

Society for American Baseball Research, Rogers Hornsby Chapter

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Wingo's story in baseball plus early season drama featured in April meeting





April 2024 Newsletter

By Gilbert D. Martinez

A baseball novel that weaves a tale spanning rural Arkansas, the Polo Grounds and Yankee Stadium, the start of the 2024 season, the (seeming) exoneration of Dodgers superstar Shohei Ohtani and a challenging quiz about baseball's expansion teams gave us a lot to talk about at the April meeting on Sunday.

Our fantastic hosts – Bailey Hall and her parents, Nicole Bryan-Hall and Brian Hall – provided the perfect venue for 14 members and guests to hear author and Larry Dierker Chapter member Mike Vance tell us about his recently published book, “Wingo: The Remarkable Life of an Unremarkable Man.”

Vance read from “Wingo,” the first of a duology, depicting a fictional character interacting with baseball legends and locations in New York. Among the tales he shared included one of Wingo's most challenging assignments in baseball: keeping Babe Ruth on the straight and narrow.

Vance signed books and took questions about his duology. He plans to publish the second book this summer and continue Wingo's journey to Cincinnati and Houston.

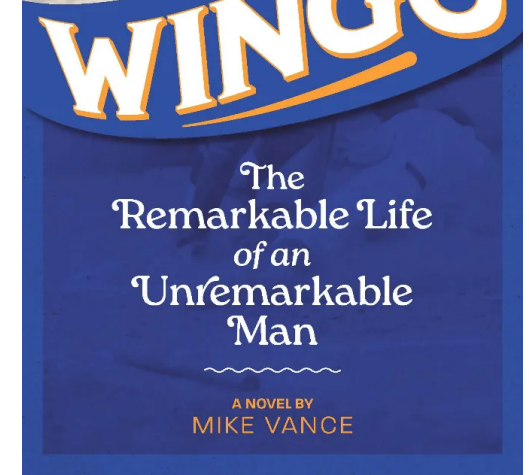
“Wingo” can be purchased at this link: <https://www.amazon.com/Wingo-Remarkable-Life-Unremarkable-Man-ebook/dp/B0CVP96ZW8>

Vance also shared with us his work on the Astros Hall of Fame Committee and gave insight into how Reid Ryan and Mike Acosta were inspired by other teams' halls of



fame to bring attention to great Astros players, broadcasters and staff.

Jim Baker sprung on us a quiz focusing on expansion clubs in MLB. Jerry Miller (pictured below, left), unbothered by the revelations involving Ohtani's former interpreter Ippei Mizuhara, easily dominated the contest with 43 points out of a maximum of 57. Special guest Mike Vance placed second with 24, and Jan Larson (pictured below, right) was third with 23. Jim generously offered prizes in the form of gift cards to Serranos, a chapter favorite, to the first- and second-place winners. Because Mike lives in a Serranos-less area between Austin and Houston, he graciously passed the gift card to Jan.



Try your hand at Jim's quiz below and see if you can top Jerry.

Expanding Horizons Quiz

By Jim Baker

I was going to do a Tax Day-themed quiz, but ran out of ideas after Bobby Pfeil and Scott "Internal Revenue" Service. Instead, everything in this quiz pertains to the 14 teams that were added to the original 16 in the latter half of the 20th Century, with an emphasis on their inaugural seasons.

Team section (1 point each; 21 total points)

1. Which of the expansion teams hosted the very first game ever played by an expansion team?
2. No expansion team ever came close to playing .500 ball, but one did manage to win 70 games in their inaugural year (and then shocked everyone by finishing third the next season). Which team was it?

3. Which current non-expansion team abandoned its old city only to be immediately replaced by a team with the same name playing in the same stadium?
4. Which expansion team won 100 games the soonest after their expansion year?
5. Which was the first expansion team to win a World Series?
6. Which expansion team won a World Championship the fastest?
7. Name the five (5) expansion teams that still *haven't* won a World Championship.
8. These two expansion teams—which share a birth year—have never won a division title.
9. Three expansion teams have relocated. Name them. For an extra point, name the expansion team that no longer uses the place name it was born with. (For purposes of this question, the Angels do not count.)
10. In addition to those four teams, two other expansion teams later either changed or altered their original names. Name them.
11. Of the 14 teams that started play in the expansion era, only one currently has a historic record over .500 (and it's by only 21 games as of yesterday). Name that team.
12. Which expansion team served as the backdrop for one of the best-selling and most-loved baseball books of all time? Need both city and team name to be correct.

