

SUNDAY BASEBALL TIDBITS

JUNE 2020

Baseball tidbits newsletter – interesting and random stuff, fodder for bar bets

Good morning, as MLB and the Players Association do their best to screw up a 2020 season here are a few items for you reading pleasure.

Draft Stuff

Chipper Jones was drafted as a shortstop, first overall pick in 1990 by Atlanta.

Barry Bonds, Reggie Jackson and Jim Palmer all played for Arizona State.

Tom Seaver, Mark McGwire and Randy Johnson all played for USC.

Jackie Robinson, Gerrit Cole and Chase Utley all played for UCLA.

21 players went directly from the draft to the big leagues including Dave Winfield, Bob Horner, John Olerud, Jim Abbott, Pete Incaviglia, Burt Hooten.

Remembering How Good Dwight Gooden was as a Teenager

Doc Gooden, drafted at age 17 in 1982. In 1983 he struck out 300 batters in 191 innings in Class-A Lynchburg.

1984. Let's talk about strikeouts per nine innings. The first starter to strike out more than a batter per inning in a full season was the lefty phenom Herb Score in 1955. He struck out 245 batters in 227 1/3 innings (9.7 strikeouts per nine innings). That was unheard of stuff. The greatest strikeout pitchers up to Score — [Bob Feller](#), Rube Waddell, [Walter Johnson](#), Dazzy Vance, Hal Newhouser and so on — would average seven or eight strikeouts per nine innings.

After Score, there was [Sandy Koufax](#) — in 1962, he struck out 216 in 184 1/3 innings, or 10.5 batters per nine innings. Three years later, Sudden Sam McDowell struck 325 batters in 273 innings, 10.7 batters per nine innings. And that was the standard until Gooden came along. [Nolan Ryan](#) routinely struck out 10 or so batters per nine innings throughout the 1970s. J.R. Richard did it a couple of times late in the decade.

At age 19 Gooden set a rookie record for strikeouts with 276, he led the league in FIP, WHIP, hits per nine, homers per nine and, yes, strikeouts per nine. He averaged 11.4 strikeouts per nine innings. Nobody had ever struck out 11 per nine innings before.

The record has changed hands a few times since then. Nolan Ryan (11.5 K/9) broke Gooden's record in 1987. Randy Johnson became the first pitcher to average 12 strikeouts per nine innings. Rookie Kerry Wood broke that record. Pedro Martínez became the first pitcher to average 13 strikeouts per nine innings in 1999. Johnson took the record back in 2001. And finally, last season, Gerrit Cole broke the record by striking out 13.8 batters per nine.

Then he backed it up. In 1985 Gooden had perhaps the greatest pitching season of the past 100 years. He went 24-4 with a 1.53 ERA, he led the league in innings (276 2/3), strikeouts (268), 16 complete games, 8 shutouts.

1996 Yankees

Year: 1996

NLDS: Braves over Dodgers in 3; Cardinals over Padres in 3

ALDS: Yankees over Rangers in 4; Orioles over Indians in 4

LCS: Braves over Cardinals in 7; Yankees over Orioles in 5

World Series winner: Yankees over Braves in six

MVPs: AL: [Juan Gonzalez](#), Rangers; NL: [Ken Caminiti](#), Padres

Cy Youngs: AL: [Pat Hentgen](#), Blue Jays; NL: [John Smoltz](#), Braves

Rookies of the Year: AL: [Derek Jeter](#), Yankees; NL: [Todd Hollandsworth](#), Dodgers

They only won 92 games. They didn't have a single 30-homer hitter, or a starter with an ERA under 3.80, or a single player in the top 10 in MVP voting.

That team had the usual Yankees veterans, a cornucopia of "That Guy" names, from Dwight Gooden to Mariano Duncan to Cecil Fielder, Darryl Strawberry and Tim Lincecum. But it was the young guys, the guys who would seed that Yankees team for the next decade, who were the sparks: Jeter, Pettitte, Jorge Posada, Rivera and Bernie Williams. (It should really be the Core Five.) The team also had its great moments, from Jeter taking over for an injured Tony Fernandez, to Rivera becoming Mo, [to Jeffrey Maier](#). (Who is now 36 years old, by the way.) And it had a wild comeback victory in the World Series, when, down 2-1 in the Series and 6-0 in Game 4, they fought all the way back, culminating in Jim Leyritz's game-tying three-run homer. Boggs would get a bases-loaded walk in the 10th to take the lead, the Yankees would win the game and three days later Boggs -- the former Red Sox nemesis -- was riding around Yankee Stadium on a horse, with a championship ring.

