



## **Chapter Newsletter**

### December 2019

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to date on chapter

### **ON DECK!**

#### **“Talkin’ Baseball”**

Saturday, January 4, 2020, 12noon lunch (on your own)  
Golden City Restaurant, 5375 Kearny Villa Rd., San Diego

#### **Regional Meeting**

Saturday, January 25, 2020, 9:45 a.m. (doors open 9:30 a.m.)  
North University Community Library, 8820 Judicial Drive, San Diego

### **PROGRAM: JANUARY 25, 2020, REGIONAL MEETING**

#### **A Chat with Broderick Perkins**

Mostly a first baseman, Perkins played in the major leagues for seven seasons, 1978-1984. Selected by the Padres in the 1976 draft he played for two major league teams, the Padres (1978-1982) and Cleveland Indians (1983-1984). In November 1982 Perkins and Juan Eichelberger were traded to the Indians for pitcher Ed Whitson.



#### **Professional Baseball in California Before 1957**

Baseball historians *Carlos Bauer* and *Bill Swank* will team to present a capsule history of professional baseball, in particular the Pacific Coast League (PCL) as it existed on the West Coast prior to MLB expansion to California in 1957. Bauer will discuss the highlights of the PCL’s rich history with a focus on the special teams and great players in the era leading up to 1957. Swank will cover the history of San Diego’s PCL Padres (1936-1957) and the major league players who barnstormed and populated the California leagues, both winter and summer. For example, players here in San Diego in 1907 included future Hall of Famer Walter “Big Train” Johnson and “Chief” Meyers who played in four World Series games.

### 1949: Bucky Harris, the Surprise Padres' Pilot – A Stalled Career Meets a Struggling Franchise

After winning the World Series in his first year as the Yankees skipper in 1947, future Hall of Fame manager, Bucky Harris was fired at the conclusion of the 1948 season. His crime was finishing a mere 2.5 games out of first place despite navigating the Bronx Bombers through an injury-ridden season. *Bob Hicks* will tell us about the fascinating career of “Boy Wonder” Bucky Harris and how he found respite in sunny San Diego by managing the 1949 Padres Pacific Coast League baseball club.

## RECAP: DECEMBER 8, 2019 REGIONAL MEETING

SABR's Chief Executive Officer Scott Bush headlined this special meeting and provided an update on numerous activities underway and planned for SABR, plus offered some comments about the current tussle between MLB and the minor leagues.

First, some background on Scott: He joined SABR in 2018 after serving as the Senior Vice President for Business Development with the Goldklang Group, a sports entertainment consulting and management firm. Since graduating from the University of Minnesota, Bush has held positions with increasing responsibilities in both sports and media, including a five-year stint as Assistant General Manager for the St. Paul Saints, where he played a key role in establishing CHS Field in St. Paul, Minnesota.



Scott noted that upcoming activities for SABR in the new year include publishing a book on 50 years of SABR research to be titled *SABR 50 at 50*. It will be an anthology of the essential baseball research SABR has published over the years. He also covered some priority areas for SABR, one of which is to attract new and younger members. Scott pointed out that student membership has doubled in 2019. Another priority is to expand the Diamond Dollars Case Competition at the SABR Analytics Conference by hosting four more regional competitions across the country. The next annual convention, SABR50, will be held in Baltimore in July. Finally, he announced that the nearly 200,000 player cards obtained from *The Sporting News* had been completely digitized by SABR volunteers and would be released to the public via the LA84 web site the next day (i.e., December 9, 2019).

The meeting concluded with an interesting discussion of the emerging conflict between MLB and the minor leagues.

## RECAP: OCTOBER 26, 2019 REGIONAL MEETING

Our October 26 regional meeting featured two speakers, Bob Bavasi and Rocky Craig. We also had an open discussion moderated by Dan Boyle on the subject of “Making the Call...and Getting it Right!”

Bavasi led off. He is the son of our NL Padres’ first team President, Buzzie Bavasi. Bob has had a varied baseball career on the business-side of things and spoke to us about baseball in Japan (ref: [www.JapanBall.com](http://www.JapanBall.com)). While the basic game is the same in Japan as here, Bob covered the numerous differences that exist within the rules, fan behavior, and the entertainment surrounding the game itself.



Examples of  
Exuberant Fans  
in Japan



Our second speaker was former minor leaguer, and San Diegan (Madison HS), Rocky Craig. Rocky covered a bunch of stories from his seven seasons in minor-league baseball spanning coast to coast. Mainly in the Royals organization his last season was 1976 when he was a player-coach with the Amarillo Gold Sox, a Padres farm team.



