

# Unbreakable Baseball Records

## Lifetime on base percentage (OBP)

- Ted Williams .4817 Only one recent player (Bonds) is close – 5<sup>th</sup> at .4443. All the others in the top ten are old-timers (Ruth, McGraw, Hamilton, Gehrig, Hornsby, Cobb, Foxx, and Speaker)

## Lifetime on base + slugging (OPS)

- Babe Ruth (1.1636 = .4739 + .6897). Only, Williams is close (1.1155 = .4817 + .6338). Everyone else is an old-timer except Bonds (4<sup>th</sup>), who got his .4443 OBP through BB, not BA – and his slugging percentage (.6069) shows it, held down by a lower BA. Nobody today with power has a high enough BA even to approach this.

## Batting walks lifetime

- Bonds 2558. Followed by Ricky Henderson at 2190, Ruth at 2062, Williams at 2021. This might be approachable given Henderson's outlying 2190 ahead of Ted and the Babe, but it is surely *less* approachable than lifetime batting K's: Jackson 2597, Thome 2548, Adam Dunn 2379, Sosa 2306, A-Rod 2237, Galaragga 2003. Modern day players strike out a LOT! Contrast these guys with Williams (709), Musial (696), Cobb (680) and Hornsby (679). DiMaggio had only 369, but only 13 seasons.

## Pitching strikeouts lifetime

- Nolan Ryan 5714. Second place is Randy Johnson at 4875, only two other guys over 4000. Nobody will ever get near this they way they pull pitchers today.

## Pitching walks lifetime

- Nolan Ryan 2795. Along with the three just below, among the most untouchable. No one else even passed 2000; second place is Carlton at 1833. Even so, Ryan is third in excess of K's over BB's, with 2919. Only R. Johnson at 3378 and Clemens at 3092 are ahead of him.

## Innings pitched lifetime

- Cy Young 7356. Even if you toss this because half his career was pre-1900 (and all of Pud Galvins's 6003 IPs came before 1900 – in a 15-year career!) then the post-1900 leader is Walter Johnson with 5914 (followed by Niekro 5404, Ryan 5386, Gaylord Perry 5350, Don Sutton 5282, Spahn 5243, Carlton 5217, and Alexander 5190) Nobody in this day of pitch counts is getting close to Cy or even to Walter.

### Pitching – Complete Games

- The all-time laughter in unbreakable records. Cy Young had 749; in the modern post -1900 era Walter Johnson had 531. Spahn had 360+. Robin Roberts 305, and then it really falls off – even a stalwart like Ryan had only 222. The active leader is Verlander with ... 37!! Kershaw and Wainwright are tied, I believe, at 28. Current dominant pitchers like Cole and deGrom have ... 4! I think Cy and the Big Train are safe!

### Pitching wins lifetime

- Finally, an ordinary stat! Cy Young 511 (and 315 lifetime losses!) Again, even if you toss him because half the wins came pre-1900, Walter Johnson leads with 416, then Mathewson and Alexander at 373, then Spahn at 363. Nobody these days will approach that.

### Shutouts lifetime

- Walter Johnson 110. Pete Alexander 90. Mathewson 79, Young 76, Eddie Plank 69, Spahn 63, Ryan 61, Seaver 61, Blyleven 60. Guys are now leading baseball seasons in shutouts with two or three.

### Triples lifetime

- Triples are the just about the most untouchable of all hitting records! Lifetime: Wahoo Sam Crawford, with 309. No active player has even 100. The MLB season record is Chief Wilson (who?) with 36 in 1912; never had more than 14 in any other season in a 9-year career in which he batted .269 lifetime. Go figure. Crawford is 2<sup>nd</sup> in post-1900 season-high triples with 26 in 1914.

### Inside the Park Home Runs lifetime

- Sort of a made-up stat – but for my money, the most exciting play in baseball, especially if you can tear your eyes away from watching just one thing. (See Arnold Hano in [A Day in the Bleachers](#) -- the flight of the ball, the outfielder chasing it, the middle infielder going out to get the relay, the hitter running the bases ... what's the pitcher doing? He doesn't need to back up third, or home either ...)

