



BLEACHER CREATURE

A Monthly Conversation Among Baseball Fans

ISSUE # 128

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

DECEMBER 2004—JANUARY 2005

Frank Robinson Will Manage Washington in 2005 Season

The Washington Nationals last month announced that Hall-of-Famer Frank Robinson has agreed to terms on a one-year contact to manage Washington in 2005. Interim General Manager Jim Bowden made the announcement from the club's Spring Training complex in Viera, FL.

Robinson returns for a fourth season with the club. In his first three seasons, Robinson's clubs went 233-253 (.479). Despite accepting the managerial post on February 12, 2002—just five days before the start of Spring Training—Robinson led the team to consecutive 83-win seasons in 2002 and '03.

In 2002, Robinson's first season, the club won 15 more games than the season prior to his arrival. The following year, in 2003, the team remained in the Wild Card chase into September despite enduring a split

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Zephyrs' New ML Affiliate Having a Busy Off-Season

By Bill Catalanello

The former Montreal Expos—now the Washington Nationals—are busy preparing for the 2005 season, still under the ownership of Major League Baseball. As 2004 comes to a close, the newest incarnation of baseball in our nation's capital has been approved by MLB's owners, has a stadium deal in hand, and is busy refurbishing Robert F. Kennedy Stadium, which will be the Nationals' home for the next three seasons.

The New Orleans Zephyrs signed a two-year player development agreement with the Montreal franchise, which is now in the process of relocating to Washington. The Zephyrs will be the Triple-A Pacific Coast League affiliate of the Washington Nationals beginning in 2005.

The Nationals, under new interim GM Jim Bowden, have also been very active with player acquisitions. In the current offseason the Nationals have brought in slugging third baseman Vinny Castilla, troubled outfielder Jose Guillen, slick-fielding shortstop Cristian Guzman, backup catcher Gary Bennett, and former Pirates outfielder J.J. Davis.

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Montreal Expos Year-by-Year Record, Attendance

2004	67	95	.414	29.0	748,550
2003	83	79	.512	18.0	1,025,639
2002	83	79	.512	19.0	812,552
2001	68	94	.420	20.0	642,745
2000	67	95	.414	28.0	926,263
1999	68	94	.420	35.0	772,737
1998	65	97	.401	41.0	914,717
1997	78	84	.481	23.0	1,497,609
1996	88	74	.543	8.0	1,616,709
1995	66	78	.458	24.0	1,309,618
1994	74	40	.649	-	1,276,250
1993	94	68	.580	3.0	1,641,437
1992	87	75	.537	9.0	1,669,077
1991	71	90	.441	26.5	934,742
1990	85	77	.525	10.0	1,373,087
1989	81	81	.500	12.0	1,783,533
1988	81	81	.500	20.0	1,478,659
1987	91	71	.562	4.0	1,850,324
1986	78	83	.484	29.5	1,128,981
1985	84	77	.522	16.5	1,502,494
1984	78	83	.484	18.0	1,606,531
1983	82	80	.506	8.0	2,320,651
1982	86	76	.531	6.0	2,318,292
1981	60	48	.556	2.0	1,534,564
1980	90	72	.556	1.0	2,208,175
1979	95	65	.594	2.0	2,102,173
1978	76	86	.469	14.0	1,427,007
1977	75	87	.463	26.0	1,433,757
1976	55	107	.340	46.0	646,704
1975	75	87	.463	17.5	908,292
1974	79	82	.491	8.5	1,019,134
1973	79	83	.488	3.5	1,246,863
1972	70	86	.449	26.5	1,142,145
1971	71	90	.441	25.5	1,290,963
1970	73	89	.451	16.0	1,424,683
1969	52	110	.321	48.0	1,212,608

Source: MLB.com

RFK Stadium Will Make A Comeback in 2005

Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Stadium has been one of Washington's best sports venues since it opened in 1961.

