



BLEACHER CREATURE

A Monthly Conversation Among Baseball Fans

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NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

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Attendance Up in 1st Year of Rebuilding **Zephyrs and Fans Can Be Proud of the 2006 Season**



Photos courtesy Washington Nationals

Some of the Zephyrs who will finish the season playing for the Washington Nationals, L-R: Henry Mateo, George Lombard, Ryan Church, and Chris Booker.

By Bill Catalanello

The New Orleans Zephyrs finished the 2006 season with a winning record and an increase in season attendance over 2005. A victory over Memphis in the season's final game gave the Zs their first winning record (72-71) since 2002. That was 8 wins better than their 2005 record of 64-76. The major league affiliate Nationals moved players between manager Frank Robinson's Washington club and Triple-A very liberally throughout the major league season. Manager Tim Foli had to adapt to an ever-changing roster. For the season 155 roster moves were made involving the Zs' roster.

In the Greater New Orleans area, a city of trailers, gutted houses and partially-rebuilt neighborhoods, the fan support came through in very good numbers. Figures for total attendance and per-game attendance were actually up from the 2005 figures. Attendance in 2005 was 5,084 per game. For the 2006 season that figure rose to 5,164 per game.

The Zephyrs sent players to the majors early and often. As September brought expanded rosters, the Nationals had 13 players on the roster who had appeared in a Zephyrs uniform at some point in the 2006 season.



Photo by Bill Catalanello

In the Greater New Orleans area, a city of trailers, gutted houses and partially-rebuilt neighborhoods, the fan support came through in very good numbers.

Zephyrs Attendance Year by Year

Year	Attendance
2006	361,493
2005	330,466
2004	324,324
2003	379,819
2002	410,183
2001	385,447
2000	447,475
1999	498,221
1998	519,584
1997	517,200
1996	180,023
1995	159,007
1994	187,026
1993	161,846

The Nationals, in the quest to improve their bullpen, gave a look to several hurlers on the New Orleans staff. The Zephyrs consistently sent pitchers throughout the year to Washington.

Arms like Billy Traber, Jason Bergmann, Chris Booker, Saul Rivera, and Chris Schroeder have added depth to the Nats' pitching staff. The strength of the Zephyrs team for most of the year was its pitching.

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Flowers for the Living

BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

A recurring question that I get a lot here in Birmingham is why do you pull for a minor league baseball team in another state? Of course the love of the city, memories of going to games while living in New Orleans and birthplace of our daughter all factor into my love of the Zephyrs. I wanted to share two behind the scenes stories of my interaction with Zephyr staff members the last couple of years and show how Boudreaux had me at hello.



It was the winter of 2004 and I was planning to carry our church group to a mission trip sponsored by New Orleans Baptist Seminary. I was nervous about the trip because it was the first time I had lead them on this type of trip and it was their first mission trip as a church. I am the new pastor trying to plan a quality event for my new church. I planned our week to attend which happened to be Jazzfest and the Zephyrs were in town that Thursday night. I contacted the Zephyrs staff about tickets so I could put the expense of the tickets as part of the package price for the trip. The staff member from the Zephyrs asked if we would like group t-shirts with the church's name on the back. I was shocked because it was only a group of 6 of us coming to New Orleans. He said it would not be

a problem to have shirts made for the group for just a couple of dollars. He had the shirts there for our group that Thursday night and they were a big hit. It really struck me that this staff member went beyond the call of duty to help make our trip special. I still have the shirt and still wear it to this day.

My other story comes from Feb 2005. My family and I were visiting our friends in Bush and wanting to take in some of the Mardi Gras parades that weekend. We got to New Orleans that afternoon and we hit several of our favorite spots including Deanies in Bucktown baby! We did not get to the shrine until 4:00 Friday afternoon. This is the Friday going into Mardi Gras' last weekend prior to Fat Tuesday the next week. I thought there is no way we are getting into the Strike Zone this late in the day and on this particular Friday. We walked into the offices and my wife told the young lady there we wanted to shop at the Strike Zone. She said that the store was closed but she would call someone. Within minutes, one of the staff members literally opens the store for us. I had a great time shopping, and it amazes me to this day how well we were treated.

