

Career Triple Crown Winners

Anti-Triple Crown Losers

Double Crown Winners

The Language of Baseball

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Sandlot Stats

Chapter 3

In Chapter 3 a list of players who led their league in batting average, in runs batted in and in home runs for the same season is provided. They were called Triple Crown winners. We now look at the players who achieved a Career Triple Crown and those players with the dubious title of achieving the Anti-Triple Crown. Also in this section the language of baseball is presented. The section closes with a discussion of baseball and medicine and some interesting coincidences in baseball.

Career Triple Crown Winners (since 1913)

The first topic is to look at those players, called career Triple Crown winners. A career Triple Crown winner is a player who in some year, not necessarily in the same year, won a batting title, led his league in both RBIs and in home runs. The requirement of achieving these three feats in the same year is removed. Surprisingly, the eleven players mentioned in this chapter won the Triple Crown in the same year; whereas, only nine players accomplished these three feats but not in the same year. The table below provides a list showing these nine players and the number of times they won each of the titles. The year represents the year they won their third title to complete a Triple Crown, though not in the same year.

Career Triple Crown Winners

<u>Player</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Home Runs</u>	<u>RBIs</u>	<u>Year</u>
Heinie Zimmerman	1	1	2	1916

<u>Player</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Home Runs</u>	<u>RBIs</u>	<u>Year</u>
Babe Ruth	1	12	6	1924
Johnny Mize	1	4	3	1940
Joe DiMaggio	2	2	2	1941
Hank Aaron	2	4	4	1957
Andres Galarraga	1	1	2	1996
Barry Bonds	2	2	1	2002
Alex Rodriguez	1	5	2	2002
Manny Ramirez	1	1	1	2004

Zimmerman, an infielder with the Chicago Cubs and New York Giants from 1907-19, came as close as anybody on this list to winning an actual Triple Crown. In 1912, he led the league in hitting with a .372 AVG and in home runs with 14. However, his 99 RBIs trailed league-leader Honus Wagner's 102 and Bill Sweeney's 100.

Babe Ruth had many close calls. In 1923, Ruth led the league in HRs with 41 and in RBIs with 131. Amazingly, his career-high .393 AVG fell 10 points below Harry Heilmann's league-leading .403 AVG.

From 1937-42, first baseman Mize finished in the top five in all three Triple Crown categories. His closest brush with the Triple Crown occurred in 1939 when he won his only batting title, hitting .349, and also led the league with 28 home runs but finished third in the RBI column with 108, well behind Frank McCormick's 128. Mize will be mentioned later in this book for an incredible feat involving home runs and strike outs.

DiMaggio is one of the two players on this list to win each Triple Crown category at least twice. The only season he led the league in two of the categories was 1948. His best overall season was his sophomore year, 1937, when at age 22 he led the American League with 46 home runs, drove in 167 runs to finish second to Hank Greenberg's 183 RBIs. His .346 AVG trailed both Gehringer's .371 and Gehrig's .351. Though he won back-to-back batting titles in 1939-40 (peaking at .381 in 1939), DiMaggio finished fourth in home runs both years and second and third, respectively, in RBIs.

Even in his fabled year of 1941 when he hit in 56 consecutive games, Ted Williams' AVG of .406 stopped Joe's attempt for the Triple Crown. In 1948, when DiMaggio finally led the league with 39 homers and 155 RBIs, his batting average dropped to .320, seventh overall in the league.

In 1957, when Henry Aaron was named the Most Valuable Player in the NL due to his league-leading 44 homers and 132 RBIs, he finished in fourth-place batting average of .322.

Aaron came closest to achieving the Triple Crown in 1963. In that year, Hank topped the league with 44 homers and drove in 130 runs but also made a run at the batting title. He spent August and September locked in a three-man race with Roberto Clemente and Tommy Davis. However, at the end of the year, Davis finished with an AVG of .326, Clemente finished second with a .320 AVG, and Aaron finished third at .319.

