

**2016 SABR Jack Kavanagh Memorial Youth Baseball Research Award Winner
Middle School Division**

**Bill Dinneen: An Overlooked Hero
By Owen Randell**

William Henry “Bill” Dinneen (sometimes spelt “Dineen”) was one of the finest pitchers of the deadball era and highly appreciated as an umpire after his playing days. “Bill” was born on the 5th of April 1876 in Syracuse, New York, and in 1898 he started his 40-year major league baseball career. After posting an incredible 21-8 season in 1897 with the Toronto Canucks, he joined the majors playing with the short-lived Washington Senators (the first of three franchises with the same name). In his two seasons in Washington he had respectable ERA’s (4.00 and 3.93) before the National League removed the team and three others in order to shrink the league.

After the Senators folded in 1899, Dinneen was signed with the Boston Beaneaters (currently known as the Atlanta Braves) where his career blossomed. He pitched his first (of four) 20-win+ season in the majors as well as drawing second for wins and triumphing over Honus Wagner for second in WAR (wins above replacement). He had a decent season in 1901 with 15 wins and in 1902 finally moved to the Boston Americans (now the Boston Red Sox).

His momentum began in 1902, when despite leading the AL in losses; he pitched a 21 win season and continued to be one of the best hitting pitchers of his era (the designated hitter rule wasn’t adopted in the American League until 1973). He followed with an outstanding 1903 season posting on of the league’s best ERA that season (2.26) and achieving his second consecutive 20-win season. He also led the league in saves. In the nation’s first World Series he is highly credited for winning three of the games as well as posting a record (at the time) of 11 strikeouts in game two of the series. He is one of just 13 people to win three games in a single World Series. He also threw 28 strikeouts, which places him fourth behind Sandy Koufax and Bob Gibson for strikeouts in a single series. In my, and many others’ opinions, Dinneen outperformed the opposing overlooked Deacon Phillippe, and arguably even Cy Young himself. With two shutouts (a feat only five people have accomplished) and many other records, Bill Dinneen’s 1903 series goes down in history as one of the greatest pitching performances in World Series history.

The landmark point of Dinneen’s career came in the form of his 1904 season. He posted his third-consecutive (fourth of his career) 20-win season, and a career-high 2.20 ERA. He also pitched 37 consecutive complete games earning the record for the most consecutive innings without being relieved (337 consecutive). In the final day of the ’04 season, the American’s played the New York Highlanders (now the New York Yankees) in a doubleheader. The Highlanders’ season had been spearheaded by Hall of Famer Jack Chesbro’s incredible pitching; throwing a record breaking 41 wins (still the only 40-win season to this day). The Americans

needed to win at least one of the doubleheaders to win the pennant, and the Highlanders needed to win both to steal it from them. Dinneen faced Chesbro in a fierce pitching battle in the first game, in the ninth inning the Americans pulled ahead to win 3-2. This game was one of the early sparks in a century long rivalry.

The rest of Dinneen's career was different. His streak had ended, his arm had worn out and he had pitched too much. In 1905 he posted a 12-14 season, a 3.73 ERA (his past four seasons he had below a 3.00 ERA) and one save (joint second in the AL). After being traded to the St. Louis Browns in 1907, he had a fairly successful season, leading the AL in saves (4).

One of the more famous parts of Bill Dinneen's career was his umpiring. When he retired from playing in 1909, he immediately took up umpiring and had a very successful career calling balls and strikes for almost 30 seasons. He umpired the first half of the first All-Star game, eight different World Series and five no-hitters. He remains the first and only person to pitch and umpire a no-hitter.

Dinneen's eight World Series umpired is the record for any AL umpire, only tying with Hall of Famer Tommy Connolly. Another notable game he umpired was the Detroit Tiger versus the Philadelphia Athletics on May 18th 1912, where the Tigers refused to play because of Ty Cobb's suspension. The Tigers ended up using coaches and spectators to play the game, and lost 24-2. He was the home plate umpire for Babe Ruth's 60th Home Run of the 1927 season, the record for the most homers in a 154-game season.

Bill Dinneen also places highly on many umpiring record boards. He is 18th overall for the most games umpired, which puts him ahead of Hall of Famers Jocko Conlan, Hank O'Day and Nestor Chylak. He also places sixth for games as the home plate umpire (umpire-in-chief).

In 1946, Dinneen was inducted into the "Honor Rolls of Baseball," which was an attempt to create a Hall of Fame for writers, umpires, executives, managers and other contributors to baseball that weren't players. "Bill" eventually passed away on January 13, 1955 due to a heart condition.

Bibliography

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