A minister friend of mine said one time he believes in giving flowers to the living. I wanted to share with you these two stories to show the kind of people that the Zephyrs have working for them, and I guess this is my form of flowers. The team seems to really care about building fan support and customer care. In a world that gets less personal all of the time, it is good to see that there still some places that care about joe average fan.

John Bowlin

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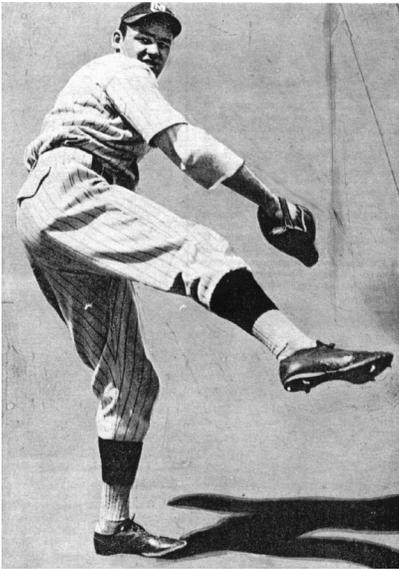
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Courtesy Arthur Schott

Al Milnar

New Orleans Pitchers Who Won 20 in a Season

Decades ago it was not unusual to find a winning minor league team with at least one and sometimes two 20-game winners among its starting staff. The era of the 20-game winner in minor league baseball, however, has come and gone. Nowadays, any pitcher who can string together even ten wins at any level of organized baseball will find himself promoted to the next level before the season is over.

Through the years the New Orleans Pelicans of the Southern Association had their share of hurlers who won 20 games in a season. In 42 seasons, between 1902 and 1943, there were 34 twenty-win seasons among 24 different New Orleans pitchers. Joe Martina tops the list, winning 20 four times for the Pels.

Roy Walker's 26-win season in 1920 is the winningest season by any New Orleans pitcher. Al Milnar's 24–5 record in 1935 stands as the best winning percentage (.828) in Pelicans history. Jesse Danna, 22–7 in 1943, was the last Pelican pitcher to win 20 in a season.

Year	Pitcher	W	L	Pct.	Year	Pitcher	W	L	Pct.
1902	Joseph Stewart #	23	9	.719	1923	Roy Walker	21	9	.700
1905	Ted Breitenstein	21	5	.808	1923	Joe Martina	21	10	.677
1905	Bill Phillips	21	8	.724	1924	John Hollingsworth	22	11	.667
1906	Ted Breitenstein	21	7	.750	1925	Joe Martina	23	13	.639
1907	Moxie Manuel	20	11	.645	1926	Lute Roy	24	10	.706
1910	Otto Hess	25	9	.735	1927	Joe Martina	23	12	.657
1910	George Paige	24	14	.632	1929	Clint Brown	20	12	.625
1911	Otto Hess	25	9	.735	1931	Fred Johnson	21	12	.636
1911	Al Klawitter	20	12	.625	1931	Sal Gliatto	20	15	.571
1914	Jim Bagby	20	9	.690	1933	Fred Johnson	21	9	.700
1915	Clarence Smith	20	12	.625	1934	Al Milnar	22	13	.629
1916	Clarence Smith	23	13	.639	1934	Fred Johnson	20	5	.800
1917	Dick Robertson	21	8	.724	1935	Al Milnar	24	5	.828
1920	Roy Walker	26	11	.703	1937	John Humphries	20	7	.741
1921	Tom Phillips	25	7	.781	1938	Russell Evans	21	14	.600
1921	Dazzy Vance	21	11	.656	1942	Bill Seinsoth	24	10	.706
1922	Joe Martina	22	6	.786	1943	Jesse Danna	22	7	.759

#—includes Stewart's record with Shreveport

Tom Phillips, Dazzy Vance Were a Combined 46–18 for 1921 Pelicans

There were seven seasons in which the Pelicans boasted two 20-game winners. In 1921, a pair of righthanders who pitched in the major leagues, Tom Phillips and Dazzy Vance, combined for 46 wins for New Orleans.

Phillips (25–7 in 1921) had a brief big league career for three teams, compiling an 8–12 record in 45 appearances.

Hall of Famer Vance (21–11 in 1921) blossomed on the major league level the following year at age 31, winning 18 games for the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1922. He went on to a splendid major league career that included 29 shutouts among his 197 career victories.