Player section (2 points each, unless specified; 37 total points)

13. These two teammates on the 1993 Rockies broke and hold the record for most RBI on a first-year team with 98 each. One was a big first baseman who came from the Expos organization and would total 399 homers in his career and the other was a third baseman with a 14-year career who was yelled at by Kramer in the Seinfeld episode “The Letter.”
14. The most home runs hit by a member of a first-year expansion team was 32 by this player whose career would later be overshadowed by a Hall of Famer with the exact same name. Who was he? For an extra point, which expansion team did he play for?
15. According to b-WAR, the best season ever by a player on a first-year expansion team was 7.2 by this Houston pitcher (a lack of support left him with a 10-20 record, however). No other pitcher is close!
16. The best b-WAR ever posted (by far) by a position player on a first-year expansion team was 6.2 by this player who became the previous player's teammate in 1963. The stellar season in question came with his new team—to which he was traded, and not given up in the expansion draft.

17. These four men played for two different first-year teams. Match the players with the inaugural teams they toiled for:
- | | |
|------------------|-------------------------|
| Ron Fairly | Houston and Seattle |
| Bob Cerv | Montreal and Toronto |
| George Brunet | Los Angeles and Houston |
| Chris Cannizzaro | New York and San Diego |
18. The best-ever b-WAR by a catcher on a first-year team (1.8) was achieved by this Angels backstopper who shares a name with his Hall of Famer father, a 1930s Cleveland Indians slugger who hailed from Snohomish, Washington.
19. The best-ever b-WAR by a left fielder (3.7) and a center fielder (4.1) on a first-year team was achieved by two men named Jones. What were their first names? For an extra point each, name their teams.
20. Only five future Hall of Famers ever played for a first-year expansion team. Interestingly, they were confined to just three teams. Here are the teams: 1962 New York, 1993 Marlins, 1998 Tampa Bay. Name the five players.

Answers appear at the bottom of the newsletter.

Hornsby Chapter Bylaws

As you may know, SABR has dedicated time and resources in recent years to improve the membership experience by encouraging chapters to formalize how they operate. Examples of improvements include having chapters conduct elections for chapter leadership positions and engage in membership recruitment and retention.

SABR HQ has also recommended that chapters adopt bylaws. As you may recall, the chapter held its first chapter commissioner election last May, with Gilbert Martinez being elected to a three-year term. He also appointed directors who make up the chapter leadership team, which includes Jan Larson, Monte Cely, Ryan Pollack, Jerry Miller and Don Dingee.

Now, the chapter leadership is ready to propose bylaws to the membership. The bylaws formalize the chapter commissioner role and duties, provide for requirements for the commissioner and give details about the director roles. The bylaws also address procedures in the event a commissioner or director is no longer able to serve. In addition, the bylaws provide instructions on how to amend the bylaws.

You can download the proposed bylaws here: [April 2024 Hornsby Chapter Bylaws](#)

The chapter will conduct an election on the bylaws from May 1 to 10. Members will have the opportunity to vote yes or no on the bylaws. Please look for a formal announcement to the Google Group and through the SABR chapter list. Only current SABR members affiliated with the Hornsby Chapter are eligible to vote. The results will be shared on the chapter email lists.

Predictatron 2024

By Jim Baker

Sunday, April 7, 2024, edition

AND WE'RE OFF!

The running of the 2024 Hornsby Chapter Predictatron is underway and with 23 participants, this is our largest field in the 18-year history of the contest. **Mr. Larson** has taken the bit and moved to the head of the pack, running up a very decent total of 278 points. He leads his next-closest pursuer—rookie **Mr. Crombar**, who is also in second in the Brian Rogers Division—by 16. Being the first leader also means Mr. Larson is our first Player of the Week.