It took 30 years, since the last Triple Crown winner, for anyone to win all three categories. The man to do it was called "The Big Cat". His real name was Andres Galarraga. He was one of many hitters to benefit from playing for the Colorado Rockies in the high-altitude of Denver. In 1993, the inaugural season for the Colorado Rockies, Galarraga hit .370, joining Gwynn as the only National Leaguer to reach this mark since Musial. His biggest year was 1996, when his 47 homers and 150 RBIs led the league comfortably. However, his meager .304 was actually fifth best on his own team.

The last three players on the list all reached career Triple Crown status since 2000. The three players were Alex Rodriguez, Barry Bonds, and Manny Ramirez.

Alex did lead the AL in homers and RBIs twice. In 2002, he had 57 HRs and 142 RBIs and in 2007 he had 54 HRs and 156 RBIs. In both those years, he did not challenge for the batting title.

Barry Bonds major problem was his drawing so many walks hampered his ability to drive in runs. In 2001, Bonds shattered all records for intentional walks and finished just fourth in RBIs. That same year he broke the home-run record with 73. His lone RBI title came way back in his first year with the San Francisco Giants in 1993, when he also led the NL in home runs. His batting average that year was .336, which was 34 points behind the .370 put up by Galarraga. Bonds, himself hit .370 in 2002 to win his first of two batting titles, but lost the homer race to Sammy Sosa, 49-46, and was sixth in RBIs. Similarly to Rodriguez, Bonds has never come close to a Triple Crown.

We get to the final man on the list, Manny Ramirez. Manny is the only player to make this list by winning each of the three categories exactly once. He has finished in the top five of each category five times, but only did so in all three in 1999. That season, playing for the Cleveland Indians, Ramirez led in RBIs with a career-high 165 but was third in home runs with 44 and fifth in average at .333. In 2002, despite playing only 120 games, he hit .349 to win his only batting crown, but his missed games kept his home run and RBI totals down. His only home-run title came in 2004, when he hit 43 home runs.

In 1948, Stan Musial led the league in batting and RBIs but failed by one home run of tying for the league lead. His 39 home runs was one short of both Johnny Mize and Ralph Kiner. The reason Musial is not on the career list is he never led the league in home runs. Musial's 1948 season will be mentioned again in Chapter 20.

The above players represent near misses to the Triple Crown. One of the problems in today's game of baseball is there are many more teams in each league and many more great hitters. Will we ever have another Triple Crown winner? What modern players have the best chance of achieving this miraculous feat? What batting characteristics must the next Triple Crown hitter possess? These questions will be left for your discussion as a class.

Anti-Triple Crown

We now look at the less distinctive honor of achieving the “Anti-Triple Crown.” A batter accomplishes this dubious honor by finishing last in the league in batting average, home runs, and runs-batted-in with a qualifying number of plate appearances. The following is a list of winners.

Year	League	Player	PA	AVG	HR	RBI
1914	AL	George McBride	552	.203	0	24
1915	NL	Herbie Moran	493	.200	0	21
1919	NL	Jack Smith	435	.223	0	15
1920	AL	Ivy Griffin	495	.238	0	20
1929	NL	Freddie Maguire	518	.252	0	41
1931	NL	Freddie Maguire	513	.228	0	26
1945	NL	Woody Williams	523	.237	0	27
1956	AL	Willy Miranda	508	.217	2	34
1970	AL	Mark Belanger	518	.218	1	36
1971	NL	Enzo Hernandez	606	.222	0	12
1979	NL	Ozzie Smith	627	.211	0	27
1981	NL	Ivan DeJesus	450	.194	0	13
2003	AL	Ramon Santiago	507	.225	2	29

Two interesting players who accomplished this feat are Freddie Maguire and Ozzie Smith. Freddie achieved the Anti-Triple Crown feat in back to back years. Ozzie is the only player to achieve this feat and also be a member of the Hall of Fame.

