



## ***FROM THE BULLPEN***

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### **WINTER MEETING**

Though we are all caught up in Husker National Championship fever, it is time to turn our thoughts to more important matters, namely, baseball and our upcoming Winter Meeting. On Saturday, December 11, 1993, beginning at 1:00 p.m., we will gather for the annual HSL Winter Awards Ceremony. On tap:

- Award Presentation - Itchie will present the coveted Cup to Curby, while delivering a tear-evoking speech about how Curby has overcome many obstacles (bad haircut and innate clumsiness among the foremost) to capture the Crown.
- The League membership will pay homage to Curby, with the customary group chant, "Curby is King."
- Curby's unforgettable a cappella rendition of "I Did It My Way."
- Payment of Award money.
- Collection of \$25 deposit for 1994.
- Panel discussion on Curby's haircut.
- Vote on 1994 format.
- Three-round mock draft.
- Planning session - 1994 trip.

Should be a good time. Be there.

## *From The Dugout*

As part of *From the Bullpen's* continuing effort to spread the word about the glorious history of our national pastime, beginning with this issue, *FTB* will periodically feature a CBE (Continuing Baseball Education) section -- *From the Dugout* -- dealing with players of yesteryear and their accomplishments. This issue we will cover two topics: (1) The Splendid Splinter, Ted Williams; and (2) the yardstick by which Teddy Ballplayer's heroics were measured, the elusive Triple Crown. My interest in the subject matter this week was spurred by two things: the marvelous 1993 season of Barry Bonds, whose statistics (.336 avg./46 HR/123 RBI) would have won him the Triple Crown in five of the last seven years in the National League; and my recent completion of terrific book on The Splendid One, *Hitter: The Life and Turmoils of Ted Williams*, by Ed Linn. If you are looking for one last item to add to your Christmas list, I highly recommend this book.

## *From the Dugout*

### I. Triple Crown

Although Barry Bonds' recent flirtation with the Triple Crown may make the T.C. seem a relatively attainable achievement, history demonstrates that it is a rare bird, indeed. While many players have been able to capture two of the three T.C. legs, only a handful of players -- some of the game's greatest -- have been able to sweep all three categories. In the 93 seasons of the 20th century, only 13 players have worn the Triple Crown. Two players, Rogers Hornsby and Ted Williams, each did it twice. The last major leaguer to do it was, of course, the Yaz in 1967. The last National Leaguer to win the crown was Ducky Joe Medwick, going all the way back to 1937.

The entire list of Triple Crown winners reads like this:

#### American League

Player	Team	Year	HR	RBI	BA
Nap Lajoie	Phila.	1901	14	125	.422
Ty Cobb	Det.	1909	9	115	.377
Jimmie Foxx	Phila.	1933	48	163	.358
Lou Gehrig	N.Y.	1934	49	165	.363
Ted Williams	Bos.	1942	36	137	.356
	Bos.	1947	32	114	.343
Mickey Mantle	N.Y.	1958	52	130	.353

Frank Robinson	Bal.	1966	49	122	.316
Carl Yastrzemski	Bos.	1967	44	121	.326

National League

Player	Team	Year	HR	RBI	BA
Paul Hines	Prov.	1978	4	50	.358
Hugh Duffy	Box.	1894	18	145	.438
Heinie Zimmerman	Chi.	1912	14	103	.372
Rogers Hornsby	St.L.	1922	42	152	.401
		1925	39	143	.403
Chuck Klein	Phila.	1933	28	120	.368
Joe Medwick	St.L.	1937	31	154	.374

Some pretty select company.

Perhaps the list of Triple Crown winners is most distinguished by the Hall-of-Famers who are not on it:

Babe Ruth  
Hank Aaron  
Willie Mays  
Stan Musial  
Joe DiMaggio  
Tris Speaker  
Honus Wagner  
Ernie Banks  
Mel Ott  
Al Kaline  
Hack Wilson  
George Sisler  
Roberto Clemente

The Bambino managed to lead the American League in two of the three legs of the Triple Crown *seven* different times without ever achieving a full sweep. And remember, while Babe generally led the majors in taters and RBIs, he was no slouch in batting average either, with a .342 career average.

The Babe had a couple of very close runs at the Triple Crown. In 1921, the Sultan of Swat had 59 round-trippers, 171 RBIs and a .378 average, but didn't win the Triple Crown. Harry Heilmann hit a salty .394 to lead the league in batting average that year. Two years

later, in 1923, Babe led the league in home runs with 41, tied for the lead in RBIs with 130, and hit an eye-popping .393. But again, he didn't win the Triple Crown. You guessed it. His 1921 nemesis, Harry Heilmann, batted .403 to again edge out the Babe. And Babe's frustrations would continue.