Anyway ... lifetime leader is Jesse Burkett (1890-1905, 55 ITPHR of 75 total lifetime). Highest post-1900 player is Sam Crawford (51 of 97 lifetime); next is Tommy Leach (48 of 63); next is Ty Cobb (46 of 117); tied with Honus Wagner (46 of 101). The highest post-1920 totals are Rogers Hornsby (33) and Max Carey (27). Highest post-1950 total is Willie Wilson with 13. Nobody is going to catch Sam Crawford on this one either!

## Greatest Pitchers - Chart

<u>Wins</u>	<u>Strikeouts</u>	<u>Complete Games</u>	<u>Innings Pitched</u>	<u>ERA</u>	<u>Shutouts</u>	<u>Hits/9</u>
1. Cy Young 511	1. Ryan 5714	1. Young 749	1. Young 7356	1. Ed Walsh 1.816	1. Johnson 110	1. Ryan
2. Walter Johnson 417	2. Randy Johnson 4875	2. Galvin 646	2. Galvin 6003	2. Addie Joss	2. Alexander 90	3. Koufax
3. G. C. Alexander 373	3. Clemens 4672	3. Keefe 534	3. Big Train 5914	3. Jim Devlin	3. Mathewson 79	40. Seaver
3. Christy Mathewson 373	4. Carlton 4136	4. Nichols 532	4. Phil Niekro 5404	4. Jack Pfeister	4. Young 76	41. Johnson
5. Pud Galvin 365	5. Bert Blyleven 3701	5. Big Train 531	5. Ryan 5386	5. Smoky Joe Wood	5. Ed Plank 69	48. Gibson
6. Warren Spahn 363	6. Seaver 3640	6. Bobby Mathews 525	6. Perry 5350	6. Mordecai Brown	6. Spahn 63	54. Clemens
7. Kid Nichols 362	7. Don Sutton 3574	6. Mickey Welch 525	7. Sutton 5281	7. John Ward	7. Ryan 61	60. Feller
8. Greg Maddux 355	8. Gaylord Perry 3534	8. Charles Radbourn 488	8. Spahn 5244	8. Mathewson 2.133	7. Seaver 61	112. Mathsn
9. Roger Clemens 354	9. Big Train 3509	9. John Clarkson 485	9. Carlton 5218	9. Al Spaulding	9. Blyleven 60	145. Carlton
10. Tim Keefe 342	10. Maddux 3371	10. Tony Mullane 468	10. Alexander 5190	10. Tommy Bond	10. Sutton 58	245. Spahn
11. Steve Carlton 329	14. Gibson 3117	13. Alexander 436	13. Maddux 5008	12. Big Train 2.167	13. Gibson 56	324. Alexder
14. Nolan Ryan 324	23. Young 2803	14. Mathewson 435	16. Clemens 4917	52. Alexander 2.560	14. Carlton 55	350. Maddux
18. Tom Seaver 311	30. Spahn 2583	21. Spahn 382	18. Mathewson 4789	62. Young 2.627	26. Clemens 46	469. Young
23. Lefty Grove 300	31. Feller 2581	42. Grove 298	19. Seaver 4783	96. Koufax 2.761	35. Feller 44	546. Grove
37. Bob Feller 266	39. Mathewson 2502	63. Feller 279	44. Grove 3941	(skipped ERA for most)	44. Koufax 40	
47. Bob Gibson 251	51. Koufax 2396	74. Gibson 255	45. Gibson 3884		71. Grove 35	
208. Sandy Koufax 165	59. Grove 2266	75. Carlton 254	49. Feller 3827		71. Maddux 35	
	66. Alexander 2198	100. Seaver 231				

<u>Top 14 (points per category)</u>	<u>Wins</u>	<u>Strikeouts</u>	<u>Complete Games</u>	<u>Innings Pitched</u>	<u>ERA</u>	<u>Shutouts</u>	<u>Hits/9</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
<b>1. Walter Johnson</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>73</b>
2. Christy Mathewson	3	39	14	18	8	3	100	185
3. Nolan Ryan	14	1	100	5	100	7	1	228
4. Grover Cleveland Alexander	3	66	13	10	52	2	100	246
5. Cy Young, 1890-1911	1	100	1	1	62	4	100	269
6. Warren Spahn	6	30	21	8	100	6	100	271
7. Tom Seaver	18	6	100	19	100	7	40	290
8. Roger Clemens	9	3	100	16	100	26	54	308
9. Steve Carlton	11	4	75	9	100	14	100	313
10. Bob Gibson	47	14	74	45	100	13	48	341
11. Bob Feller	37	31	63	49	100	35	60	375
12. Greg Maddux	9	10	100	13	100	71	100	403
13. Lefty Grove	23	59	42	44	100	71	100	439
14. Sandy "dead last" Koufax	100	51	100	100	96	44	3	494