Close but No Milestone

[Lou Gehrig](#): 493 home runs, 1,995 RBIs

[Al Kaline](#): 399 home runs, 498 doubles

[Fred McGriff](#): 493 home runs

[Andrés Galarraga](#): 399 home runs

[Dale Murphy](#): 398 home runs

[Tommy John](#): 288 wins

[Bert Blyleven](#): 287 wins

Think About It

Ted Williams played in 2292 games. He did not reach base in 267 of them.

Barry bonds walked 232 times in 2004.

And a repeat but a favorite-- Rivera was at his finest when the stakes were the highest. He secured 42 saves and owned a 0.70 ERA in 96 postseason appearances, all records. More people have walked on the moon (12) than have scored an earned run off Rivera in the postseason (11).

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Another oops. Jim Palmer did not play for Arizona state (he signed with the Orioles right out of high school in 1963, pitched in the minors in '64 and debuted with the O's at age 19 in 1965.

However, 111 ASU players reached the majors including Sal Bando, Rick Monday, Reggie Jackson, Gary Gentry, Larry Gura, Floyd Bannister, Bob Horner, Barry Bonds, Dustin Pedroia and Ian Kinsler.

Great Last Seasons

Ted Williams, 1960 age 41. Hit .316 and 29 HRs. BTW Williams lifetime .344 average is the highest of all members of the 500 HR club.

Sandy Koufax, 1966 age 30. Led the majors in wins (27), ERA (a career-best 1.73), complete games (27), shutouts (five), innings (323) and strikeouts (317), unanimously winning his third Cy Young Award and placing second in NL MVP Award voting for the second straight year.

Mike Mussina, 2008 age 39. 20 wins, 200 1/3 innings and leading the AL with 34 starts. He became the first pitcher to retire after a 20-win season since Koufax.

Ken Holtzman for Ryne Sandberg?

June 8, 1965: Cubs select lefty Ken Holtzman in the fourth round of the MLB Draft

Nov. 29, 1971: Cubs trade Ken Holtzman to A's for center fielder Rick Monday

Jan. 11, 1977: Cubs trade Monday and right-hander Mike Garman to the Dodgers for first baseman Bill Buckner, shortstop Iván de Jesus and right-hander Jeff Albert

Jan. 27, 1982: Cubs trade de Jesus to Phillies for shortstop Larry Bowa and infielder Ryne Sandberg

Tim McCarver for Willie McGee?

June 8, 1959: Cardinals sign McCarver as amateur free agent

Oct. 7, 1969: Cardinals trade McCarver, Byron Browne, Curt Flood, Joe Hoerner to Phillies for Dick Allen, Jerry Johnson, Cookie Rojas; Flood refused trade, thus setting stage for free agency in later years; Cards send Willie Montanez, Jim Browning to Phils to complete trade

Oct. 5, 1970: Cardinals trade Allen to Dodgers for Ted Sizemore, Bob Stinson

March 2, 1976: Cardinals trade Sizemore to Dodgers for Willie Crawford

Oct. 20, 1976: Cardinals trade Crawford, John Curtis, Vic Harris to Giants for Dave Rader, John D'Acquisto, Mike Caldwell

Dec. 8, 1977: Cardinals trade Rader, Hector Cruz to Cubs for Jerry Morales, Steve Swisher, cash

Dec. 4, 1978: Cardinals trade Morales, Aurelio Lopez to Tigers for Bob Sykes, Minor Leaguer John Murphy

Oct. 21, 1981: Cardinals trade Sykes to Yankees for McGee

McGee was the Yanks' first-round Draft pick in 1977, but he never rose higher than Double-A. In 13 seasons with St. Louis, McGee hit .294 with 301 stolen bases. McGee was the '85 NL MVP

Award winner, a four-time NL All-Star, a three-time NL Gold Glove Award winner and a two-time batting champion.

Short Season

2020 will be a weird season with just 60 games.