Third up on our program was an open discussion led by our chapter’s past president and current treasurer, Dan Boyle, involving all in attendance. The subject was about some of the new ideas being tested in the Atlantic League and the Fall League with regard to calling balls and strikes. The general consensus was that “Robo Umps” would continue to be evaluated—mainly the technology—and would likely be part of major league baseball umpiring sometime in the next few years.



## TED SIMMONS: HALL OF FAMER, AND DESERVEDLY SO

by Geoff Young

*On December 8, 2019, Ted Simmons was elected to the Hall of Fame by the latest incarnation of the Veteran's Committee. It represented a certain vindication for his having been kicked off the ballot after one year in 1994 despite being one of the best catchers in baseball history, while other, lesser players continued to receive consideration.*

*Back in 2008, I explored Simmons' candidacy and premature dismissal in great detail at [The Hardball Times](#). What follows is an abbreviated and updated version of my findings at that time along with additional analysis.*

The St. Louis Cardinals selected Simmons out of Southfield (Mich.) High School with the 10th overall pick of the 1967 draft. He reached St. Louis by the end of 1968, at age 18, and stuck with the big club two years later. After a brief adjustment period, he became an offensive beast and remained so for the first ten full seasons of his career:

Years	G	PA	BA	OBP	SLG	OPS+	WAR
1971-1980	1475	6106	.301	.367	.466	131	44.7

Simmons averaged 148 games per season during that decade, including 135 behind the plate. He caught 130-plus games seven times, breaking the 140-game threshold four times and the 150-game mark twice. He led his league in games caught three times and ranks 16th all time.

The '80s were less kind to Simmons, who had been worked extremely hard the previous decade at a demanding position. Still, he managed to put together a few decent seasons before hanging up the proverbial spikes:

Years	G	PA	BA	OBP	SLG	OPS+	WAR
1981-1988	892	3235	.260	.313	.395	98	5.4

Although a shadow of his former self, Simmons remained somewhat productive almost until the end. He didn't catch much after 1983, was terrible in 1984, and finally succumbed to a bench role in 1986. Still, he mostly held his own and made two All-Star teams during that span.

Admittedly, "held his own" is hardly a suitable criterion for inclusion in the Hall of Fame, but this ignores Simmons' earlier stellar body of work. The fact is, catchers don't age well, especially if they are worked hard.

Compared to other backstops, Simmons stacks up quite well. Only nine catchers have more WAR (Baseball-Reference's version). All of them except for Joe Mauer, who is not yet eligible, are in the Hall of Fame. Of the hundreds below Simmons, Mickey Cochrane, Buck Ewing, Ernie Lombardi, Roger Bresnahan, Roy Campanella, Ray Schalk, Rick Ferrell, and Al Lopez are in as well. He is a worthy addition and has been for decades.

My original conclusion read as follows:

*I'm not sure that Simmons belongs in the Hall of Fame. I'm not sure that he doesn't either. My instinct tells me that if [Gary] Carter belongs, then so probably does Simmons. It's not a strong instinct, though, and I'd be receptive to hearing further arguments from either side. What I am certain about, however, is that Simmons is an eminently worthy candidate who deserved far more serious consideration than he ever received.*

In retrospect, my comparison of Simmons to Carter was unfair. There's little doubt that Carter was the better player. At the same time, Simmons was at least as good as Cochrane and Lombardi, if not better.

The Hall of Fame has been notoriously stingy in admitting catchers. I'm still not *sure* that Simmons belongs in Cooperstown, but based on the available evidence, I think it's far more likely that he does than does not and I'm glad to see him finally get the recognition he deserves.

\* \* \*

### Retrospective: Chapter History from 19 Years Ago!

The photo at the right was taken when Ted Simmons joined us at our chapter's July 5, 2000, regional meeting held in the Qualcomm Stadium Press Box. He was then with the Padres as the team's Vice President for Scouting and Player Development.



Tom Larwin, Ted Simmons

## FYI: TED WILLIAMS CHAPTER STEERING COMMITTEE

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## A PEEK AT SAN DIEGO BASEBALL HISTORY: APRIL 17, 1981

Hall of Famer Tony Gwynn made his MLB debut on July 19, 1982. However, 15 months earlier he was playing baseball for San Diego State University (SDSU). He also had been getting notice, as both a basketball player as well as in baseball. In fact, his first mention in *The Sporting News* was on November 8, 1980 issue...as a basketball player!

