



**! Spring Training Es Aqui, Cunado!**  
117 seasons of Professional Baseball are upon us.

Even as you read this, in the balmy climes of Florida and Arizona, rookies are nervous, striplings are touted, freshmen are promising and ex-Cubs are factors. Veterans are seasoned, aging, scrappy, sparkplugs or erstwhile Dodgers. Along with the various raw-boned southpaws, husky fireballers, crafty lynchpins, and the ilk. Men making a wage, making us happy, giving to some of us a sense of spring and summer that cannot be duplicated.

To business...  
**Reggie Jackson**  
AB BA HR RBI H 2B 3B R SB  
9864 262 563 1702 2584 463 49 1551 228

As I write this, it is February, Black History Month. I am reminded that it was forty-six years ago that Jackie Robinson reminded the American public that there were, after all, citizens of color in the community of states. He suffered and endured, with monumental sacrifice and restraint.

In the years after Robinson's crashing the monolith, a strange thing happened. The conservative sports press - the Baseball Writers of America Association - went holy, mad dog, frothing sane, and realized that the heretofore blackballed talent which they were now given license to report, was something special.

The major awards for this twenty year period  
**White Folks**  
MVP's-25  
Rookies-25  
Cy Young-12  
**Blacks**  
MVP's-17  
Rookies-15  
Cy Young-1

There was a twenty year span between Jackie Robinson in '47 and Jackson's rookie year in '67. Not much time, considering the time between the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The point is, most ball players of the time were southern agrarian farm boys, and they reacted to the black intrusion, for the most part, viciously. Life was not easy, particularly on the road, for the black players. They ate and slept in the colored parts of towns, with little support from either their teammates or the front office. The Yankees signed their first black player in 1955, a mere twelve years before Jackson's rookie season, twenty two before he joined the Yankees. If you firmly believe that is time enough to expunge two centuries of innate prejudice, I refer you to Marge Schott, c/o Ohio Dept. of Human Resources, Cincinnati.

For all his annoying outburst, tantrums, and fits of pique, I am now convinced Reggie Jackson was just defending himself, in a way an "upper left" white dude like me couldn't understand at the time. Baseball, to this day, is a racial abomination. Muhammed Ali captured our sympathy, Reggie, sometimes, just couldn't make it work. That, fans, is not his problem.

At this point, my first text, says, I'm supposed to write, "All this said, I still don't like Jackson, as a player." Shucks, I just can't do it. I still hate his defense more than earaches, his strikeouts are hideous, but his offense numbers convinced me, particularly his post-season stats. Example? A .755 slugging average. Gehrig-.731, Ruth-.744. He was an irritant, and a one dimensional player for most of his career, but he made every team he played for not just a bit better, but a great deal better, and that is why he's going into the Hall of Fame.

**The Season Begins April 5th**

In this column, perhaps we can persuade some of the local cognoscenti to reveal their pre-season picks for the AL & NL division winners. Thus, an ill advised, drunken blurring out of "Dodgers all the way!" sets the stage for being summarily hooted down, and, ultimately sanctioned. Make your decisions, I'll be in touch. You know who you are.

- I, of course, shall blaze the trail.
- AL East** (Toronto - a lock. No let up here. Joe Carter, MVP? Baltimore - a distant second)
- AL West** (White Sox - At last. Thomas-monster season, with Ventura, Guillen & McCaskill solid. Sax back! Twins? maybe)
- NL East** (Montreal - seriously. 2nd flip a coin)
- NL West** (Atlanta - The best pitching staff since the '71 Orioles, with better bats)

**Our favorite quote (1989):**  
Steve Sax: "I want number three!"  
Yankees: "Um, sorry, it's retired."  
Steve Sax: "Why?"

**This Month's Quiz**

Who are these guys?

- 1) "This stool taken? Yeah, gimme a beer. Huh? Yeah I played. Fifteen years in the majors, 273 lifetime, decent glove. But, yah know sumthin'? All they remember is one game. We were in a hot race with the stinkin' Cubs, and had a huge game in late September with 'em at the Polo Grounds. We go into the bottom of the ninth tied. We get runners on first & third, two out, and a base hit scores the man on third. Well, I'm on second, the crows pour onto the field, I'm getting shoved around and I say "The hell with this!" and take off to the clubhouse without stepping on second. Johnny Evers, the little twerp, calls for the ball and forces me at second. Run doesn't count. We can't finish the game cause of the crowd, hafta play a one-game playoff. We lose, Cubs win. Ah Gawd, whatta mess! To this day, I'm known in the annals of baseball as "Bonehead." I can't stand it... Sob.
- 2) "Aw, quit bawlin' will ya? You think you got it bad? I win the MVP, the next year we're in the series, down three games to zip, in the tenth inning. Runners at first and third, I'm catching. Dimaggio lines safe to right, Goodman boots it, and by the time it's relayed home, Charlie Keiler is right there, from first. He clobbers me, I'm layin' there stunned, and Dimaggio races home. I get blamed for the series loss, can you believe it?"
- 3) "Yah, I can believe it. I'm so taped up I can't move, and the skip puts me in for defense, for cryin' out loud. The ball rolls through my legs, we lose. I'm the goat. Geez, hey, gimme another shot, will ya? Yeah, yeah, you all know me, sit down and shut up!"
- 4) "Hey, move over. Short beer and Jack. I had a career workin' for me. Three good years. Last of 'em I was second in hitting to Brett's .388. I figure I oughta make my move, so I go free agent, sign for big bucks with the Angels. Next year, my average goes down forty points, I only hit five homers and seventy-one RBIs. So I said, Hey, cut my salary. I'm at least gonna build up some good karma, right? Yeah, sure. Late September I'm in a car in Gary, Indiana, of all places, and get caught in the middle of a family domestic dispute. I took a bullet, I'm dead."
- 5) a) "Gosh, pal, that's tough. Actually, I had a great time in the bigs. Born in Oregon, had a great career as a slugger for the Senators and Twins, and MVP once. b) My little buddy here, was a team-mate and MVP the same decade."
- 6) "Hey, I had a good time, too. Huh? Yeah, Kamikaze, please. Check this out, 320 lifetime, led the league four times in homers, twice in RBIs, once in BA, twice in hits and one triple crown. But it took 'em thirty-six years to put me in the hall! Whadda ya gotta do, I ask ya!"

Contrary to earlier dispatches, We are still taking reader mail. Division pre-season picks, trade speculations, amusing anecdotes, death threats, your call, cabron.

Mr. Baseball  
PO Box 664  
Tolovana Park, Or 97138  
(Answers on page 11)

**Feb. Quiz**  
1-A) 216  
B) 1  
2-c  
3-Len Koenecke  
4-Stan Musial

**Next Month**  
Reader's Mail  
Sports Desk Survey  
and More

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