## Baseball's Greatest Hitters – Notes on Rankings

It was bothering me to use raw numerical tallies in all our rankings, wondering whether we were recognizing longevity rather than effectiveness or dominance (and penalizing guys like Williams, DiMaggio, Feller, and Mays, who lost some prime years through no fault of their own.) And then Clark made his observation about imputing numbers to seasons lost to war (or injury) -- that may seem a logical way to put things on an even footing, but it's not really right, because it's not reality.

Then it occurred to me how much weight we give to *averages* in baseball (batting average, OBP, slugging average, ERA, etc.) So, I thought -- where it seemed to make sense to do so -- that I'd work with hitting averages to do the ratings. Here's an overview of what I came up with; the attachments tell the complete story:

Categories retaining my original approach: Points according to the player's rank among all players historically -- Batting average, batting titles, home run titles, RBI titles, OBP, slugging percentage, and Triple Crowns.

Note on Triple Crowns: I revised TC scoring to break ties in number of triple crowns by counting number of times the player won two legs. For example, Williams and Hornsby are tied with two TCs, but the Rajah won two legs two other times and Teddy only once, so Hornsby gets 1 point and Williams 2. I broke ties among the four other one-time winners the same way. Since there have been 13 TC winners, the rest of our dozen start tied for 14th place at zero TCs, and I broke that tie by counting number of times the player won two legs. (The Babe did it six times! Can you believe that? That's a new tidbit in my storehouse of knowledge.)

Categories ranked by averages: Seasonal averages in home runs, RBI, hits, and strikeouts. (I continue to think GDP is a better measure of rally-killing than a K, but they only started keeping that stat in 1933. However, the lack of GDP only reinforces the idea to include strikeouts -- in reverse order, of course, as you guys have suggested.)

When I ranked by averages, I initially did so by 1-12 within our select group, then realized that doesn't do enough to reward top performance and "punish" lesser performance. So I took the rankings and awarded points based on that initial ranking, plus the differences in the seasonal averages one player to the next. This is clearer in the table on the second attached page, but here's an example: Ruth is first in HR seasonal average with 37.6, Bonds is second with 34.0. Gehrig is third with 32.9. So Ruth gets 1 point, Bonds gets 5.6 (+1 for the difference between first and second, +3.6 for the difference between 37.6 and 34.0. Similarly, Gehrig gets 7.7 (+1 from Bonds 5.6 for being third, +1.1 for the difference between 34.0 and 32.9. I did the same in the RBI, hits, and strikeouts categories. I hope that makes for some rough justice in assigning points here.

By the way, I adjusted number of seasons to ignore -- not count as a season for denominator purposes -- years of September rookie call-ups or a few games playing out the string (e.g., Ruth with the Braves in 1935); or I combined other partial seasons to count as a full season (Gehrig 1923, 1924, 1939 are combined to make his 15th season.) Fairly arbitrary, I know, but I tried to be fair, and besides ... the unbridled authority of the guy making up the table. I have noted the number of seasons I used in the table on the second attached page.

Categories from previous tabulations omitted here: Runs scored and OPS. Runs scored is a measure of other team members' ability to bat a guy in, not a measure of his own batting ability. His ability to get on base to be batted in is already measured by OBP. And OPS is simply the sum of OBP and slugging, both of which have already been point-counted by rank among all players. If we include OPS as another category, I think we're overemphasizing -- counting essentially the same thing twice in the all-time list. So, I left it out in this tabulation.

Result is kind of an interesting re-arrangement. As much as I dislike him, DiMag gets 6th, on the strength of his averages over the shortest career here and the fact that he along with the five others above him are the only ones without a "100" counting against him. Maybe if we specified a minimum 15-year career I could shit-can him; but someone in our group will surely be a DiMaggio fan, so I guess we'll play with what we have.