The stadium was originally used to house both the National Football League's Washington Redskins and Major League Baseball's Washington Senators. However, the 56,000-seat stadium has also proven ideal for concerts and other major events. RFK Stadium played host to the 1962 and 1969 Major League Baseball All-Star game.

Field Dimensions:

- Left field: 335 feet
- Left-Center: 385 feet
- Center Field: 410 feet
- Right-Center: 385 feet
- Right field: 335 feet
- Backstop: 60 feet



Stadium Fast Facts :

Stadium Owner: The Government of the District of Columbia, under the auspices of the D.C. Sports & Entertainment Commission

Year Built: 1961

First Baseball game: April 9, 1962

Last Baseball game: Sept. 30, 1971

-from MLB.com

Montreal/Washington 2004 Organizational Records

League (Level)	Team	W	L	PCT
Pacific Coast (AAA)	Edmonton	69	74	.483
Eastern (AA)	Harrisburg	52	90	.366
Florida State (A)	Brevard County	53	72	.424
S. Atlantic (A)	Savannah	58	80	.420
NY-Penn (SS)	Vermont	34	38	.472
Gulf Coast (R)	GCL Expos	22	38	.367
Total		288	392	.424

-from MLB.com

Expos Farm Clubs Were Combined 104 Games Under .500 in 2004

Montreal Expos minor league affiliates had a combined won-loss record of 288-392, .424 for the 2004 season. As the chart below shows, however, Edmonton, Montreal's Triple-A club last season, fared best in the system with a record of 69-74, a winning percentage of .483.

A Reminder-

This is our December/January issue. We publish 11 times a year. Our next issue will be mailed about a week into February, 2005.

Correction-

We erred last month on researcher and contributor Bill Gilbert's home. Bill lives in Lakeway, Texas. We should have known better, since Bill's been receiving this publication by mail for several years. We apologize for the error.

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Bleacher Creature is a conversation among baseball fans. It has been published monthly eleven times a year, since 1993. It is independent of the New Orleans Zephyrs ballclub and is made possible by our wonderfully loyal subscribers, supporters, contributors and friends.

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Joe Sewell Was the Ultimate Contact Hitter

Joe Sewell played fourteen years in the American League from 1920 through 1933. During that period, Joe enjoyed a reputation as one of the toughest ballplayers for a pitcher to strike out. Playing for Cleveland and New York, the former University of Alabama athlete participated in 1,903 major league games and struck out a career total of only 114 times, an average of 9.2 K's per 154-games.

The figures are even more impressive when we rate him on the basis of strikeout frequency. To get this we divide the number of official at-bats by the number of strikeouts to get times at bat per strikeout. Sewell had 7,132 official career at-bats in the American League and fanned only 114 times for a frequency of one strikeout per 62.4 times at bat.

The records show that as Sewell advanced in age, his batting eye became keener, and he posted his best mark in 1932, when he struck out only three times all season in 503 times at bat. That's once every 167.7 trips to the plate.

Sewell's career .312 batting average is impressive, but his walk to strikeout ratio is off the charts. Sewell managed to reach via the base on balls 842 times in his career. That's more than seven times the number of his career strikeouts (114).

Joe Sewell played shortstop for the New Orleans Pelicans in the 1920

season, when he was called up by Cleveland under unique and tragic circumstances.

Ray Chapman, the regular Cleveland shortstop, was hit by a pitched ball on August 16, 1920 and died of his injuries the following day. Chapman was and is the only player to suffer a fatal injury in a major league game.

Joe Sewell was promoted from New Orleans and joined the Indians for the season's final weeks, helping Cleveland clinch the American League pennant. Sewell hit .329 in 22 late-season games. He appeared in all seven games of the World Series against the Brooklyn Robins, batting just .174.

Sewell did not get another chance in the World Series until 1932, as a member of the Yankees. He batted .333 in New York's victory over the Chicago Cubs.

Joe Sewell was never a power hitter, nor was he a big RBI man, but he was valuable to the teams he played on for his ability to get the bat on the ball and score runs, resulting in a total of 2,226 major league career base hits and 1,141 runs scored in his fourteen big league seasons.