Since 1941, only seven players have hit at least .400 through the first 60 games of a season. This includes Williams a second time (.412 in 1948), Hank Aaron (.402 in 1959), Rod Carew (.411 in 1983), Paul O'Neill (.417 in 1994), Larry Walker (.417 in 1997), Tony Gwynn (.403 in 1997) and, most recently, Chipper Jones (.409 in 1998).

Over the past decade, the highest batting average by any player through the first 60 games of a season was Cody Bellinger hitting .376 last season.

According to the Elias Sports Bureau, only five active players have hit .400 over a 60-game span in a single season: Jose Altuve in 2017, Joey Votto in 2016, Andrew McCutchen in 2012, Hanley Ramirez in 2009 and Albert Pujols in 2003.

From MLB.com's senior data architect (yes, that is a job), best performances over a 60 game stretch:

Batting average

Last decade: **.427 -- Josh Hamilton**

June 4 - Aug. 14, 2010

Hamilton tallied multiple hits in nearly half (27) of the 60 games he suited up for in this particular stretch, while going hitless only seven times.

All-time leader: Rogers Hornsby (.466), June 21 - Aug. 29, 1924

Additional recent notable: Ichiro Suzuki (.458), July 1 - Sept. 6, 2004

On-base percentage

Last decade: **.560 -- Joey Votto**

July 18 - Sept. 21, 2015 (same year he had a 48 game on-base streak)

All-time leader: Barry Bonds (.613), June 27 - Sept. 7, 2004

Additional recent notable: Frank Thomas (.550), May 1 - July 7, 1994

Hits

Last decade: **103 -- José Altuve**

May 27 - Aug. 8, 2017

All-time leader: Ichiro Suzuki (121), July 1 - Sept. 6, 2004

Additional recent notable: Johnny Damon (111), July 9 - Sept. 12, 2000

Home runs

Last decade: **33 -- Giancarlo Stanton**

June 22 - Aug. 29, 2017

All-time leader: Barry Bonds (37), April 13, 2001 - June 23, 2001

Additional recent notable: Sammy Sosa (34), May 22, 1998 - July 31, 1998

Runs batted in

Last decade: **68 -- Josh Donaldson**

July 1 - Sept. 11, 2015

All-time leader: Hack Wilson (90), July 17 - Sept. 27, 1930

Additional recent notable: Mark McGwire (80), March 31 - June 13, 1998

Pitcher ERA

Last decade: **0.41 -- Jake Arrieta**

Aug. 4 - Oct. 2, 2015

Arrieta allowed a total of four earned runs and just one homer across 88 1/3 innings, holding opponents to a .136 average and .182 OBP. The Cubs rightly won 11 straight decisions and tossed at least eight innings of one-run ball or less in five straight starts, beginning with a 12-strikeout no-hitter against the Dodgers.

All-time leaders: 0.29 -- Fernando Valenzuela, April 9 - May 8, 1981 and Lefty Grove, April 14 - May 18, 1936

Additional recent notable: Zack Greinke (0.60), April 8 - May 15, 2009

Pitcher strikeouts

Last decade: **133 -- Gerrit Cole and Corey Kluber**

July 17 - Sept. 24, 2019 (Cole) and June 14 - Aug. 13, 2017 (Kluber)

All-time leader: Nolan Ryan (142), May 14 - July 4, 1977

Additional recent notable: Randy Johnson (138), May 23 - July 24, 1997

Team win-loss record

Last decade: **Dodgers (51-9)**

Two stretches between June 7 - Aug. 19, 2017

All-time leaders: 1906 Cubs and 1912 Giants (52-8)

Additional recent notable: 2017 Indians (48-12)

More Tidbits

Three players have hit 20 or more home runs before their age-20 season--Tony Conigliaro, BOS (24 in 1964), Bryce Harper, WSH (22 in 2012) and Juan Soto, WSH (22 in 2018)

More teams that traded Hall of Famers:

Montreal traded Randy Johnson and Pedro Martinez. (They also non-tendered Larry Walker).

and

Cincinnati traded Frank Robinson to O's when he had already won an MVP.

Zack Greinke, who had a better OPS than Bryce Harper last year — as in .888-.882, *and you can look that up.*

Hall of Famer Mickey Cochrane of the Philadelphia A's is the only catcher to hit for the cycle twice--(7/22/1932 and 8/2/1933).

In 1986 Roger Clemens began the season 14-0.

In 1963 Roger Craig lost 18 straight decisions for the Mets including 5 games by 1-0.