I'm comfortable with the top 5, especially the top guy, and Gehrig coming in second lends credence to what someone said about his unrecognized dominance, first in the Babe's shadow, then in DiMaggio's. Nice to see the figures working for him.

The bottom four are our "modern" players -- Aaron, Bonds, Mantle, and Mays -- all victimized to one degree or another by "100s" counting against them. They primarily get whacked on batting average and OBP, and I think those are probably due to (1) the slider coming to the fore after WWII (look how much DiMaggio's batting average dropped); (2) late-inning relief pitching as a front-line weapon rather than mop-up; and (3) the more frenetic pace (a much longer season, made even more debilitating by a long playoff schedule; much more night baseball, and day games following night games; jetting coast to coast instead of more leisurely train rides, etc.)

# Baseball's Greatest Hitters

Ranking Seasonal Averages

Name/ Seasons	Home Runs			Runs Batted In			Hits			Strikeouts		
	Avg.	Rank	Pts.	Avg.	Rank	Pts	Avg	Rank	Pts	Avg.	Rank	Pts
Williams 17.5	29.8	7	16.2	105.1	5	30.9	152	9	38	40.5	5	17.8
Gehrig 15	32.9	3	7.7	133.0	1	1.0	181	1	1	52.6	6	30.9
Hornsby 17	17.7	11	32.3	93.1	7	44.8	172	3	12	39.9	4	16.2
Ruth 19	37.6	1	1.0	116.5	3	17.5	151	10	40	70.0	9	51.3
Foxx 17	31.4	5	11.2	113.1	4	21.9	156	7	32	77.1	11	61.4
DiMaggio 13	27.7	9	20.3	118.2	2	14.8	170	4	15	27.7	1	1.0
Cobb 23.5	5.0	12	46.0	84.5	11	57.4	178	2	5	28.9	2	3.2
Musial 22	21.5	10	27.7	88.6	10	52.3	166	5	20	31.6	3	6.9
Aaron 23	32.8	4	8.8	99.8	6	37.1	164	6	23	60.1	7	39.4
Bonds 22.5	34.0	2	5.6	90.7	8	48.2	133	12	60	68.4	8	48.7
Mantle 18	29.6	8	17.4	83.8	12	59.1	134	11	58	95.0	12	80.3
Mays 21	31.4	5	11.2	90.6	9	49.3	156	7	32	72.7	10	56.0

## Baseball's Greatest Hitters II

Points Assigned by Category

<u>Name</u>	<u>Batt. Avg.</u>	<u>Batt. Titles</u>	<u>HR Avg.</u>	<u>HR Titles</u>	<u>RBI Avg.</u>	<u>RBI Titles</u>	<u>Hits Avg.</u>	<u>OBP</u>	<u>Slug. Avg.</u>	<u>Triple Crns.</u>	<u>Strikeouts</u>	<u>Total</u>
Williams	7	7	16	8	31	5	38	1	2	2	18	135
Gehrig	16	43	8	26	1	3	1	5	3	5	31	142
Hornsby	2	4	32	26	45	5	12	8	11	1	16	162
Ruth	10	43	1	1	18	2	40	2	1	14	51	183
Foxx	39	24	11	8	22	11	32	10	4	3	61	225
DiMaggio	41	24	20	26	15	22	15	63	10	16	1	253
Cobb	1	1	46	100	57	5	5	9	77	4	3	308
Musial	30	4	28	100	52	22	20	23	16	16	7	318
Aaron	100	24	9	8	37	5	23	100	20	15	39	380
Bonds	100	24	6	26	48	53	60	6	5	18	49	395
Mantle	100	43	17	8	59	53	58	17	18	6	80	459
Mays	100	43	11	19	49	100	32	100	17	18	56	545



# Baseball Books

## Anthologies

The Fireside Book of Baseball – Charles Einstein (4 Vols. – 1956, 1958, 1968, 1987) The classic desert island book – if you could have only one, this would be it. Some fictional short stories, mostly non-fiction features and biographical sketches. The best articles are the real time newspaper reports on classic games. The first volume is the best – they're all great, but Einstein chose the best material for the first.