Sewell Struck Out Just Three Times In 503 Official At-Bats In 1932



Photo courtesy S. Derby Gleclair

Joe Sewell—Major League Strikeout Frequency

Year	AB	K	AB/K
1920	70	4	17.5
1921	572	17	33.6
1922	558	20	27.9
1923	533	12	44.4
1924	594	13	45.7
1925	608	4	152.0
1926	578	6	96.3
1927	569	7	81.3
1928	588	9	65.3
1929	578	4	144.5
1930	353	3	117.7
1931	484	8	60.5
1932	503	3	167.7
1933	524	4	131.0
Career	7132	114	62.4

Chart by Arthur Schott

Joe Sewell's Career Major League Numbers for 14 Seasons

G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	BB	K	AVG.
1903	7132	1141	2226	436	68	49	842	114	.312

Source: *Total Baseball*

Total Runs Produced = Runs + RBI – HR

THE TOP 20 IN EACH LEAGUE FOR 2004

By Jack Hebert

Here are the leaders in Total Runs Produced for the 2004 season. TRP totals a player's runs either scored or driven in minus home runs (which count for one of each.)

AMERICAN LEAGUE LEADERS IN TOTAL RUN PRODUCTION FOR 2004

Player and Team	R	RBI	HR	TRP
Miguel Tejada, Baltimore	107	150	34	223
Vladimir Guerrero, Anaheim	124	126	39	211
Gary Sheffield, New York	117	121	36	202
Johnny Damon, Boston	123	94	20	197
Manny Ramirez, Boston	108	130	43	195
David Ortiz, Boston	94	139	41	192
Michael Young, Texas	114	99	22	191
Melvin Mora, Baltimore	111	104	27	188
Hideki Matsui, New York	109	108	31	186
Hank Blalock, Texas	107	110	32	185
Alex Rodriguez, New York	112	106	36	182
Travis Hafner, Cleveland	96	109	28	177
Mark Teixeira, Texas	101	112	38	175
Carlos Guillen, Detroit	97	97	20	174
Carlos Lee, Chicago	103	99	31	171
Aubry Huff, Tampa Bay	92	104	29	167
Derek Jeter, New York	111	78	23	166
Jose Guillen, Anaheim	88	104	27	165
Victor Martinez, Cleveland	77	108	23	162
Paul Konerko, Chicago	84	117	41	160

NATIONAL LEAGUE LEADERS IN TOTAL RUN PRODUCTION FOR 2004

Player and Team	R	RBI	HR	TRP
Albert Pujols, St. Louis	133	123	46	210
Scott Rolen, St. Louis	109	124	34	199
Bobby Abreu, Philadelphia	118	105	30	193
Vinny Castilla, Colorado	93	131	35	189
Barry Bonds, San Francisco	129	101	45	185
Lance Berkman, Houston	104	106	30	180
Miguel Cabrera, Florida	101	112	33	180
J.D. Drew, Atlanta	118	93	31	180
Todd Helton, Colorado	115	96	32	179
Jimmy Rollins, Philadelphia	119	73	14	178
Adrian Beltre, Los Angeles	104	121	48	177
Jeff Kent, Houston	96	107	27	176
Sean Casey, Cincinnati	101	99	24	176
Moises Alou, Chicago	106	106	39	173
Jim Edmonds, St. Louis	102	111	42	171
Mark Loretta, San Diego	108	76	16	168
Brian Giles, San Diego	97	94	23	168
Jeromy Burnitz, Colorado	94	110	37	167
Jeff Bagwell, Houston	104	89	27	166
Aramis Ramirez, Chicago	99	103	36	166

Compiled by Jack Hebert

Robinson...continued from pg.1

"home" schedule that included 22 games in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Robinson, who became baseball's first African-American manager on October 4, 1974 when he assumed Cleveland's helm, is 913-1,004 (.476) in 14 seasons as a big league manager. In addition to Montreal (2002-04) and Cleveland (1975-77), Robinson also managed in San Francisco (1981-84) and Baltimore (1988-91). He was named American League Manager of the Year in 1989 after leading the Orioles to a 32.5-game improvement compared to the previous season.

