



Reader Mail

Dear Mr. Baseball;

In last year's thrilling NL West pennant race, the Giants won over 100 games, and still were runners-up. How often does this happen?

Mr. M. Olsen
Arch Cape, Or

Mr. Olsen:

One hundred win second place finishes have occurred seven times previous to 1993. Here's the list.

- '09 Cubs (104-49)
- '15 Tigers (100-54)
- '42 Dodgers (104-50)
- '54 Yankees (103-51)
- '61 Tigers (101-61)
- '62 Dodgers (102-63, w/2-1 play-off loss to Giants)
- '80 Orioles (100-62)

And we got a letter from a loyal reader Dan Landando of Astoria, who once again provides a southside counterpoint to the Second City hardball scene. It's lengthy, so permit me to paraphrase.

Mr. Baseball:

"My grandparents came over from Italy to settle in the soul-less area (of Chicago). It was Little Italy. My folks had the luxury of knowing English, and could afford to become Americans first and Italians second. . . with that came a choice, you gonna be a Cub fan or a Sox fan? Most of us followed our parents. Cub fans begat Cub fans, etc. My cousins and uncles were all Cubs fans. My father passed on when I was four, but Mom told me he loved Cominsky and lived and died with the Pale Hose. Naturally, I was a Sox fan. For a while we lived within walking distance of Wrigley and I'd sit in the bleachers sometimes, but it didn't do much for me. I belonged on 35th Street, not Addison and Clark.

My relatives tore me up. They hounded me all through '69 until the Cubs self-destructed. . . I told them the Sox lost pennants because of the Yankees, the Cubs lost 'em because they stink.

They shook their heads; I was hopeless. When I told my Uncle Len the '67 Sox were the most exciting team ever, he stopped talking to me. He knew I was right, I think.

Marsha in Chicago needs to understand that play-off baseball fans are not true ball fans. They are the ones who show up during winning seasons to see what all the excitement is about. They don't understand how the '67 Sox were a better team than the '83 Sox would ever be. They can't.

These days the game has changed and soon it will be as soul-less as Pro Hockey. It's barely worth watching anymore and the best baseball for my money is being played by amateurs in the Pan-Am Games and Olympics. At least they love the game, not the endorsements.

D. Landando
A Sox fan for better or worse.

P.S. Once you wrote that you would do a story on the '83 Sox. Don't waste your time. (Actually I believe I mentioned chronicling the virtues of the 1959 "Go-Go" White Sox. I really hated the '83 team. -Mr. Bb) "Do the '67 Sox. . . they were beautiful losers. . . they never quit, they just ran out of talent." -DL.

Mr. Landando:

I'm convinced that most of us orthodox citizens, if suddenly and with no good explanation were thrust, willy-nilly, into the role of a Chicago baseball fan, we would end up within days, naked on a clock tower with a deer rifle, screaming "Top o' the world, Ma!"

I have before me a complete roster of the '67 White Sox, all 45 players, 23 of which were gone by the next year. Out of deference to the folks in the type-setting room, I won't print it.

The title of "most exciting team ever" appears kind of shakey. But, so what? The team of my youth was the early 60's Portland Beavers, and to this day, I swear that Danny Osinski was a better pitcher than Sam McDowell or Luis Tiant.

Although I doubt many aspects of the irony of Chicago Baseball are lost on Marsha Morgan, I agree entirely with your condemnation of the front-runner play-off syndrome. And it's only going to get worse with the new format. More on that later. But really, look at these chumps as an opportunity for major laughs. Take '83 for example, you turn to the mouthy jerk on your left and say, "Sure Luzinski's got the long ball, but we're down two in the 7th, so maybe we need to use Paciorek for the hit and run, or hell, maybe just a safety squeeze on Dybzinski, but ya gotta watch Splittorff's balk move and the pitch-out from Wathan. Whatta ya think?"

The Game of Baseball is much like this great experiment in the republic we live in. It requires constant vigilance by the body it serves. The Game is particularly vulnerable now, as it languishes without the head of a Commissioner for the first time since Kenesaw Mountain Landis. Our Republic suffered a great hurt in 1981 when we fell asleep at the switch as a responsible body for twelve years, a damage our grandchildren are sure to damn us for. 1981 was also the first year baseball labor and management put lust for gold before the Game, and the result was a protracted lock-out.

