



Maximum Efficiency

by

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Not counting warm-up pitches, the average major league pitcher throws hundreds of pitches during the course of a game. In today's game we are very aware of pitch counts and the limits placed on hurlers by their managers and pitching coaches.

Under the best of all circumstances – a perfect game – a pitcher could use as few as 27 pitches if each batter he faced either grounded out or flied out on the first pitch offered. If the pitcher struck out all 27 batters he would still use 81 pitches.



This makes the performance of Charles Henry "Red" Barrett on August 10, 1944 all the more impressive. The native of Santa Barbara, California had spent four seasons with Cincinnati and was in his second season with Boston when he took the mound against his former teammates. That night, the 29-year old right-hander needed only 58 pitches to mow down 27 of his former teammates from Cincinnati in a complete game shutout that yielded only two hits as the Boston Braves defeated the Reds 2 to 0 before a crowd of 7,783 at Crosley Field. That's a little more than two pitches per batter.

Throughout the game, Barrett never fell behind in the count to any hitter, did not issue a single walk or strike out and Reds hitter. The only two hits surrendered – to Gee Walker with two out in the 1st inning and to Eddie Miller to lead off the 6th inning – accompanied 13 ground outs, 5 fly ball outs, 4 foul outs, 3 pop ups and 2 line drive outs

This feat still stands as the fewest number of pitches to complete a nine inning game in major league history. It surpassed the former record of 67 pitches set in 1915. It is also the shortest night game on record, being completed in one hour and fifteen minutes. Although pitch counts were not common at this time, the official scorekeeper, reporter Frank Grayson of the Cincinnati Times-Star, kept track of pitches in his scorebook.

Barrett was a journeyman pitcher, seeing time with the Cincinnati Reds, the Boston Braves, and the St. Louis Cardinals during his 11-year career that yielded a 69 – 69 (.500) record. His best season came in 1945 when he led the league with 24 complete games and earned his only All-Star selection.

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