Robinson earned his 900th managerial victory with a 6-3 win on August 25, 2004 vs. Los Angeles. He became the just 58th manager in major league history to reach the 900-win plateau. His 913 victories rank seventh among active managers.

Robinson returns to manage at RFK Stadium, the ballpark where he hit two grand slams in consecutive plate appearances on June 26, 1970 off Senator pitchers Joe Coleman and Joe Grzenda.

Elected into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1982, Robinson hit 586 home runs in 21 big league seasons. He currently ranks fifth on the all-time home run list behind only Hank Aaron, Babe Ruth, Barry Bonds and Willie Mays. Robinson is one of only 14 living members of baseball's exclusive 500-Home Run Club.

—from MLB.com

All-Time List of Montreal Expos Managers

Gene Mauch	1969-75	499-627
Karl Kuehl	1976	43-85
Charlie Fox	1976	12-22
Dick Williams	1977-81	380-347
Jim Fanning	1981-82, 1984	116-103
Bill Virdon	1983-84	146-147
Buck Rodgers	1985-91	520-499
Tom Runnels	1991-92	68-81
Felipe Alou	1992-2001	691-717
Jeff Torborg	2001	47-62
Frank Robinson	2002-2004	133-153



In the 2004 season, Ichiro Suzuki established baseball's highest hit total for a season, 262

Hitting Machines

By Terry Cullen

In a season full of surprises, perhaps the biggest of 2004 (the Boston Red Sox World Championship notwithstanding) was Ichiro Suzuki's 262-hit season. The surprise was not so much that Ichiro had broken the record, but that anyone had.

Previously, the last serious assault was in 1930, when Bill Terry and Chuck Klein had 254 and 250 hits, respectively. In the intervening 74 years, the Red Sox at least made World Series and playoff appearances.

With his leap to the top of the pack, Suzuki now owns the #1 and #10 spots on the season hit list. The man he replaced, George Sisler, is now at #2 and #9. The top ten are as follows:

	Player	Year	Hits
1.	Ichiro Suzuki	2004	262
2.	George Sisler*	1920	257
3.	Lefty O'Doul	1929	254
	Bill Terry*	1930	254
5.	Al Simmons*	1925	253
6.	Rogers Hornsby*	1922	250
	Chuck Klein*	1930	250
8.	Ty Cobb*	1911	248
9.	George Sisler*	1922	246
10.	Ichiro Suzuki	2001	242

*—denotes Hall of Famer

Despite Ichiro's season-long pursuit, outside of the 1920 hits record, little was said about the rest of George Sisler's magnificent career.

George Sisler was a baseball prodigy, and as such was signed to a major league contract in 1911—illegally, as he was underage and did not have his parents' permission. (Sound familiar?) Four years later, because of the previous shenanigans, he became one of baseball's first free agents. Eventually he signed with the St. Louis Browns and was reunited with his college coach, Branch Rickey, who was the Browns' manager.

Oddly enough, Sisler began his major league career in 1915 as a lefthanded pitcher à la Babe Ruth. And like Ruth, he was much too valuable as a batsman not to play every day. However, in his 24 pitching appearances (15 in 1915), he garnered two complete-game victories over the incomparable Walter Johnson.

Likewise, his versatility was displayed in his defensive play as a graceful and sure-handed fielder. Seven times he led American League first basemen in assists, compiling a record 1,529 assists by a first sacker for his career. That record still stands. He also played 37 games in the outfield and a couple at second base and third base. His career fielding percentage was a fine .987.

Speed afoot was another important element of his overall game. Tangible proof of this is in the four seasons—1918, 1921, 1922 and 1927 (at age 34) he led the American League in stolen bases.