We now turn our attention to a rarely discussed accomplishment called a Double Crown winner.

Double Crown Winners

A player who leads his league in two of the three Triple Crown categories is said to have achieved a “Double Crown”. The three possible Double Crowns are batting average (BA) and home runs (HRs), batting average and RBIs, and HRs and RBIs.

As one might expect the rarest of the three is BA and HRs. In fact, since 1900, excluding the

Triple Crown winners, there have only been four such Double Crown winners. These include Heinie Zimmerman (1912), Babe Ruth (1924), Johnny Mize (1939), and Ted Williams (1941). Since Ted Williams won the Triple Crown twice, he stands alone as the only player to win both the batting title and home run title three times. In 1912, Zimmerman finished 3rd in RBIs; in 1924, Ruth finished 2nd in RBIs; in 1939, Mize finished 3rd in RBIs; and in 1941, Williams finished 4th in RBIs. It should be noted he had 147 walks that year. When walked that many times, it is difficult to accumulate RBIs.

The next rarest Double Crown is the combination of BA and RBIs. Ty Cobb accomplished this feat three times. The years were 1907, 1908, and 1911. These three Double Crowns, along with his Triple Crown in 1909, makes him one of only two players to lead the league in these two categories four times. The other player to lead the league in these two categories four times was Rogers Hornsby. He won two Triple Crowns and led the league in BA and RBIs in 1920 and 1921. Honus Wagner led the league in BA and RBIs in 1908 and 1909. Fourteen other players led the league in BA and RBIs one time. Some players accomplishing this Double Crown were Stan Musial, Joe Torre, Tommy Davis, Todd Helton, and Matt Holliday.

The Double Crown achieved the most times was the combination of HRs and RBIs. Babe Ruth did it six times, Mike Schmidt did it four times, and both Hank Greenberg and Hank Aaron did it three times. This Double Crown was accomplished over 90 times in the history of baseball. The most recent players achieving this Double Crown twice were Johnny Bench, George Foster, Jim Rice, Cecil Fielder, and Alex Rodriguez.

Some notable players, since 1990, to win a Double Crown were Barry Bonds (1993), Ken Griffey Jr (1997), Todd Helton (2000), Alex Rodriguez (2002 and 2007), Andruw Jones (2005), Ryan Howard (2006), David Ortiz (2006), and Matt Holliday (2007). All the above players won the Double Crown of HRs and RBIs, except for Helton and Holliday. These two players won the Double Crown of BA and RBIs. Coincidentally, both these players were members of the Colorado Rockies.

Since 1900, of the 17 times a player led the league in BA and HRs, 13 times the player also led

the league in RBIs. The last time a player led the league in both HRs and BA was in 1967 when Carl Yastrzemski won the Triple Crown. In 1967 there were only 10 teams in each league. Today, there are 14 teams in the AL and 16 teams in the NL. With the increase in the number of teams and the increase in the number of strike outs for home run hitters, it would take a very special hitter to be the next Triple Crown winner. If a player could win the batting title and the home run title there is a good chance he will also lead the league in RBIs. My candidate for such a special hitter is Albert Pujols. In 2003, Pujols led the league in batting and finished 4th in both home runs and RBIs. Another possible candidate is Joe Mauer, the catcher for the Twins. Mauer's biggest obstacle is the position he plays. The difficulty of the position of catcher works against Mauer. The combination of a player like Pujols playing for the Colorado Rockies might be the next Triple Crown winner.

We now look at how the language of baseball has evolved into our everyday language and into medicine.