Leading things in the Raeanne Martinez Division (named for our defending champion) is **Mr. Robinson** with a score of 253, eight points better than current runner-up, **Mr. Polk**. **Mr. McNulty** rounds out the Top 5 with a score of 248.

It must be remembered, of course, that this is a very volatile time of year in this contest and wild swings can and will take place. Despair not if you currently find yourself at the bottom of the standings, for big changes are bound to come as soon as the next update.

One of the things we take a measure of after everyone has submitted their ballots is who is taking chances and who is playing it safe. One way to gauge this is to check picks compared to last season's MLB outcomes. The further a player is

from last year's standings, the "wilder" their ballot is considered. The closer, the "milder."

In other words, if a player submitted a ballot that was exactly the same as last year's final standings, their score would be 1,000—a very mild approach to be sure. This is this year's **Mild or Wild** tabulation. The Wildest score is at the top:

Mike Dillon	742
Michael Harrell	758
Gilbert Martinez	779
Tom Wancho	804
Dan Walsh	808
John Rechterovic	808
Eric Robinson	808
Don Dingee	814
Brian Rogers	823

Jan Larson	826
Mike McNulty	826
Raeanne Martinez	832
MEDIAN	832
Jim Baker	834
Frank Rechterovic	834
Team Hall	834
Ryan Pollack	839
Syd Polk	839
Michael Bass	842
Jerry Miller	842

Gary McIntosh	844
Chris Crombar	856
Scott Gay	866
Ira Siegel	887

It's something to keep in mind as the season progresses: who fares better, the risk taker or the risk averse?

Through games of Sunday, April 7, or 5.9 percent of the 2024 season:



	PLAYER	Points	PB
1	Jan Larson*	278	0
2	Chris Crombar	262	16
3	Mike McNulty	248	30
4	Tom Wancho	241	37
5	Brian Rogers	235	43
6	Frank Rechterovic	216	62
7	Dan Walsh	201	77
8	Gilbert Martinez	200	78
9	Jim Baker	198	80
9	Gary McIntosh	198	80

11	Ryan Pollack	187	91
12	Mike Dillon	124	154
	*Player of the Week		



	PLAYER	Points	PB
1	Eric Robinson	253	0
2	Syd Polk	245	8

3	Scott Gay	241	12
4	Ira Siegel	239	14
5	Jerry Miller	224	29
6	John Rechterovic	214	39
7	Michael Harrell	192	61
8	Raeanne Martinez	191	62
9	Team Hall	183	70
10	Michael Bass	164	89
11	Don Dingee	156	97

Awardatron

(Shared via email to the chapter Google Group list on April 3)

By Ryan Pollack

Greetings and salutations, baseball fans! Welcome to the 2024 season of Awardatron — I mean, err, Major League Baseball. We have just under a week's worth of games in the books, meaning of course we can make 100% accurate predictions about who will win all the awards.

First things first, some housekeeping:

- We have 17 participants this year, the most ever! So like last year, I'll be splitting the field into 2 divisions. Because this is Awardatron, I name the divisions after BBWAA award winners. Last year the divisions were named for the first-ever BBWAA MVP award winners: Frankie Frisch and Lefty Grove. This year I've chosen the 1973 Cy Young winners as our division names. When the time comes, you'll be in either the **Jim Palmer** or **Tom Seaver** Division. I alternated division assignments based on the order in which you submitted your ballot. (For the record, I am not playing.)
- Speaking of ballot submissions, the earliest submission was Syd Polk who submitted his ballot on March 17th at 11:34 AM, a full 9 days before the season started. The last ballot was submitted by Jimmy Miller on March 27th at 7:27 PM. I think a bunch of stuff happened
- Schedule:
 - I will send email updates throughout the season; roughly one per month. I keep the email lists open (non-BCC) to encourage commentary and trash talk. In each update I give a brief overview of whom I think the top 3 candidates are for each award. I sometimes base this on Vegas odds, sometimes on mathematical projections, sometimes on gut feel. I may go deeper on one or more candidates depending on how much time I have. Typically I will wax more loquacious about the Orioles, given my obvious bias.
 - **YOU CAN CHANGE ONE (1) PICK DURING THE ALL STAR BREAK.** Doing this will reduce the point total you get for that pick, but it's a way to keep yourself in the race! I'll remind you as the deadline approaches and make it clear what & when will happen.
 - After the awards are announced in mid November, I tally up everyone's scores and send out the final standings.

