

A SCREWBALL BASEBALL ALL-STAR TEAM

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As we near the end of the twentieth century, baseball enthusiasts are compiling lists of the greatest players of the past hundred years. To complement the lists of players known for their accomplishments on the field, I would like to propose a Screwball All-Star Team made up of the anagrams of baseball players of the present and past. All of the names have been taken from the 10th edition of *The Baseball Encyclopedia: The Complete and Definitive Record of Major League Baseball*.

A key ingredient to a team's success is a skilled manager. Earl Weaver of the Orioles used to fire up his team by frequently acting crazy during arguments with umpires. As a result, Earl Sidney Weaver was RARELY VIEWED SANE. The Cincinnati Reds have fallen on hard times since the departure of their crafty manager, Sparky Anderson. George Lee Anderson comes out to SEE LONG-GONE RED ERA. Tommy Lasorda of the Dodgers was very unpredictable, so one could say that Thomas Charles Lasorda was AS HARD TO CALL AS HOMERS. And who could forget Leo "The Lip" Durocher, another wise, fiery skipper who learned from his mistakes. Leo Ernest Durocher comes out to COULD THEN SEE ERROR.

At first base, an obvious choice would be baseball's original ironman, Lou Gehrig. He is known both for his long and productive career with the Yankees and his tragic battle with a disease which bears his name. Henry Louis Gehrig surely was a HUGELY RISING HERO. Another power-hitting first sacker was Harmon Killebrew, who despite being a nice man was tagged with the nickname "killer" because of his last name. Unfortunately, his anagram doesn't make him sound any more pleasant; Harmon Clayton Killebrew comes out to LOONY HITMAN, BALL-WRECKER. A somewhat more demure power hitter was Dodger first baseman Gil Hodges, who later used his knowledge of the game to manage the New York Mets to a championship. But during his playing career Gilbert Raymond Hodges treated the fans to seeing his SLY DODGER BAT HOMERING.

One of the best-fielding second basemen of all time was the Pirates' Bill Mazeroski, who in 1960 hit a World-Series-winning homer in the ninth inning of the seventh game against the Yankees. He was a tough competitor who always played within himself. Hence, the motto of William Stanley Mazeroski could have been ALL I KNOW IS I MASTER MY ZEAL. A long-time star at second for the Cubs was Ryne Sandberg, who played his entire career in Wrigley Field despite being coveted by other teams. In retrospect, Ryne Dee Sandberg was NEEDED BY RANGERS. The Cubs fans loved him, so he seldom ENGENDERED BRAYS.

Baseball has had many slick-fielding shortstops over the years. One of the best was Luis Aparicio, who anchored the defenses of the White Sox and the Orioles. Luis Ernesto Aparicio comes out to ORIOLE CAPTAIN IS SURE. When second baseman Jackie Robinson joined the Brooklyn Dodgers as the first black player in the majors, his double-play partner at short was Pee Wee Reese. In this emotionally-charged environment, some of the overly-critical Brooklyn fans may have taken the attitude that Harold Henry Reese HAS ONLY ERRED HERE.

The greatest player not in the Hall of Fame is Pete Rose, a key cog in Cincinnati's Big Red Machine. He is best remembered for his setting the all-time record for career hits, his hustle and drive to win as typified by his bowling over Oakland catcher Ray Fosse to score the winning run in an All-Star Game, and his eventual disgrace and banishment from baseball for gambling. During his heyday, Peter Edward Rose POWERED RED TEARS. Graig Nettles of the Yankees was an excellent fielder who dared opposing batters to hit one by him. So, in a sense, he was a SINGLE TARGET.

To anchor the screwball infield, a team needs a smart, veteran catcher such as Carlton Fisk, whose famous World Series home run against the Reds is still replayed on highlight films. Players who played with or against Carlton Ernest Fisk would probably have attested that he OFTEN LEARNS TRICKS. And let us not forget poor Ray Fosse, who was never quite the same after being steamrollered by Pete Rose. One could safely have said that Raymond Earl Fosse ONLY FEARS MAD ROSE.