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Billy Traber



Chris Schroeder

Billy Traber and Chris Schroeder were two more Zephyrs pitchers who were promoted to the Nationals in September

There's a distinct possibility that the New Orleans Zephyrs will have a new major league affiliate for the 2007 season. Indications are the Washington Nationals may be in the market for a Triple-A affiliate closer to their home than New Orleans, The two-year agreement that the Nats and Zs entered into after the 2004 season is at an end.

The Zephyrs may also be looking this fall for a new major league affiliate. One thing's for certain, however. There will be Pacific Coast League Triple-A baseball in New Orleans in 2007, and that baseball will be played in Metairie's Zephyr Field. Who the players are will be determined by the affiliations, and that issue will be decided in the next several weeks.

Next month's October issue will be our last.

Don't miss it.

We're planning some fun features by our regular contributors to bring the curtain down in style.



Photo by Pam Catalanello

Bricktown Showdown Will Decide Triple-A Champions

Triple-A Baseball (International and Pacific Coast Leagues) will hold its inaugural Bricktown Showdown in Oklahoma City presented by Hyundai, a winner-take-all championship game. The game will be televised live across the ESPN2 network on Tuesday, September 19, at 6 p.m. Central Time.

Triple-A Baseball and ESPN2 have enjoyed a 12-year relationship involving the annual Triple-A All-Star Game and also partnered on the telecast of the Las Vegas Triple-A World Series from 1998-2000.

Triple-A Baseball, Minor League Baseball's highest classification, is comprised of 30 teams throughout North America that develop talent for Major League affiliates while providing affordable entertainment for fans of all ages. The 2006 campaign was the 103rd season of operation for the Pacific Coast League and the 123rd season for the International League.

The 2006 Bricktown Showdown, presented by Hyundai, will determine the overall champion of the Triple-A Baseball classification. On Sept. 19, the International League's Governors' Cup Champion and the Pacific Coast League Champion will meet in Oklahoma City's AT&T Bricktown Ballpark (home of the Oklahoma RedHawks).

The IL club will be considered the home team for this year's game, thanks to the Internationals' 6-0 win over the PCL All-Stars in July. This will be the first time an overall champion has been determined since the Las Vegas Triple-A World Series was held from 1998-2000.

—From Minorleaguebaseball.com

Around the PCL

The Round Rock Express defeated the Nashville Sounds in their first-round best of five series, three games to two. The Express won the deciding game, 8–0, on a complete-game shutout by Zeke Astacio at the Dell Diamond in Round Rock.

Round Rock will play a best-of-five series against the Tucson Sidewinders, who topped the Salt Lake Bees, three games to one, winning the finale by a 10-8 score in Salt Lake City. The Tucson-Round Rock winner will advance to a one-game championship against the International League champ to be played in Oklahoma City's Bricktown Ballpark on September 19.

PCL Attendance Up

The Pacific Coast League League celebrated another milestone in its setting of a new attendance record as more than 7.4-million fans attended PCL ballparks during the 2006 regular season, the League announced on Wednesday.

For the second consecutive season, the PCL averaged over 6,600 fans per game, reaching a total of 7,413,505 fans and surpassing the previous season's attendance record of 7,346,408 fans.

Sacramento led the way with over 728,000 fans, followed closely by Memphis (692,426) and Round Rock (677,706). Albuquerque and Iowa rounded out the top-5 as they, along with Oklahoma, surpassed the 500,000 mark again.

Iowa Cubs fans boosted the per-game average at Principal Park by nearly 500 patrons a game for a League-best six percent increase.

Colorado Springs also saw a significant improvement in its total attendance with a 12-percent increase from its 2005 mark, while Portland followed with an 11-percent increase.

Together with the International League, Triple-A baseball drew nearly 14 million fans.

300-300 Club: Six Players Who Combined Power, Speed, Longevity

By Lee Collin

One of baseball's most exclusive statistical "clubs" is the 300 home run + 300 stolen base club. Only six major leaguers have combined power, speed and a long career to achieve those lofty totals.

Willie Mays was the first to gain entry into this notable club. Over a 22-year career beginning in 1951 with the New York Giants, Mays collected 660 homers and 338 stolen bases in 2992 big league games. Mays had six seasons of 40 or more home runs and two seasons of 50 or more. Willie hit 52 in 1965, his best HR-output, for San Francisco. His career high in steals was a total of 40 in 1956. For his career, Mays stole 338 in 441 attempts, a success rate of 76.6%.