With that said, let's see whom we all think will win!!

Soto and Rodriguez are the clear favorites among this group, with longtime stalwart Mike Trout still inspiring some love. I love me some Kyle Tucker; I saw him bash 2 HRs in a Round Rock Express game several years ago and I continue to think he's one of the more underrated players in the game. Despite being on the Astros who get a lot of media attention, King Tuck is a pretty bland looking guy who doesn't generate a lot of buzz himself. When he stepped to the plate against Felix Bautista on August 7th last year with the bases loaded and the Astros losing 6-3 in the top of the 9th, my wife was like "Who's that guy? He looks like a huge dork." And I was like "He does look like a huge dork, but he's a really good hitter, very underrated, so I'm nervous." Turns out I had good reason to be, as Tucker blasted a grand slam that gave the Astros a 7-6 lead they held onto to win. Ugh.

Great, now I'm depressed. So I'll cheer myself up by being happy there are 2 Orioles on this list. Thank you for your votes of confidence. I'm not positive either will win, but I sure would love it if they did. I think they have the skillset to do it.

Our field in the NL seems much narrower. Many of us think there will be a repeat of last year's "Acuña Jr. or Betts?" discussion. I can see that happening. The interesting name here for me is Trea Turner. He's been continually excellent but has never had that dominant season, and he struggled much of last year with Philly. He did turn it on in the last month or so of the season and took that into the playoffs (.347 AVG, 3 HR, 9 runs scored). We shall see.

I'm so excited for Corbin Burnes on the Orioles this year. I know the rigors and randomness of baseball well, but his first start was a gem and he's been consistently very good to excellent for the past couple of years. ALSO, we didn't give up much of anything to get him. Joey Ortiz was like our 5th best infield prospect and DL Hall struggles enough with command to have 'future reliever' written on him instead of "future starter". These guys have a chance to be good in Milwaukee, for sure, and I'm rooting for them. But Burnes is way more valuable to us now than these guys are. Love love love what Mike Elias & Sig Mejdal are doing for our club.

Speaking of Orioles and pitching, I've loved watching Kevin Gausman get better over the past 3 years. He showed flashes of being good when he was with the Orioles, but our pitching development was still a trash fire at that point and so he understandably never reached his full potential (See: Arrieta, Jake). He's a borderline ace in Toronto, maybe an actual one, and I would love to face him in the playoffs. (Actually not really, I'd be scared.)

I think George Kirby has a chance to be great too. He doesn't walk anyone (2.5% walk rate in 2023, vs. the major league average of ~8.5%) and that is a huge recipe for success. Run prevention is worth more than run scoring; for this reason I think Seattle has a chance to be sneaky good this year (although in Jim Baker's Predictatron contest, I have them missing the playoffs).

I'll leave with — given that Blake Snell signed with an NL team, I think it's highly unlikely he wins the AL Cy Young award this year 😏 But who knows, CC Sabathia was nails for the Brewers in the second half of 2008 after being traded from the AL to the NL, so anything could happen ...

Speaking of the NL Cy Young, most of us think this will be Luigi's — I mean, Strider's — year. (Sorry, the baseball mustache trend is getting to me.) I think Strider had a much stronger NL Cy Young case last year than Blake Snell did. I prefer FanGraphs WAR over Baseball Reference WAR and by this measure, Strider was basically tied with Zach Wheeler for the NL lead. Snell was closer to 4th. He wasn't bad by any means, but other guys were better. This year, maybe Strider's new curveball will put him over the top. I would not bet on Snell repeating or even finishing Top 5 this year.

Pretty much consensus on the field here. I haven't read much at all about Langford, but I saw a lot of Carter in the playoffs last year so I'm excited about him. Also, he looks exactly like a co-worker of mine who is NOT ONLY a Rangers fan, BUT ALSO whose name is ALSO Evan. Uncanny.