But it was at the plate, swinging his 42-ounce club, that he really stood out. He had six 200+ hit seasons, two batting titles, (.407 in 1920 and .420 in 1922) and twice led the league in triples. In his final season of 1930, he batted .309, cracking the .300 barrier for the 13th



National Baseball Library

George Sisler

time in his 15-year career. Currently Gorgeous George is tied for 15th with Lou Gehrig in career batting average at .340. The greatness of Sisler's playing accomplishments is magnified when you consider that in 1923—in the prime of his career—he suffered a serious eye infection which caused him to miss the entire season and threatened to prematurely end his career. Most baseball historians say he was never the same after that, and the statistics seem to lend credence to this. In his first eight seasons, he averaged .361, the final seven, .320.

In Sisler's first game back after the eye problem in 1924, he went 2-for-4 on his way to a 194 hit season. Not at all shabby, for someone with decreased visual activity.

Finally, with all due respect to Ichiro, I would like to compare his 2004 season with Sisler's 1920 season. I have extrapolated Sisler's numbers to reflect 161 games as opposed to the 154 games he actually played. It's a variation of the asterisk thing.

	G	AB	H	R	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	SO	SB	BA	SA
Sisler '20	161	661	269	143	51	19	20	128	44	20	44	.407	.632
Ichiro '04	161	704	262	101	24	5	8	60	49	63	36	.372	.455

Sisler's numbers are inflated to represent a 161-game season. He actually played 154 games.



Photo: National Baseball Library

Mel Ott became the first player to homer twice in a no-hit game on May 8, 1929, at the Polo Grounds

Nationals...continued from pg.1

Castilla, Guzman and Bennett came via free agency. Guillen and Davis were acquired in trades.

Although the organization's minor league talent reached a low ebb last year (see the chart on page 2), historically the Expos/Nationals have been very successful at bringing talent through the system to the major leagues. It's reasonable to expect that the newest Washington franchise will send the Zephyrs some competitive talent for the 2005 Pacific Coast League season.

In our February, 2005 issue we'll look at some of the prospects likely to wind up on the New Orleans Zephyrs roster. We'll preview spring training, and look at the Nationals' 40-man roster.

Mel Ott, Earl Wilson and Rusty Staub: Home Runs in Major League No-Hitters

Mel Ott, Earl Wilson and Rusty Staub: the three Louisiana-born players share a distinction: each has hit a home run in a no-hit game. In Ott's case, he did it twice.

Mel Ott, one of the greatest lefthanded hitters in history, was the first player from the Bayou State to homer in a no-hit game. He hit two in a game to support the no-hit pitching of New York Giants lefthander Carl Hubbell on May 8, 1929, before a gathering of 8,000 at the Polo Grounds in New York. The Gretna native started the Giants' scoring in the first when he tagged Pittsburgh Pirates veteran pitcher Jess Petty for a two-run, inside-the-park home run that sailed over Pirates rightfielder Paul Waner's head, and Hubbell and the Giants quickly had a 2-0 lead. Later in the fifth inning, Ott became the first player to homer twice in a no-hit game when he connected off reliever Roy Kremer with teammate Andy Cohen aboard to help the Giants build an 11-0 lead. While Hubbell's teammates gave him a big cushion offensively, they did commit three errors behind him, making the feat more difficult by forcing Hubbell to get more outs, but he persevered and finished his no-hitter.

Mel Ott went on to collect 42 round-trippers in 1929, finishing second to Philadelphia strongman Chuck Klein's 43 in the National League. Hubbell finished the season with a record of 18-11.

Boston Red Sox righthander Earl Wilson, a native of Ponchatoula, Louisiana, reached the pinnacle of pitching on June 26, 1962. Wilson no-hit the Los Angeles Angels at Fenway Park before 14,000 fans and became the toast of Boston.