Player	G	AB	HR	AB/HR	SB	CS	Pct.
Willie Mays	2992	10,881	660	15.5	338	103	.77
Bobby Bonds	1849	7043	332	21.1	461	169	.73
Andre Dawson	2627	9927	438	22.7	314	109	.74
Barry Bonds*	2841	9444	729	12.9	509	141	.79
Reggie Sanders*	1753	6168	303	20.3	304	114	.73
Steve Finley*	2522	9257	303	30.5	320	118	.73

*– through Sept. 3, 2006

Bobby Bonds, who also broke into the big leagues with the Giants, was the second player to reach the 300–level in both home runs and steals. In five different seasons the elder Bonds achieved the 30–30 level in HRs and stolen bases. He is still the only player to have 30–30 seasons in both leagues (three in the AL and two in the NL.) In his 14-year career with eight clubs, Bobby, however never led either league in homers or stolen bases.

Andre Dawson enjoyed a 21-year career with four clubs, hitting 438 round-trippers to go along with his 314 steals in 423 tries (a 74% success rate.) With the Montreal Expos, Dawson posted seven consecutive seasons (1977-83) with 20 or more thefts. He was later a National League home run champ in 1987 as a member of the Cubs, with 49.

Three active players, **Barry Bonds**, **Reggie Sanders**, and **Steve Finley** have recently joined this exclusive club. Barry Bonds has achieved a unique niche as the only player in baseball history with at least 500 HRs and 500 steals. As this was written, Bonds had 729 homers and 509 stolen bases.

Sanders hit his 300th home run and stole his 300th base during the 2006 season to join the greats on the list. Likewise, Steve Finley joined the 300-homer club this year, and stole his 300th base during the 2005 season. Finley is on the San Francisco Giants active roster, while Sanders is on the 60-day DL for the Kansas City Royals.

Dead Ball Superstar Bill Dahlen Hit in 70 of 71 Games

When Chase Utley hit safely in his 30th consecutive game in late July, he became only the 39th major leaguer since 1876 to achieve that distinction. He is currently tied for 10th place on the Longest Hitting Streaks list with 35. Thus he and Jimmy Rollins (who hit in 36 consecutive games in 2005) became the first teammates to enter this elite group in back-to-back seasons.

Ahead of Utley and Rollins are some of the game's greatest players ever—Rose, Keeler, Sisler, Cobb and, of course Joe DiMaggio. But there is one man who remains largely forgotten despite his 4th-place ranking in this category. His name is Bill Dahlen, and in 1894, as a member of the Chicago Colts (Cubs), he became the first player to attain a 40+ game hitting streak. His stay at the top of the heap was short-lived, however, because of future teammate Willie Keeler's 44-game romp in 1897.



Chase Utley



Jimmy Rollins

Teammates Chase Utley and Jimmy Rollins are both on the list of MLB's ten longest hitting streaks. 19th century star Bill Dahlen was the first to have a 40+ game streak.

Longest All-Time Hitting Streaks

1941	Joe DiMaggio	56
1897	Willie Keeler	44
1978	Pete Rose	44
1894	Bill Dahlen	42
1922	George Sisler	41
1911	Ty Cobb	40
1987	Paul Molitor	39
1945	Tommy Holmes	37
2005	Jimmy Rollins	36
1895	Fred Clarke	35
1917	Ty Cobb	35
2006	Chase Utley	35

BILL DAHLEN

	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BA	OBP	SLG	OPS
1894	121	502	149	179	32	14	15	107	.357	.444	.566	1.010
1896	125	474	137	167	30	19	9	74	.352	.438	.553	.991
Career	2443	9031	1589	2457	413	163	84	1233	.272	.358	.382	.740

Dahlen was one of the superstars of his time (1891-1911) playing shortstop for an NL record 20 years. Fielding was considered his strong point (NL career record 7500 shortstop assists and major league record 13,325 chances at shortstop) but he was also a formidable batsman with decent power. In fact, after he belted his final career homer (his 84th) in 1909, he was alone in 13th place on the all-time HR list. Since he was also fleet of foot and strong-armed, Bad Bill was the 1890's version of a five-tool phenom.

