn. It wasn't until he started pitching for the Excelsiors in 1860 that he became the game's most dominant pitcher. Creighton had the benefit of playing with the greatest catcher of the time in Joe Leggett, who was adept at handling swift pitching and limited his passed balls in comparison to others of the day. The battery was the best in the nation in 1860 and the Excelsiors were the best team in the land despite not officially beating the reigning champion Atlantics in a best-of-three series. The Excelsiors went on the first baseball tour of a team earlier in the season which enhanced Creighton's reputation outside of Brooklyn as his contemporaries and fans witnessed his attention-grabbing delivery and success. On November 8, 1860, Creighton pitched the first recorded shutout against the St. George Cricket Club, 25-0.

In 1861, the Excelsiors did not play any matches and Creighton played in just six games in 1862 before he passed away on October 18. It appears he died from a ruptured inguinal hernia. How that exactly happened will never be known but in baseball lore it occurred on October 14 against the Unions of Morrisania when he hit a home run. His death made him a baseball immortal. His pitching changed the game forever. Creighton was a pioneer that changed the focus from tossing the ball to the batter so they could put the ball in play to trying to get the player out and not giving the hitter a clean shot at the ball. Due to his success, others would soon follow this strategy and there was no turning back. Creighton died at his father's home and was buried with a large monument in Brooklyn's Greenwood Cemetery, a popular tourist spot for baseball enthusiasts.

Creighton was an Overlooked Legend finalist from 2012–2016, finishing third last year.

Paul Hines

Born: March 1, 1855, **Died:** July 10, 1935

Years as Player: 1872-91

Position: Outfield

Hines, an outstanding defensive center fielder, was among the best all-around players in the game for 20 seasons. He started his professional career with Washington of the National Association before becoming a member of the Chicago White Stockings in 1874, playing for the first National League champion in 1876.



In 1878, he joined Providence and became baseball's first Triple Crown winner when he led the league with 4 homers, 50 RBI and a .358 batting average. He followed his historic season with another batting title in 1879 (.357), while also leading the league in games, hits and total bases as the Grays won their first NL championship. In 1884, along with Old Hoss Radbourn, Hines led the Grays to the NL pennant before defeating New York of the American Association to win the first "World Series." Hines played for the Grays during their entire existence (1878–1885).

He returned to Washington for the 1886 and 1887 seasons before bouncing from Indianapolis (1888 and 1889), Pittsburgh and Boston (1890) and back to play in Washington for the Statesmen of the AA in 1891. He continued to play in the minor leagues until 1896. Hines finished his career with 1,217 runs, 2,133 hits, 549 extra-base hits, 855 RBI and a .302 batting average. At the time of his retirement, he trailed only Cap Anson and Jim O'Rourke in hits.

Hines was an Overlooked Legend finalist in 2009 and from 2011–2016, finishing seventh last year.

Sabermetric slant: Hines collected 2,133 hits over a 20-year career. That sounds like a solid, but unspectacular career, but he did it in only 1,658 games. He wasn't missing games because of injury—his teams simply played fewer games because of the short 19th century schedules. Hines' durability and production might have made him a 3,000 hit man. In fact, if you project his hit totals over 162 game seasons, he could have gotten 3,972 hits. Of

course, this is mere speculation and it is entirely unlikely he would have kept that same pace. But that does give you a general idea of how much playing time his era cost him.

Dummy Hoy

Born: May 23, 1862, **Died:** December 15, 1961

Years as Player: 1889-99, 1901-02

Position: Outfield

Hoy played 14 seasons in four major leagues, spending the most time in Cincinnati and Washington of the NL. Hoy was deaf and had difficulty speaking. Despite his challenges, he was among the best centerfielders and leadoff hitters in the game. He accumulated 2,048 hits, 1,429 runs, 121 triples, 596 stolen bases and 1,006 walks while hitting .288 with a .386 OBP. In 1901, at the age of 39, he played for the American League champion White Stockings, leading the league in walks and hit by pitches.



When he retired, he ranked ninth in games played, second in bases on balls, fourth in stolen bases and sixth in hit by pitches. He was the career leader in games played in centerfield (1,727) until 1920. Hoy has been credited with the use of hand signals in the game but that is open for debate. Still, the deaf boy from Ohio became one of the best players of his era and lived to be 99 (at the time, a record age for a former major league player).