In 1924, Babe led his league in batting average (.378) and led all of baseball in home runs (46), but lost the RBI crown to Goose Goslin of the Washington Senators. In 1926, Babe led the majors in home runs (47) and RBIs (146), and batted a nifty .372. But another Detroit Tiger/spoiler, Heinie Manush, hit .378 that year to lead the major leagues in batting average. *That's* how hard it can be to win the Triple Crown.

### Close Calls

Babe wasn't the only major league player to barely miss out on a Triple Crown. Consider if you will the 1949 season of Ted Williams, in which Ted eagerly chased after an unprecedented third Triple Crown. Going into the final weekend of the season, the Red Sox went to New York for the final two games with a one-game lead, with Teddy Ballgame enjoying a lead in home runs (43) and batting average, and tied for the lead in RBIs (159) with teammate Vern Stephens. The Red Sox were swept by the Yankees to lose the pennant, and Ted went hitless to barely lose the batting average title to Tiger George Kell, who had two hits in his final game to finish ahead of Williams. Their final statistics:

	AB	H	AVG
Kell	522	179	.3429118
Williams	566	194	.3427561

While they both had their averages rounded up to .343 per statistical practice, Kell was the official batting average leader, defeating Williams' bid for the Triple Crown. Note that one more at-bat for Kell, one fewer at-bat for Williams, one more hit for Williams, or one less hit for Kell, would have made Ted Williams the batting average champ, and the winner of the Triple Crown for the third time. Now that's close!

### Other Close Seconds

Year	Player	HR	RBI	BA	Spoiler	
1921	Rogers Hornsby	21	126	.397	George Kelly	23
	HR					
1931	Chuck Klein	31	121	.337	Chick Hafey	.349 BA
1932	Jimmie Foxx	58	169	.364	Dale Alexander	.367 BA

1938	Jimmie Foxx	50	175	.349	Hank Greenberg	58
HR						
1940	Hank Greenberg	41	150	.340	Joe DiMaggio	.352 BA
1941	Ted Williams	37	120	.401	Joe DiMaggio	125
RBI						
1948	Stan Musial	39	131	.376	Ralph Kiner/Johnny Mize	40
HR						
1953	Al Rosen	43	145	.336	Mickey Vernon	.337 BA
1963	Hank Aaron	44	130	.319	Tommy Davis	.326 BA
1972	Richie Allen	37	113	.308	Rod Carew	.318 BA
1977	George Foster	52	149	.320	Dave Parker	.338 BA
1978	Jim Rice	46	139	.315	Rod Carew	.333 BA

The next time that a major leaguer wins the Triple Crown -- if it happens again in our lifetimes -- we will appreciate the magnitude of this achievement.

## II. The Splendid Splinter

I always knew that Ted Williams was one of the great hitters of all time. However, until reading *Hitter: The Life and Turmoils of Ted Williams*, I did not appreciate just how fantastic an athlete he was. Allow me to share a little bit of information and a few anecdotes about this great player.

Birth name:	Theodore Samuel Williams
Date of birth:	August 30, 1918
Birthplace:	San Diego, California
Parents:	Sam and May (Venzer) Williams
Brother:	Danny
High school:	Hoover High
Height:	6' 3"
Weight:	205
Bats:	Left
Throws:	Right
Nicknames:	"The Kid" "The Thumper" "The Splendid Splinter" "Teddy Ballgame"

After a tremendous prep career at San Diego's Hoover High, Ted Williams signed his first professional contract on June 26, 1936, with the San Diego Padres of the Pacific Coast League. His initial contract paid him \$150 per month. Williams played 42 games for the San Diego club in 1936, and the entire 1937 season. His contract was then purchased by the Boston Red Sox, who sent him to Minneapolis for the 1938 season.

When Williams arrived in the Red Sox spring training camp in Sarasota in the spring of 1938, it was with a great deal of fanfare, and he was as cocky a rookie as the major leagues had yet seen. On his first day in camp, one of the Boston writers reportedly said to Williams: "Wait until you see Foxx hit." Williams reportedly responded: "Wait until Foxx sees me hit." Following spring training, Williams was sent to the Triple A farm club of the Boston Red Sox, the Minneapolis Millers, where he proceeded to tear apart the league with a .366 average, 142 RBIs and 43 home runs. Despite his obvious immaturity and erratic fielding, it was obvious that it was time for Williams to play ball with the big boys.

Williams broke into the majors with a bang in 1939, hitting 31 home runs, a batting average of .327, and leading the major leagues in RBIs with 145. It was only the beginning for the Splendid Splinter. Take a look at his lifetime batting statistics:

2

## 1941

1941 was a fantastic year for Ted Williams and for major league baseball in general. It was the year that Williams batted .406, the last time that a major leaguer has cracked the .400 mark. It was also the year that Joe DiMaggio had his 56-game hitting streak. Williams narrowly missed out on winning his first Triple Crown that year, with a league-leading batting average of .406, a league-leading home run total of 37, and a total of 120 RBIs. Joe DiMaggio led the majors in RBIs that year with a total of 125. Despite the fact that Williams led the majors in 1941 in runs, home runs, bases on balls, batting average, on-base percentage, and slugging percentage, the MVP award that year went to his more popular American League rival, Joltin' Joe. If that seems unjust, consider what happened in 1942.