Understand this: Neither the owners nor the players call the shots, unless the fans allow them to. The Game of Baseball was invented, developed, perfected and 99 times out of 100 is played, by the American Non-Professional. The Major Leagues reap vast profits from this "National Pastime" at the sufferance of the fan, in the form of depreciation on taxes, municipal franchise extortion, and most importantly, the infamous Congressional exemption from the Sherman Anti-Trust Law.

Make no mistake: doze off for the briefest moment, and you will awake to Eight team Play-offs, Inter-League play, and unlimited substitutions.

Dan, don't give up on the Sox. I can hear Bill Veeck pleading with you from here.

RIP - Pat Crawford, 92, last surviving member of the 1934 "Gashouse Gang" World Champion St. Louis Cardinals (Kingston, N.C. 1/25/94)

And don't forget - Your cards and letters in the Mondo Team and Stadium Name Contest. Time is dear.

QUIZ

- 1) Who was the first switch-hitter to collect 100 hits from each side of the plate in one season?
A) Gerry Templeton
B) Ozzie Smith
C) Pete Rose
D) Willie Wilson
- 2) Since Gehrig's 1927 season, only one player has surpassed his put-out total for one year. (Gehrig - 1662, this guy - 1682). Who is this guy?
A) Steve Garvey
B) Ernie Banks
C) Keith Hernandez
D) Don Mattingly
- 3) Which of these two pitchers had the best and worst strikeout to walk ratio for the White Sox (1000 IP)?
A) Floyd Bennett and Thornton Lee
B) Juan Pizarro and Orval Grove
C) Britt Burns and Bill Dietrich
D) Ed Walsh and Ted Blankenship
- 4) Any tyro knows Connie Mack lost more games than any manager. Who places second?
A) Casey Stengel
B) Bucky Harris
C) Gene Mauch
D) John McGraw
- 5) Before Wilson Alvarez, who was the last White Sox hurler to pitch a no-hitter?
A) LaMarr Hoyt
B) Richard Dotson
C) Joe Cowley
D) Dennis Lamp
- 6) Of all the players with at least one swipe, who has the largest homer to stolen base ratio?
A) Dick Stuart
B) Jim Gentile
C) Del Rice
D) Steve Bilko
- 7) Who purloined the most bags for the Pale Hose in a campaign?
A) Wally Moses
B) Luis Aparicio
C) Rudy Law
D) Gary Redus
- 8) The feat of collecting two taters and six ribbies in one frame has been accomplished more than once. Who was the last player to do this?
A) Jesse Barfield
B) Gary Gaetti
C) Dave Parker
D) Dale Murphy
- 9) Who is the only pitcher to hit home runs in four consecutive games?
A) Lon Warneke
B) Ken Brett
C) Don Newcombe
D) Rick Rueschel
- 10) Which two guys hold the record for runs scored in a season for the Cubs and the White Sox?
A) King Kelly and Luke Appling
B) Hack Wilson and Fielder Jones
C) Kiki Cuyler and Chico Carrasquel
D) Rogers Hornsby and Johnny Mostil
- 11) We all remember Mike Scott authoring a no-hitter against the Giants to clinch the NL West title in 1986. Who was the first to twirl a no-no to secure a pennant 30+ years earlier?
A) Sal Maglie
B) Ed Lopat
C) Allie Reynolds
D) Robin Roberts
- 12) We all think of Satchel Paige as the World's Oldest Rookie; but no. This patriarchal Pirate broke in at the age of 43.
A) Coot Veal
B) Diomedes Olivo
C) Julio Gotay
D) Victor Cruz
- 13) Who was the last junior circuit first sacker to lead his league in triples?
A) Vic Power
B) Joe Pepitone
C) Cecil Cooper
D) Mike Hargrove
- 14) Greg Maddux has now won four consecutive Gold Glove awards. Before that, who was the last NL pitcher to garner four straight?
A) Bob Gibson
B) Phil Niekro
C) Bobby Shantz
D) Harvey Haddix
- 15) Who was the only slugger to pund out 100 rbi's every year for his initial ten years in the Majors?
A) Jimmy Foxx
B) Goose Goslin
C) Frank Robinson
D) Al Simmons

Extra Credit

Frank Thomas was Al MVP last season. Who were the other White Sox to win the award?

COYOTE
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I never hurt nobody but myself and that's nobody's business but my own.
Billie Holiday

Baseball is the only thing besides the paperclip that hasn't changed.
Bill Veeck

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