

Society for American Baseball Research, Rogers Hornsby Chapter

Serving Central and South Texas Since 2006

200th Consecutive Meeting Sees First Pitch, Tight Game, and Baseball Talk Galore

July 2023 Newsletter

Monthly Meeting Summary

On July 23rd, 12 chapter members braved the 102-degree heat and 65-degree dew point to watch the Round Rock Express host the Reno Aces at Dell Diamond in Round Rock, TX.

The game was a tense affair that the Aces won by a score of 3-1. They took an early 1-0 lead and threatened to expand it with 10 hits, but failed to actually increase the lead until Pavin Smith hit a two-run home run in the 8th inning. In the bottom half, the Express managed to load the bases with a few walks but could push across only one run. The Aces won, 3-1. Here's the [box score](#).



The gathering was the 200th consecutive monthly meeting of the chapter, dating from December 2006. Hornsby Chapter Commissioner Gilbert Martinez was unable to join the meeting but praised chapter members for their dedication and commitment. “This streak demonstrates the strong community that founder Bill Gilbert created and that we have all maintained for more than 16 years during the streak,” Martinez said. “We’ve fostered strong friendships built around all aspects of baseball.”

Here’s a photo of attendees gathered around a commemorative “200” sign comprising two baseball jerseys:

The #20 jersey is from a Josh Gibson Homestead Grays jersey; behind it is the “0” from a #10 worn by chapter member Jerry Miller.

While watching the game unfold, members discussed many baseball topics including the Orioles’ takeover of first place in the AL East (and conversely, the once-dominant Rays falling to second place), speculation on whether the Angels will trade Shohei Ohtani, the absence of 15+ inning games due to the automatic runner on second base, and LSU’s recent victory at the College World Series. Additionally, several on-field challenges to balls and strikes prompted discussion about whether this challenge system should be used instead of automated balls and strikes, or even at all!

Prior to the game, chapter member Nancy Finley threw out the first pitch. Here

she is walking off the mound:

Nancy's book, [Finleyball](#), is an excellent history of the A's move from Kansas City to Oakland under owner Charles Finley. Nancy is Charles' niece and had a close-up view; her father Carl helped run the team for many years.

Chapter News

Hornsby Chapter Named as One of Best

The Rogers Hornsby Chapter proudly received the “Starting Lineup” certification from SABR HQ. It's one of only eight chapters, out of more than 80 worldwide, to receive one of the available “Starting Lineup”, “All Star”, or “MVP” certifications. SABR HQ now certifies chapters nationwide who do things like elect officers and establish chapter bylaws.

“We're thrilled with this recognition from SABR,” Commissioner Gilbert Martinez said. “We've long known that we're a good, active chapter with great members, but it's encouraging to be recognized by the national organization.”

In addition to having regular monthly meetings, an annual winter meeting and baseball prediction contests and trivia quizzes, the Hornsby Chapter took major steps to meet criteria created by SABR. For example, the chapter held its first election for chapter commissioner in May. In addition, the chapter is working on bylaws to meet another requirement by SABR.

“We look forward to doing more to achieve a higher ranking in the coming years,”

Martinez added.

Research Highlights and Discussions

Chapter members utilize the email listserv to share research and socialize between meetings. Here's some of what we shared since the last update:

- Syd Polk kept us [apprised](#) of the Oakland A's chances at being a historically bad team. He's been updating us on their chances all season! And he had plenty to write about: not only did the A's win seven in a row to start June, but the team may not even finish with the sport's worst record, thanks to the fumbblings of the we-thought-they'd-be-bad-but-not-*this*-bad Kansas City Royals.
- Tom Thayer quizzed the group with the question: "Who is the only player who played at least 10 years in MLB with an OPS+ of 125 or more each year in the majors?" (You can find the answer at the bottom of this post.)
- The group panned the A's seemingly finalized move to Las Vegas. The main discussion revolved around the fact that Las Vegas is not only a much smaller market than the Bay Area, the city also has popular NHL and NFL teams that will compete for fans' attention and dollars.
- Jerry Miller shared an informative New York Times [article](#) about Carl Erskine, still going strong at age 96.
- Don Dingee started a lively discussion about the rule that prevents catchers from blocking home plate if they don't have the ball in hand. The rule reared its head on back-to-back days in June; first Texas' Jonah Heim was called for violating it, then San Diego's Gary Sanchez was called the very next day.

That's just the tip of the iceberg! We talked about many more things. If you're a chapter member, email Jan Larson at jan.a.larson@gmail.com to participate in the discussions.

Baseball Memories Project Update

On July 19th, Monte and Linda Cely, Ira Siegel, Jerry Miller and Mike Dillon facilitated a Baseball Memories session at the Round Rock [AGE of Central Texas](#) for a diverse group of 29 attendees at the facility. The Baseball Memories project, active since 2015, is a community service outreach program that uses baseball as a theme to improve the quality of life for those living with dementia, isolation, loneliness, and other long-term health issues. The program is resuming in-person sessions after a hiatus caused by the pandemic.

Likewise, Jim Kenton and the “Baseball Guys” team are now back in person at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Kerrville. This program is a big hit with the resident veterans, and Jim advises that twelve vets attended the most recent gathering.

For more information or to get involved, [visit the website](#).

Predictatron Update

Jim Baker runs the chapter’s Predictatron contest, wherein members submit pre-season predictions of teams’ end-of-season win totals and predict who will make the playoffs. Jim updates the standings weekly as teams’ records change.

In the most recent update, he shared how he had gained enough points recently to tie Ryan Pollack for the most points in not just his division, but also the entire contest. Many other players improved their scores as well, a contrast to earlier updates in which many players lost points overall.

Awardatron Update

The Awardatron contest challenges chapter members to predict the four major BBWAA awards in both leagues: MVP, Cy Young, Rookie of the Year, and Manager of the Year. Members submit predictions prior to the season's first pitch and receive points for how their picks place in the voting. Members can change one pick during the All-Star Break in exchange for reduced points.

At the Break, two categories shuffled around the most. Perhaps owing to a large amount of uncertainty around pitchers' value, three members changed their AL Cy Young pick and three also changed their NL Cy Young pick. In the AL, two participants changed to Framer Valdez; one changed to Shane McClanahan. In the NL, Spencer Strider, Marcus Stroman, and Zac Gallen got midseason votes of confidence. Shohei Ohtani remains the AL MVP favorite, Ronald Acuña Jr. remains the NL MVP favorite, Gunnar Henderson remains the AL ROY favorite, and Corbin Carroll remains the NL ROY favorite.

Next Meeting

The Rogers Hornsby Chapter isn't satisfied with 200 consecutive monthly meetings! The 201st is planned for Saturday, August 5th at 1 PM. It will be an online Zoom meeting; link details will be shared on the Google Group listserv soon.

Trivia Answer: "Indian" [Bob Johnson](#) who played for the A's and Red Sox in the 30's and 40's.

 Ryan Pollack / July 25, 2023 / Hornsby News /

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