So uh — yeah, two facts for you here. Yesterday the Orioles started Tony Kemp at second base. Meanwhile Jackson Holliday has hit 2 HR in Triple-A this year already and owns a 1.080 OPS. I get that the whole 'gaming service time' thing isn't truly stamped out, but this just makes me sad. Hopefully new Orioles owner David Rubenstein has a different philosophy when it comes to extending young talent than John Angelos did. I'm happy Angelos hired Elias and stayed out of his way, but excuse me when I say that thank fuck I don't have to think about him and his decisions for our team ever again.

Over in the NL, you have the Dodgers' *other* Japanese offseason megadeal in Yamamoto. I'll be honest, I'm on the fence about whether NPB imports should be eligible for MLB rookie awards, I know technically it's their first year in MLB. So technically yes, they are rookies. But it just doesn't sit quite right with me.

That said, Yamamoto is the heavy favorite for a reason. He didn't have a great first start, but he was much better in his second one. For a quick look at pitcher dominance I look at strikeout rate minus walk rate — K-BB% for short. By this measure Yamamoto's 23.1% is well above last year's MLB SP average of 14.2%.

I'm intrigued by the Kyle Harrison pick. I'll be honest, I didn't know who this was. Turns out I was mentally confusing him with another Giants pitching prospect, Kyle Crick. It also turns out that Crick was a Giants prospect back in 2016-ish and has since rotated through the Pirates and White Sox. This shows you how much I pay attention to the Giants, but hopefully I can burn this into my brain to land an awesome rarity score on a future Immaculate Grid.

Speaking of Kyles, whatever happened to Kyle Freeland? He was awesome in, what, 2018? And how he sucks. Kyle Hendricks is still around and doing well, right? Kyle Lewis is my sneaky ROY pick in Immaculate Grid whenever I can land him because it happened in 2020 and no one remembers what happened during that season. Okay, I promise I'm done with Kyles now.

Here we get into the category of "team that is the most positive surprise" which can sometimes be "team that most overperforms its run differential to sneak into the playoffs", which is how I correctly predicted late last season that Skip Schumaker would win the award.

Many of us think that this is the Mariners' year — *for real this time*. Will it be? It's been "this is the year, for sure!" for many years now, going back to I think like 2015. Except for 2022, the M's regularly finish just out of the playoffs. They can never seem to quite get that push to get over the line. They do however have a legitimate MVP contender in Julio Rodriguez as well as a great 1-2-3 rotation in Castillo, Kirby, and Gilbert.

The Rangers lost the handle on the division last year. While the Astros are still very good and can never be counted out, they seem a step below their days of guaranteed 95+ wins every year. Will this be enough for Servais?

Ron Washington ... I love the guy, especially his energy and his candor. Living in Austin, I was rooting hard for the Rangers in 2010 and 2011. But I just don't think the Angels have what it takes to make a run this year. Their pitching is okay, but Mike Trout probably won't play a full season. Even if he did, it wouldn't be enough.

Craig Counsell gets the “Bob-Melvin-takes-over-last-year-‘s-underperforming-team” pick here. Mike Shildt says “[Hold up](#), that’s my underperforming team.” And Bob Melvin says “... [first time?](#)”

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Thanks for playing y’all! Settle in and enjoy the season! We’ll be in touch throughout.

Frank Deford Lecture on Sports Journalism

Earlier this year, Dr. Michael Butterworth, the director of the Center for Sports Communication & Media at UT-Austin, shared an event of interest to our chapter. The center sponsored the Frank Deford Lecture on Sports Journalism on March 27. This year’s speaker was Dr. Gerald Early, a distinguished professor at Washington University of St. Louis and one of the foremost writers on baseball. Dr. Early is consulting with the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum on changes to their Black Baseball exhibit, which was the subject of his talk.

The 2024 Frank Deford Lecture in Sports Journalism

Dr. Gerald Early

Merle Kling Professor of Modern Letters
Washington University in St. Louis



Reconceiving the Baseball Hall of Fame's Black Baseball Exhibit

Supported by the McGarr Symposium on Sports and Society

Chapter member Bailey Hall attended and shared this summary with the chapter on the group email list:

I just wanted to give a quick summary of the Dr. Gerald Early talk given today at the UT Dealey Center for New Media. My mom and I went, and it was super interesting, so I figured I'd share some of my favorite parts with everyone.