Once the pride of the Ponchatoula Eagles, the 26-year old Wilson went into the game with a 5-2 record as he faced the Angels and his mound opponent Bo Belinsky. It was Wilson's first major league shutout. The only baserunners he allowed were on four walks. In the third inning Wilson provided the Red Sox (and himself) the only tally they needed when he hit a 420-foot blast off Belinsky, and the Red Sox coasted to a 2-0 victory. Wilson became only the second pitcher to homer during his no-hitter. (Jim Tobin in 1944 with the Braves was the first.) Earl Wilson finished the 1962 season with a record of 12-8.

On April 17, 1969, Rusty Staub, playing right field for Montreal, had a big day at the plate in support of Bill Stoneman's no-hit game. Staub went 4-for-5, as Stoneman held the Phillies hitless before 6,494 at Veterans Stadium in Philadelphia. Staub had three doubles to go along with his third homer of the young season, a solo shot in the fourth inning. Staub went on to deliver 29 home runs for the Expos in the 1969 season. Stoneman finished the year with a record of 11-19.

Twenty Questions About Baseball (and Other Stuff)

Pasadena, Texas
December, 2004

Dear Bleacher Creature,

As we returned from our visit to Louis' family in New York last week, I suddenly felt like the year is almost done. It's the time to take stock of everything and get set for 2005. As this year ends, though, I have more questions than answers. I started to write my questions down during the flight home to Houston, looking up occasionally to watch Betsy napping on Louis' lap.

1. When Phil Garner replaced Jimmy Williams as Houston manager last July, did anybody in town believe that he would lead the Astros to the playoffs? (I didn't.)

2. Will Washington embrace the orphaned franchise that was the Montreal Expos?

3. Does RFK Stadium favor the hitters or the pitchers? (I was just a little girl when the Senators played there.)

4. Ask your history-buff friends this: Has any big league ballpark ever sat idle as long as RFK Stadium has, and then get hustled back into service? (Louis couldn't think of one.)

5. Will new GM Tim Purpura take the Astros in a new direction, or stay the course with the current nucleus in place?

6. Can Houston top last year's franchise-record attendance of 3,087,872?

7. When will the Major League Players Union finally take a stand and do something to help the game that's made them all so rich? I'm talking about mandatory testing for steroids. Every other sport does it. It's time for the world's most powerful labor union to do the right thing

8. In 2005, as a new affiliation with Washington begins, will the Zephyrs make a comeback at the gate?

9. Will 2005 be the year Adam Everett emerges as the top shortstop in the National League?

10. Why is baseball's all-time career saves leader Lee Smith not in the Hall of Fame?

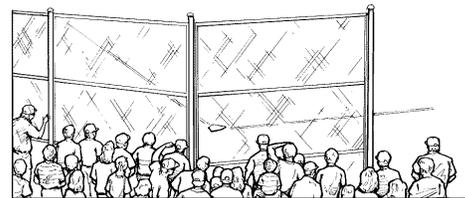
11. What can the Red Sox possibly do for an encore in 2005?

12. Will baseball's integrity be called into question by the revelations coming out about performance enhancing substances?

13. Will Roger Clemens come back for another season? And has there ever been a tougher competitor on the mound?

14. If you think baseball salaries are finally starting to level off, just listen to the numbers they're mentioning in connection with Carlos Beltran. With the amounts of money spiraling higher with each passing year, where will it all end?

15. Who's the smartest manager in baseball today?



16. How many times will Barry Bonds be walked intentionally in 2005?

17. Will 2005 be the year that Lance Berkman puts it all together for an MVP season?

18. Will the Washington Nationals contend for the National League East title?

19. What has to be done to improve Team USA in international baseball competition?

20. How will baseball do in the next decade as far as competing with other sports for the best available athletes? Older folks tell me that baseball has been losing out in recent years to basketball, football and even soccer in competition for outstanding young male athletes.

That's what I want to know...a few of the things, anyway. The Christmas season is a sometimes happy, sometimes sad time, but New Years is usually a season of hope for the future.

From Louis, Betsy and me to you, Pam and all your friends and readers, Happy Holidays, and best wishes for a safe and prosperous new year.

—Rose

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