Hoy was an Overlooked Legend finalist from 2013–2016, finishing fourth last year.

Sabermetric slant: Hoy accumulated 32.5 WAR in his career, which translates to a relatively long career at a moderately above average level. He did pull a unique WAR-related feat, however. He managed a 2+ WAR season in four different major leagues: 4.3 for Washington (National League) in 1888, 4.2 for Chicago (American League) in 1901, 3.4 for St. Louis (American Association) in 1891, and 2.6 for Buffalo (Players League) in 1890. No other player in history has done so in more than three leagues.

Bobby Mathews

Born: November 21, 1851, **Died:** April 17, 1898

Years as Player: 1869-77, 79, 81-87

Position: Pitcher



Mathews, a pioneer pitcher in the development of both the spitball and the curveball, won 297 games, including the National Association's first game in 1871. Listed as five feet, four inches and 140 pounds, Mathews played amateur ball in Maryland before joining the Fort Wayne Kekiongas in the NA.

In 1872, he joined Baltimore as their ace, winning 25 games and leading the league in strikeouts. Mathews moved again in 1873 and joined the New York Mutuals, where he would stay through the 1876 season. Mathews was their workhorse and led the league in strikeouts in 1873 and 1874, shutouts in 1874, and games started, complete games and innings pitched in 1875. Despite the Mutuals being a subpar offensive team, Mathews managed to become the third winningest pitcher in the NA's existence, behind only Albert Spalding and Dick McBride, winning 131 games.

At the end of the 1876 season, the Mutuals failed to play out their schedule and were removed from the National League, which was the beginning of an uncertain future for Mathews. From 1877 to 1882, Mathews bounced around from team to team, which ultimately cost him the three wins he needed for 300. He won just 39 games in those six seasons, although he was a key contributor as the change pitcher for the champion Providence Grays in 1879. Among his stops were the Columbus (1877) and Lynn (1878) teams of the rival International Association (considered a minor league) and a trip to the West Coast (in protest of the new reserve clause) to play for an independent team out of San Francisco in 1880. His career was rejuvenated in 1883 when he joined the Philadelphia-based Athletics of the American Association and led them to the championship. It was the first of three consecutive seasons of 30 wins for the hurler. Mathews finished his career with nearly 5,000 innings pitched and a 2.86 ERA.

Mathews was an Overlooked Legend finalist from 2009–2010 and 2012–2016, finishing fifth last year.

Sabermetric slant: Bobby Mathews had a 2.89 ERA and 104 ERA+ in 4,956 innings. Meanwhile, Old Hoss Radbourn had a 2.68 ERA and 116 ERA+ in 4,527 innings. Yet, Mathews is worth 62.3 pitching WAR while Radbourn received credit for 73.0. You would think the difference between the two would be greater. So what gives? Baseball-Reference's pitching WAR adjusts for not only era and park factors, but also strength of competition and the defense behind the pitcher. No pitcher in history was hurt more by his defense than Mathews. Mathews' defenses allowed 126 runs more than an average squad. Meanwhile, Radbourn's defenses helped him more than anyone. They allowed 146 runs fewer than average. This enormous shift closes the gap between their WAR totals considerably. But how much can we trust advanced defensive metrics from the 19th century? It's a good question. Radbourn's teams were better than Mathews', but how much of that was because of the pitching and how much was because of the defense?

Dickey Pearce

Born: February 29, 1846, **Died:** September 18, 1908

Years: 1857-1877

Position: Shortstop



Richard John “Dickey” Pearce was the first great shortstop in baseball history. Born in Brooklyn, New York, Pearce changed the way the shortstop position was played. Prior to Pearce, shortstops were rovers that primarily backed up throws and handled relays from the outfield. Pearce positioned himself on the field according to the hitter at the plate. He would play in against weak hitters and back against stronger batsmen.