Ted Williams won his first Triple Crown in 1942, leading all of baseball with 36 home runs, 137 RBIs and a .356 batting average. He also led the majors in runs scored with 141, total bases with 338, bases on balls with 145, on-base percentage with .499, and slugging average with .648. The MVP award that year went to Joe Gordon of the New York Yankees, who had a .322 batting average, 18 home runs and 103 RBIs. How could this happen? For one thing, the New York Yankees won the American League pennant by 10 games over the Red Sox. For another, Williams alienated numerous members of the press corps -- particularly in Boston -- almost from the moment that he donned his major league uniform.

Williams did manage to finally win an MVP award in 1946, his first year back after three years in the service during World War II. That year, Williams had 38 home runs, 142 runs, 123 RBIs, and batted .342. In addition, Boston won the pennant that year.

In 1947, Williams won his second Triple Crown, with 32 homers, 114 RBIs and .343 average. Again, however, he failed to be voted in as the league's most valuable player, an award which again went to Joe DiMaggio, whose statistics paled in comparison: .315, 20 HR, 97 RBI. The Yankee Clipper was the favorite of the sportswriters; Williams, their chief antagonist.

Williams did manage to pick up another MVP award in 1949, despite the fact that the Yankees edged out the Red Sox for the American League pennant by defeating them on the last day of the season. Williams led the league in runs (150), doubles (30), home runs (43), total bases (368), RBIs (159), walks (162), on-base percentage (.490), slugging percentage (.650), and, as mentioned above, finished a very close second in batting average to George Kell, with a rounded-up average of .343.

After an injury-plagued season in 1950, Williams put together another nice campaign in 1951, leading the league in walks, on-base percentage and slugging percentage, and finishing second in home runs, second in RBIs, fourth in runs, and fourth in batting average.

In 1952, after playing just six games for the Red Sox, Williams was called back into the Marine Corps for combat duty in the Korean conflict. Williams did not experience combat duty in World War II, although he was in the service from 1943 to 1945, because he was too good at what he did. After breaking all the course records in air gunnery during training, he was made a Marine pilot instructor as one of the top graduates in his class.

In the Korean conflict, Williams flew 39 missions in a fighter squadron whose operations commander was John Glenn, later an astronaut and now U.S. senator. Glenn picked Williams to be his wing man, as the best and sharpest pilot in the squadron.

After completing his service in Korea, Williams returned to the Red Sox in 1954, leading the league in average and walks. It was clear that his best years were now behind him. However, one of Williams' greatest accomplishments was when he batted a torrid .388 in 1957, at the ripe old age of 39. Williams also forged a slugging percentage of .731 that year, one of the highest in history.

Williams retired following the 1960 season, after 19 years of service with the Red Sox, giving up a chance to play a couple more years with the Yankees. When he retired, he had the fifth highest career batting average among 20th century players with .344. He finished with 521 home runs, which was third behind Babe Ruth and Jimmie Foxx at the time that he retired. (He is now tied for 10th on the all time list with Willie McCovey.) Williams is second on the all time list of walks with 2,019, behind Babe Ruth's 2,056. He is the all-time leader in on-base percentage with .483, and second in slugging percentage with .634. His 162 walks in 1947 and 1949 were the second greater season totals ever, behind Babe Ruth's phenomenal total of 170 walks in 1923. Williams' on-base average of .551 in 1951 is the highest season on-base percentage of all time. His .528 on-base percentage in 1957 is the fourth highest of all time. Williams' slugging percentage of .735 in 1941 is the tenth highest season total ever (Babe Ruth had the three highest totals, and six out of the

top ten). All in all, some pretty amazing statistics, considering the fact that he missed almost five entire seasons in the prime of his career for service in World War II and the Korean conflict.

Ted Williams, maybe the greatest hitter of all time.

### **Around the Horn**

Our league Egyptologist, U-belly, reported that his poem, "My Trip to Ejipt," was thoroughly enjoyed by his fellow railroaders. However, to U-belly's chagrin, none of his cerebral co-employees realized that the poem was a spoof, and none noticed any misspellings.

### **Ballpark Fever**

With new ballparks to open next season in Cleveland and Texas, there is a lot of excitement about baseball stadiums these days. For your edification, I reprint here a listing of past, current and future ballparks in the major leagues, as listed in the October issue of *The SABR Bulletin*.

### **Nickname of the Week**

This issue's featured baseball nickname is Doug "Eyechart" Gwosdz. When Doug debuted with the San Diego Padres in 1981, his teammates had great difficulty with the pronunciation of his last name, and therefore dubbed him "Eyechart."

See you on December 11.

Skipper