On the next page is a copy of an article from the April 17, 1981 *San Diego Union*, by Bill Finley, which introduces an Aztec who "...speaks softly but carries a big stick."

# Tony Gwynn

## Aztec Speaks Softly But Carries Big Stick

By BILL FINLEY  
Staff Writer, The San Diego Union

There is nothing unusual about the bat belonging to Tony Gwynn.

Resting there in the bat rack at San Diego State, it could be confused with any of the rest, but the Aztecs know full well how different it is.

"I'm not sure I've ever seen a bat with so many hits in it," Aztec shortstop Bobby Meacham will tell you.

"That thing could hit line drives in the dark," Coach Jim Dietz will add.

When in the clutches of Gwynn, it may be the loudest bat in all of college baseball. Certainly it was one of the featured attractions when San Diego State defeated New Mexico 8-0 yesterday at Smith Field.

Gwynn went 1-for-3 at the plate, scored a run and knocked in one in a seven-run second inning to support the five-hit pitching of Vic Martin (6-1). The only bigger bat this day was in the hands of Aztec center fielder Kevin Wiggins, who went 2-for-3 with two RBIs and had a solo home run in the sixth.

Nor will the presence of Gwynn likely go unnoticed today when the same two Western Athletic Conference teams play a double-header, beginning at 4 o'clock.

Remember, now, that as recently as March 7 Gwynn scored 16 points and contributed 16 assists for the Aztec basketball team. He is much better known as a guard than he is as a left fielder. But Gwynn — and that bat of his — are having a rather remarkable spring.

— On the day he reported for baseball, March 9, the 5-10, 185-pounder collected five runs batted in during a double-header against Southern California College.

— In 33 games, Gwynn has 58 hits and 44 RBIs.

— Finally, he leads the team with a batting average of .460.

"I can honestly say he's one of the best college hitters I've ever seen," Dietz submits. "I really believe he's capable of hitting .300 at any level because there just aren't any weaknesses in his stroke. He can hit any pitch, in any location, and I mean he can hit that pitch hard. We've never even worked with him on his hitting; we didn't want to screw him up."

In truth, Gwynn was always considered a better prospect in baseball than basketball. As a senior at Long Beach Poly, he batted .563. He was recruited by Arizona State and Fullerton State, both full-fledged national powers.

Now, for the first time, he is devoting his energies solely to baseball and chances are excellent he will be taken in the upcoming professional draft.

Interestingly, Gwynn is not overly impressed with his rare ability to strike pitched baseballs.

"I don't know why, exactly, but I've always been able to hit," he explained. "I have good hand-eye coordination, that's probably the biggest thing, but even when I was little I could usually make contact. There were times in high school when I felt every time I came up that I'd get a hit. It's always come so natural to me, I don't even think about it. I get a bigger thrill out of making a nice play in the outfield or throwing a guy out."

Gwynn also suspects the two fellows hitting before him in the Aztec batting order have more than a little to do with the numbers he is posting this year.

Al Newman and Meacham have combined to steal 72 bases in 48 games; opposing pitchers tend to notice their presence at first base.



The San Diego Union/John Gibbins

### Slugger Tony Gwynn takes batting practice.

"I see a lot of good pitches," Gwynn shrugged. "If you throw a curve when those two guys are on, you might as well give them second base, because they're going to steal it anyway."

The keys to hitting, Gwynn says, are concentration and confidence. The key to .460 is keeping oneself out of a prolonged slump.

"I've only had one bad stretch all year, during the Sun-Lite Classic," he noted. During this one, miserable spell Gwynn was only 4-for-16. In his slumps, then, Gwynn hits .250.

Gwynn does not consider himself a power hitter — "I just try to make contact. If you can hit the ball someplace you can make something happen." — but he has five home runs, three in the last week.

Because the left-handed hitter is so accomplished while swinging the bat, it is tempting to consider him a one-dimensional player, but he is not.

"He makes plays in the outfield you can't believe," Dietz said. "He made a couple of catches in the wind in El Paso that just shouldn't have been made."

Gwynn does not have an exceptional arm, but Dietz thinks it will improve.

"When you're spending half the year trying to shoot soft, one-handed jump shots, you can't afford to strengthen your arm too much," the coach said. "Now that Tony is throwing every day, now that he's stretching and strengthening the arm, it's going to get stronger. It's something he can work on and improve."

One thing that needs no improvement is the method with which he swings his bat. If Tony Gwynn was not born to play baseball it did not take him long to learn.

April 17, 1981, San Diego Union