At the plate, Pearce has been credited with inventing the bunt, the fair-foul hit, and possibly the sacrifice bunt and the squeeze play as well. Pearce's greatest seasons were with the legendary Atlantics of Brooklyn teams that dominated the late 1850s and 1860s. He was considered one of the first professionals, probably receiving payment for play in the early 1860s. When the Atlantics decided to join the National Association of Amateur Base Ball Players after the 1870 season, Pearce along with teammates, Bob Ferguson, Charlie Smith and Joe Start signed with the New York Mutuals of the National Association. He played two seasons in New York before heading back to Brooklyn. In 1875, he jumped to the St. Louis Brown Stockings, where he played in the National League's inaugural season. After his major league playing career was over, he continued to play semi-pro and minor league ball, did some umpiring, and was even a groundskeeper. Pearce's contribution to the game cannot be measured by his statistical numbers in the NA and NL. He was one of the game's true pioneers.

Pearce was an Overlooked Legend finalist in 2011.

Sabermetric slant: The only statistics we have for Dickey Pearce came from the very end of his career. But what we have is telling. Pearce accumulated 47 WAR fielding runs between 1871 and 1877. Only three players (Bob Ferguson, Ross Barnes, and George Wright had more). Even more amazing, those seasons all came from age 35 on. The only players with more WAR fielding runs after turning 35 were Brooks Robinson, Bob Boone, Craig Counsell, and Ozzie Smith.

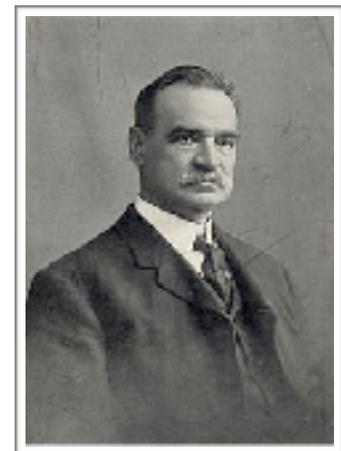
Al Reach

Born: May 25, 1840, **Died:** January 14, 1928

Years: 1858-1903

Position: Second Base/Outfield/Executive/Pioneer

Reach spent over 40 years in baseball. He was one of the best players of his era and one of the first to be paid. He played for the Eckford Club of Brooklyn from 1861-1864, participating on championship teams in 1862 and 1863. In 1865, he joined the Athletics and became their regular second baseman through the team's 1871 season when they won the National Association championship.



In 1874, he opened a sporting goods store which led to him forming the A.J. Reach Company. His company would go on to merge with Albert Spalding's sporting goods empire in 1892 but both companies retained their own identities. Reach balls, which was the official baseball of the AA from 1883-1891, became the official baseball of the American League and Reach's Official Base Ball Guide was published from 1883 to 1939. Reach became a founder and owner of the NL's Philadelphia Phillies in 1883. He sold his interest in the team in 1903. During his tenure as Phillies owner, he built a ballpark in 1887 which was called both Philadelphia Base Ball Park and Huntingdon Street Grounds. In 1894, a fire destroyed a good portion of the mostly wooden ballpark. Reach repaired and rebuilt the ballpark. In 1913, the structure was renamed Baker Bowl. It was the first modern ballpark made from brick and steel and was used by the team until 1938.

Reach was an Overlooked Legend finalist in 2013 and 2014–2016, finishing eighth last year.

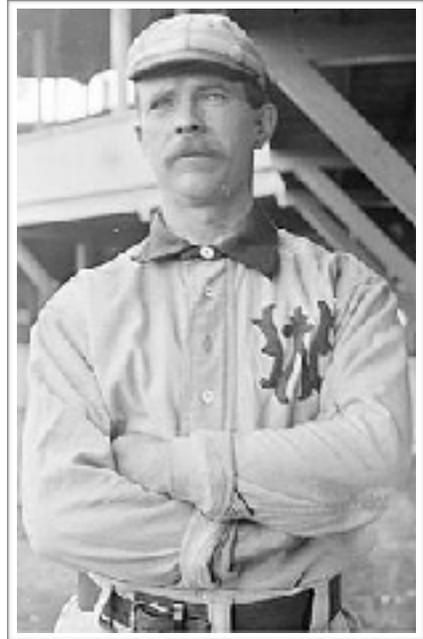
Jimmy Ryan

Born: February 11, 1863, **Died:** October 29, 1923

Years: 1885–1903

Position: Outfield

James Edward Ryan was an outstanding outfielder and lead-off man who spent almost his entire career in Chicago. He joined the White Stockings in 1885, playing for a team that won back-to-back NL pennants. The rest of his career he mostly played on mediocre to poor teams. Ryan was a leading power hitter in his day, leading the NL in 1888 with 16 homers and finishing in the Top 7 five other times. He led the league in extra base hits in 1889 and finished in the Top 6 four other times. Ryan hit 22 lead-off home runs in his career, a record until Eddie Yost passed him in 1959.