As a little bit of background, Dr. Early is a professor of African and African American Studies at WASHU in St. Louis, and he has appeared in I believe all of the Ken Burns baseball documentaries. He also just seemed to be a baseball enthusiast and fan.

His talk was about the reimagining and design of the updated Negro Leagues exhibit at the Hall of Fame Museum in Cooperstown. He talked about quite a few interesting details like how they arrived at a name for the exhibit, what needed to be updated (because the exhibit hadn't been changed since the 1997), and how to portray the players. He talked also gave a bit of history about the Negro Leagues in general, and said something very interesting: he explained that for the Negro Leagues, the game that drew the biggest turnout was the all star game, and not the World Series. If anyone knows why that is, please let me know, because I was super curious about that! He also explained the nuances of how to portray Jackie Robinson because the board was concerned with how to, or if they should, display his political ideals. Robinson, according to Early, was a pretty vocal republican, and apparently there were board members who thought that this would "tarnish" Robinson's legacy as a hero in civil rights. Early explained that he disagreed with this, believing that the point of a museum is to display all of the facts regardless of how people will take it. He then talked about the discussions that led to the naming of the book that goes with the exhibit. They landed on the name "Play Harder", and explained that this was a really meaningful phrase in the Negro Leagues and for black players in general; many famous black major leaguers and Negro leaguers have been quoted saying "play harder" as an expression of perseverance and as a response to the racial backlash they faced.

There were tons more of these little anecdotes like these, so if anyone is curious, please let me know!

Many thanks to Bailey for attending and sharing!

Next meeting: Round Rock Express game at the Dell Diamond!

The May meeting will be our first baseball outing of the year. We're attending the 7:15 p.m. Saturday, May 11, game between the Round Rock Express and the Las Vegas Aviators. There will be a post-game Star Wars-themed drone show. As is the chapter's custom, we'll plan to meet for barbecue at 5:30 p.m. at Salt Lick, located near the Dell Diamond. A call for RSVPs will go out in early May. Hope you can join us!

If you plan to join us, please purchase your own ticket in Section 121, Rows 23 and 24. I've purchased seats 21 and 22 in Row 24. Here's the link: https://mlb.tickets.com/?orgId=22433&agency=MILB__MPV&eventId=26031#/event/E26031/seatmap/?seatmapId=9504&selectBuyers=false&minPrice=15&maxPrice=67&quantity=2&sort=price__desc&ada=false&seatSelection=true&onlyCoupon=true&onlyVoucher=false

Quiz Answers

Team section (1 point each)

1. The "new" Washington Senators, 4/10/1961 vs. Chicago White Sox
2. Los Angeles Angels
3. Minnesota Twins
4. Arizona Diamondbacks, year 2 (100-62)
5. New York Mets, 1969
6. Arizona Diamondbacks, year 4
7. a. Pilots/Brewers Mariners c. Tampa Bay d. Rockies e. Padres
8. Marlins b. Rockies
9. WAS/TEX b. MTL/WAS c. SEP/MIL d. FLA/MIA Marlins
10. Houston Colt .45s/Astros b. Tampa Bay Devil Rays/Rays
11. Houston Colt .45s/Astros; 4925-4904 through Saturday
12. Seattle Pilots, *Ball Four* by Jim Bouton

Player section (2 points each)

13. Andres Galarraga and Charlie Hayes
14. Frank Thomas, 1962 Mets
15. Turk Farrell
16. Rusty Staub
17. Fairly MTL-TOR (AS); Cerv, LAA-HOU; Brunet HOU-SEP; Cannizzaro NYM-SDP
18. Earl Averill (his father was known as the “Earl of Snohomish”)
19. Rupert Jones, 1977 Mariners b. Mack Jones, 1969 Expos
20. Gil Hodges/Richie Ashburn, 62NYM; Trevor Hoffman, 93FLA; Wade Boggs/Fred McGriff, 98TBR



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