## Non-fiction: Chronicles

The Boys of Summer – Roger Kahn. The Dodgers in the Golden Age, and the gold standard of chronicles.

The Summer of '49 – Roger Angell The silver standard, even though it breaks my heart to read it.

Five Seasons – Roger Angell The 1972-76 seasons; the bronze medal winner.

The Last Best League – Jim Collins. About the Cape Cod summer league and the major league dream.

Can't Anybody Here Play This Game? – Jimmy Breslin. Casey Stengel and the 1962 Mets.

Dynasty: The 1949-1964 New York Yankees Dartmouth's own Peter Golenbock and his boyhood idols.

The Kid: The Life of Ted Williams – Ben Bradlee, Jr. Emphasis on Ted's life outside the game.

## Non-fiction: Memoirs

The Long Season – Jim Brosnan Broke clubhouse omerta; not as controversial as those that followed.

Veeck: As in Wreck – Bill Veeck and Ed Linn. Baseball's master showman.

Ball Four – Jim Bouton Ballplayers have feet of clay, and Bouton shows them all. Scandalous!

Strike Two, The Umpire Strikes Back, and The Fall of the Roman Umpire – Ron Luciano. Hilarious stories; the best are Nolan Ryan and the exploding fastball, Ted Williams watching the bat hit the ball, and Dick Williams and "You're going to have to throw me out."

Fear Strikes Out – Jimmy Piersall. Trying too hard and wound too tight. Very compelling.

Catcher in the Wry – Bob Uecker. From the "just a bit outside ..." broadcaster. Funny guy.

The Wrong Stuff – Bill Lee. The Red Sox Spaceman describes the planet he lives on.

The Bronx Zoo – Sparky Lyle and Peter Golenbock. NY newspaper strike wins the 1977 pennant.

## **Non-fiction: Inside Baseball**

A Day in the Bleachers – Arnold Hano. September 29, 1954, Willie and The Catch.

Nine Innings – Daniel Okrent June 10, 1982: Brewers-Orioles The detailed anatomy of baseball.

Moneyball: The Art of Winning an Unfair Game – Michael Lewis. Billy Beane and his A's magic.

Three Nights in August – Buzz Bissinger. Cards-Cubs; strategy and moves pitch by pitch.

The Greatest Game Ever Pitched – Jim Kaplan. Spahn-Marichal, July 1963, 1-0, 16 innings.

Smart Baseball – Keith Lewis. Rules of baseball; tough cases. Also, traditional stats vs. newer stats.

Bottom of the 33<sup>rd</sup> – Dan Barry. Rochester Red Wings (Cal Ripken) vs. Pawtucket Red Sox (Wade Boggs)

Off Speed – Terry McDermott. Felix Hernandez' perfect game, pitch by pitch.

The MVP Machine – Lindbergh and Sawchik. Beyond" Moneyball" – spin rates and launch angles.

The Physics of Baseball – Robert Adair. How far can you hit a baseball? Math nerds want to know!

## **Non-fiction: Nostalgia**

The Glory of Their Times – Mark Harris. The old-time greats in their own words. Classic oral history.

The Image of Their Greatness – Lawrence Ritter and Donald Honig Priceless pictures.

Baseball When the Grass Was Real – Donald Honig. The purists' Bible.

## **Fiction**

The Natural – Bernard Malamud. Can't understand why he allowed the movie's Hollywood ending.

The Universal Baseball Association, Inc. – Robert Coover. The prediction of nutcase fantasy baseball.

Bang the Drum Slowly – Mark Harris. The dying catcher; great movie too.

The Southpaw – Mark Harris. Rookie Henry Wiggins, a left-hander in a right-handed world.

The Art of Fielding – Chad Harbach. A recent entry in the baseball sweepstakes, and pretty good.

For Love of the Game – Michael Shannon. The book for Kevin Costner's farewell perfect game.

Shoeless Joe – W.P. Kinsella. The basis for the film "Field of Dreams".

Finding George Washington, a Time Travel Tale – Our own Bill Zarchy. Baseball time-transportes George.

The Year the Yankees Lost the Pennant – Douglass Wallop. Far better than the musical "Damn Yankees."