Ryan was also swift on the bases, stealing over 400 bases while hitting over 150 triples — one of only sixteen players to do so. Ryan hit for the cycle twice. The first time (in 1888), he became the only player to hit for the cycle and pitch in the same game. His second cycle came in 1891. In 1894, Ryan scored six runs in a single game (one of sixteen players to accomplish that feat, as well).

Ryan had one of the great arms in history and still ranks third all-time in outfield assists behind only Tris Speaker and Ty Cobb with 375. Ryan retired with 2,014 games (third all-time), 1,643 runs (fifth), 2,513 hits (sixth), 451 doubles (fifth), 118 homers (fourth), 1,093 RBI (twelfth), 805 walks (twelfth), 726 extra-base hits (fifth) and 3,632 total bases (fourth) while batting .308 with a .375 on-base percentage and .444 slugging percentage.

Ryan was an Overlooked Legend finalist in 2015, finishing eleventh that year.

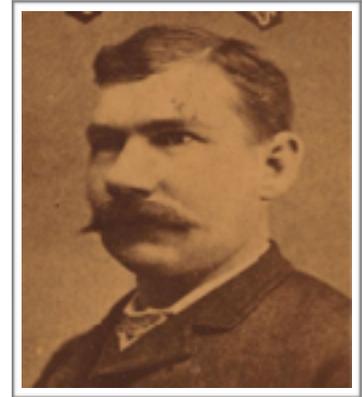
Sabermetric slant: Ryan was a remarkably consistent offensive performer. In all eighteen of his seasons, he recorded a positive Wins Above Replacement. In fact, only fifteen position players in history have had more seasons with a positive WAR without ever being negative (remarkably, Cap Anson was above replacement level in all 27 of his campaigns). Ryan was also an above average hitter (by WAR's batting runs) in his first seventeen seasons, finishing less than half a run below average in his final season.

Chris Von der Ahe

Born: October 7, 1851, **Died:** June 5, 1913

Years: 1881–99

Category: Executive/Pioneer



Von der Ahe was the owner and the “Boss President” of the St. Louis Browns from 1881 to 1899. A German immigrant, Von der Ahe started out in the grocery and saloon business before becoming a baseball entrepreneur. As early as 1875, he was involved in the organization of a local and competitive amateur St. Louis team, the Grand Avenues. By 1881, he bought controlling interest in the Sportsman’s Park and Club Association that refurbished the baseball grounds a few blocks from his Golden Lion Saloon, an early sports bar, where the Browns would play and dominate the AA.

Von der Ahe was a powerful force in the AA and has been credited with bringing baseball back to St. Louis after the Brown Stockings dropped out of the NL in 1877. He fully supported the AA’s three main differences from the NL, a cheaper admission fee that was affordable for the “common man” (25 cents), games played on Sunday, and the sale of alcohol at the ballpark. The Browns were an instant financial success and Chris put much of the profits back into the team, securing top talent and investing in many innovations that were a century before their time. During his tenure, he introduced a beer garden, a stadium club, a water ride and a race track among his many gimmicks to attract people to the park. Eventually, many of these ideas failed and contributed to his financial downfall but he planted the seed for future innovators like Bill Veeck.

Before the AA merged with the NL in 1891, the Browns would win four straight pennants (1885–1888) and the “World Series” in 1885 and 1886. He also helped keep

the AA afloat financially during their battles with the Player's League and the NL in 1890 and 1891. Von der Ahe was a finalist on the Hall of Fame's Pre-Integration ballot in 2016.

Von der Ahe was an Overlooked Legend finalist for the first time in 2016, finishing sixth.