Many of the all-time great sluggers have been outfielders. Perhaps the most famous player in baseball history is Babe Ruth, who set numerous records for hitting home runs. George Herman Ruth will forever be remembered for his GREAT HOMER HUNGER. And so will Hank Aaron, who eventually broke Ruth's career home run record. He was on one championship team near the beginning of his career, but none thereafter, despite coming close a few times. Henry Lewis Aaron comes out as A HERO NEARLY WINS. He did not complain about his teams' failures to win, even though he may have wanted to; he was SO NEARLY A WHINER.

Red Sox outfielder Ted Williams was one of the greatest hitters of all time and the last to hit .400 for a season. He also clouted more than 500 home runs during his career. As a power hitter, Theodore Samuel Williams had a simple philosophy: I SEE WALL, I'D SLAM OUT HOMER. The Yankee centerfielder Mickey Mantle was another member of the 500-homer club. Mickey Charles Mantle would not have been bragging had he said before going to the plate "SEE ME CALMLY CRANK HIT". And who could forget Cardinal star Stan "The Man" Musial? Stanley Frank Musial comes out to IS MEAN FUNKY ALL-STAR.

Our Screwball All-Star Team would need a strong pitching staff. I would have no qualms about naming Tom Seaver to start a game for me. It was common when George Thomas Seaver was on the mound for fans

to say at the end of nine innings "GAME OVER--HE'S SO GREAT!" Going back in time, one could call on Hall-of-Famer Christy Mathewson to throw a lot of strong innings. Christopher Mathewson, who was also a double dactyl, sometimes asked the baseball question "WHICH MEANER SHORTSTOP?" In recent years, pitcher Orel Hershiser has been one of the great competitors, particularly in the post season, despite his bookish, unassuming appearance. Thus, it would be fair to say about Orel Leonard Quinton Hershiser "NOTE: SQUARER NERD IS HERO ON HILL".

In 1978 Yankee Ron Guidry, nicknamed Louisiana Lightning, had one of the greatest single seasons of any modern pitcher on his way to a Cy Young Award. Ronald Ames Guidry comes out to MY AROUSED DARLING, which will probably prevent this article from having a PG-13 rating if it is ever made into a movie (especially if the anagram refers to Ron Darling, who was pitching across town for the Mets around the same time). One of the finest young pitchers in the game today is Orioles ace Mike Mussina. A graduate of Stanford, he is a brainy, perfectionist type. Michael Cole Mussina, despite the seeming immodesty, comes out to AM HILL ACE--NO MISCUES.

A Screwball All-Star staff would need a few good relief pitchers in the bullpen. When I was a mere lad back in the 1960s, I had a Topps baseball card entitled "Fork and Knuckler". It pictured two of the first great relief pitchers: forkballer Roy Face and knuckleballer Hoyt Wilhelm. (The forkball was actually what we today call the split-finger fastball.) Elroy Leon Face was a tough competitor with a good sense of the strike zone; he was CLEARLY ONE FOE with ONE EYE FOR CALL. Wilhelm threw knuckleballs to confound hitters. Even though he mostly threw fluttery pitches, James Hoyt Wilhelm comes out as HEY, HE WILL JAM MOST. The all-time save leader among relievers is Lee Smith. He must have had trouble holding runners close, because Lee Arthur Smith comes out as STEALER HURT HIM.

Certainly no Screwball All-Star Team would be complete without a couple of pitchers who could throw real screwballs. One of the best in recent years was Luis Tiant, whose unorthodox "look to the heavens" delivery made him a great favorite. Luis Clemente Tiant comes out as SAME NICE LITTLE NUT. Perhaps the greatest screwball pitcher of all time was Carl Hubbell. With this baffling pitch, he once struck out five future Hall-of-Famers in succession during an All-Star Game, including two members of our All Screwball Team (Ruth and Gehrig). It is very appropriate that this article will end with the anagram for Carl Owen Hubbell, which happens to be what every player and manager mentioned thus far would want to say about his team after every game: BALLCLUB WON HERE.