The Language of Baseball

Many words and phrases have evolved from baseball into our everyday life. A salesman who makes a large sale is said to have hit a *home-run*. A salesman who does not make a sale is said to have *struck-out*. A person who replaces another person is called a *pinch-hitter*. If an item on-sale is not available, the patron is given a *rain-check*. The expression *don't fly off the handle* comes from bats which upon contact with the ball came apart with the barrel separating from the handle. How is this term used in our everyday language? The expression *hot-dogger* refers to a person or player who is trying to show off. Can you come up with an example of how *getting to first base* is used in our everyday language? Can you come up with any of your own examples of baseball words or phrases that have evolved into our everyday language? The words and phrases with their descriptions mentioned next come from the book, "The New Baseball Catalogue", by Dan Schlossberg.

Ace – An ace refers to a star worker. The best salesman is often called the ace of the staff. In baseball, the ace of the pitching staff is the best pitcher. Ace is derived from the name of a

pitcher. Asa Brainard was a pitcher for the unbeaten Cincinnati Red Stockings of 1869. That year, Asa pitched in every game.

Shut-out – A person is shut out of a situation if he or she is excluded from taking part. In baseball, a shut-out occurs when a team fails to score a run in the entire game.

Fan – In the late 1880s, Chris Von der Ahe, owner of the St. Louis Browns, was discussing a spectator who never missed a game. He referred to him as a **fanatic**.

Ruthian – This adjective was named after Babe Ruth. It describes a great achievement. For example, a very long home run can be referred to as a ruthian shot. A salesman, who triples his sales for a year, is said to have performed a ruthian accomplishment.

Rookie – In everyday life, a person is called a rookie if he is new to company or a job. This term was first mentioned in the Chicago Record Herald in 1913. It references a first year player in any sport. It may have come from the game of chess. In chess, the rook must wait its turn.

Southpaw – In everyday life, a southpaw refers to a person who uses his left hand. In baseball, a southpaw is a left-handed pitcher. Most ballparks were set up in such a way that the afternoon sun was behind the batter and in the eyes of the rightfielder. Such a setup makes the home-to-first base line almost directly east to west. Therefore, a lefthanded pitcher's arm faces south.

Bush League – This term was first used in 1910 to refer to any baseball league outside of the majors. Today, the term refers to an amateur action or behavior.

At-bat – A sailor, keeping score of a game in an 1872 game, coined this phrase and also is credited with the term **on-deck** to describe the next hitter. In everyday usage, a person who is performing a task is said to be at-bat; while the person that follows him is said to be on-deck.

Hardball – In everyday usage, this term refers to a no-nonsense attitude in business or politics. We say that person is playing hardball. In baseball, hardball refers to the ball used. There is even a television show called *Hardball*.

Scout – A scout evaluates the performance of a person. In baseball, a scout evaluates players or teams. Before 1845, a scout was the second catcher who stood in the rear behind the first catcher. In those days, a foul ball did not exist. A ball hit in the rear was a live ball and a player could run to first base. The scout was responsible for retrieving these balls.

Can-of-corn – In everyday usage, a *can-of-corn* means something very simple to do. In baseball, this term refers to a soft fly ball. A couple of possible sources of the phrase are cited in the definitive "New Dickson Baseball Dictionary." The most accepted: The phrase, first used in

1896, makes reference to a long-ago practice where a grocer would use a stick to tip a can of vegetables off a high shelf, then catch it in his hands or outstretched apron. Another possible source: Such a pop fly is as easy to capture as ‘corn from a can’.

In-the-ballpark – In everyday usage, “in-the-ballpark” means close to. For example, we could describe an acceptable bid as one ‘in the ballpark’. In baseball, a long fly ball that is catchable is said to be ‘in the ballpark’.

Play-ball – In everyday usage, this term refers to a person willing to go along with a plan. We say such a person is willing to *play-ball*. In baseball, *play-ball* means to start or resume the action in a baseball game.

Curve-ball – In baseball, a type of pitch released with a spin which causes the ball to swerve. In everyday life, it is a slang expression which means something that is expected or designed to mislead or deceive. It can also mean to be surprised, especially unpleasantly so.

Bobby Mathews in the 1870s is credited with mastering the curve ball and spitter.