Even without his streak, 1894 was his best season. He reached career highs in runs, hits, home runs, RBIs, batting average, on-base percentage and slugging percentage. In 1903, the pitcher's mound was moved back from 50 feet to its current distance, and a substantial number of players had their best seasons that year and the next. No one, however, had a 42-game hitting streak, and only one other player, Hall-of-Famer George Davis, broke through the 30 consecutive game barrier with 33 in 1893. As if to

silence his detractors, Bill had another terrific season in 1896, nearly matching some of his 1894 numbers.

Perhaps the highest compliment paid to Dahlen was made by none other than John McGraw. "Little Napoleon" stated that the trade he made for Dahlen in the off-season of 1903 is what made the Giants into winners. Two years later the New Yorkers were World Champions.

Some baseball historians say that Bill Dahlen is the best player not in the Hall of Fame. Personally, I would not go quite that far, but take note of this: following his 42-game hitting streak, Bad Bill was held hitless for one game and then went on a 28-game tear, thereby hitting safely in an astounding 70 out of 71 games. He nearly became the only man in major league history to possess two 30-game hitting streaks in one season. Even the great DiMaggio, despite hitting in 73 of 74 in 1941, might have had to take a back seat to that.

Houston, Texas

Dear Bleacher Creature,

Ever since my daughter Betsy was born in October, 2001, we've been almost constant companions. Oh, I was a career girl before I became a mother. Since then, however, I've had the luxury of being a "stay-at-home" mom, thanks to my sweet and hard-working husband Louis. During the last three years, however, Betsy and I didn't stay at home all that much. We did everything together. We went shopping, to the gym, to restaurants, to my mother's, to the potty, to her dancing class, to my yoga class, to ballgames...everywhere together.

Two weeks ago, Betsy started kindergarten. She was enthused about it; she was pumped up. She was confident, fearless and tearless. Her mother, however, was a wreck.

Up to now, the almost exclusive influences in Betsy's life have been me and Louis. We've sheltered her, to a great degree, from the more corrupt elements of the popular youth culture. We've taken her to church and talked with her about the stuff that's important to us, like treating people politely and with respect, loving God and country, making good choices.

Now begins her exposure to the world at large, to kids and adults (the teachers) unlike any she has met so far in her short life. Over the next several years, she will encounter strange new ideas and ways of looking at the world. Louis and I can only hope the values we've introduced to her early will continue to shape and guide her as she gradually expands her horizons.

Leaving Betsy at school that day with tears in my eyes, I tried to sort out my feelings: relief that Betsy was so ready to spend the day away from Mama in a totally new environment; sadness to realize she's not a baby anymore; exuberance at all the free time I would now have to do the things I've been putting off; and separation anxiety, of course.

So far, she really likes going to school, and that certainly is a blessing. The start of Betsy's scholastic career puts me squarely at another crossroads as my 40th birthday approaches.

* * *



For those of us here in Houston who have watched the Astros sneak into the NL playoffs the last two seasons, proceeding last year all the way to our first World Series, we entered the 2006 with high expectations. The manner in which the Astros closed with a rush in each of the last two seasons, we were beginning to believe the sky would be the limit. Many of us thought that this would be the year to go all the way.

Here we are a week into September and the Astros are two games under .500, mostly because of a dormant offense. The pitching has been as tough as ever, but Houston has lost far too many close games. Last time I counted, they had been shut out twelve times. For a team defending the NL championship, that's embarrassing. Our team is last in the NL in batting average, last in hits, 15th in slugging, 12th in runs, and 11th in on-base percentage. It's hard to be a winning team when you don't score enough runs to support your pitchers. With the notable exception of Lance Berkman, who is having an MVP-type year, none of the Astros hitters have produced like they can this year.

Having said all that, there's still hope for a miracle finish that would propel the Astros to the NL wild card. The league is rather bunched up in the middle, with a half dozen or more clubs hovering around the .500 mark. With the strong pitching manager Phil Garner has, don't count the Astros out yet. But even if they make it three fantastic finishes in three years, they haven't shown that they can score enough runs to be a factor in the playoffs. against the NL's best. This is an analysis I hope is all wrong. As you know, I'm usually a hopeless optimist.

We'll see what the rest of September brings. Next month will be our final installment. I'll have more for you then.

Feel free to write me at :
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Bye for now,
Rose



First Class

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