Hit-it-out-of-the-ballpark – In baseball, this expression describes a home run. In every day usage, this expression means a big success. A person who does well in a debate is said to have ‘hit-it-out-of-the-ballpark’.

Nice-guys-finish-last – This expression is attributed to the famous manager Leo Durocher. His original expression was ‘nice guys finish eighth’. When Durocher made this statement in 1948, there were eight teams in the National League. Later the word ‘last’ replaced the word ‘eighth’. This expression is used in any area where there is competition. The interpretation of this expression is to advance yourself you must be a little ruthless.

A cup of coffee – A brief stay in the Major Leagues

Early Expressions Used in Baseball with their Modern Day Translations:

Early Expression	Modern Day Meaning
Aces	Runs
Behind	Catcher
Club Nine	Team
Cranks	Fans
Dew Drop	Slow Pitch

Foul Tick	Foul Ball
Hurler	Pitcher
Match	Game
Muff	Error
Striker	Batter
Tally	Score

Sandlot Stats

Baseball and Medicine

Learning Statistics with Baseball

Tommy John Surgery, known in medical practice as *ulnar collateral ligament reconstruction*, is a surgical procedure in which a ligament in the medial elbow is replaced with a tendon from elsewhere in the body. This surgery is named after the former Dodger pitcher Tommy John. Tommy John was the first baseball player to successfully undergo the operation in 1974. Tommy John played for six Major League teams during his career which spanned from 1963 through 1989. Tommy sat out the 1975 season. From 1963 through 1974 he won 113 games and lost 106 games. After the surgery, from 1976 to 1989, he won 175 games and lost 125 games. Clearly, the surgery not only prolonged his career but also improved his effectiveness. Tommy John is considered a borderline Hall of Fame player. For his career, Tommy had 288 wins and 231 losses. Probably, if he had recorded 12 more wins he would have been elected to the Hall of Fame.

Unfortunately this surgery did not exist during Sandy Koufax's time. He was forced to leave baseball at a very young age. Many baseball people believe, for a five year period, Sandy was the most dominant pitcher in the history of baseball.

Lou Gehrig Disease is a very rare form of a degenerative disease: amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). In 1938, Lou batted below .300 for the first time since 1925. It became evident that something was wrong. He also seemed to be losing his power. In 1939, Lou played the first eight games but managed only four hits. Lou took himself out of the lineup on May 2, 1939. As the Yankee captain, he took the lineup card to the umpires with Babe Dahlgren listed as his

replacement at first-base. Lou's 2,130 consecutive game streak had ended. Doctors at the Mayo Clinic made the tragic diagnosis. Lou died on June 2, 1941.

Finally, we present some interesting coincidences involved with baseball.

Coincidences and Baseball

Life Expectancy: According to researchers Ernest Abel, a professor of medicine, and Michael Kruger, a statistician at Wayne State University, Major-Leaguers with nicknames live 2.5 years longer, on average, than those without nicknames; that professional baseball players live a little longer than other people; that players who debut at a young age have a shorter life-expectancy than their slower-developing teammates; that southpaws are a little shorter than right-handers; that Major-Leaguers are more likely to die on their birthday than chance would predict; and that Hall of Famers are more likely to die on their birthday than other Major-Leaguers.

Initials: A study conducted by Leif Nelson of the University of California at Berkeley and Joseph Simmons of Yale University show players whose first or last name begins with "K" strike out more than those players without "K" in their initials. The findings were published in 2007 in the Journal of Psychological Science. The hypothesis in the study was that people unconsciously seek out outcomes corresponding to their names in spite of their conscious desires.

Political Parties: In the May 2007 Quarterly Journal of Political Science, a study conducted by Christopher Zorn of Penn State University and Jeff Gill of Washington University demonstrated that Democrats favor the designated-hitter rule more than Republicans and Independents Zorn stated, "Liberals like the DH- rule because it is sort of a welfare program. It lets hitters hit longer into their careers."