



Consecutive Games Played

by

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On September 6, 1995, Cal Ripken, Jr. broke Lou Gehrig's 56-year old consecutive game streak as the Baltimore Orioles beat the California Angels, 4 – 2, before a sellout crowd of 46,272 in Camden Yards. His streak began on May 30, 1982 and would eventually end at the end of the 1998 season with an incredible 2,632 consecutive games.

Baltimore's non-stop shortstop played his final game on October 6, 2001 against the Boston Red Sox before a crowd of 48,807 fans including former President Clinton and Commissioner Bud Selig. Unfortunately, Ripken went 0-for-3 as the Orioles lost to the Red Sox, 5 – 1.

What I find truly remarkable is that Ripken's consecutive game streak means that he played 87.5% of his career – roughly 17-1/2 years out of 20 years – without missing a single game. Can you even imagine not missing a single day of work in 17-1/2 years?

This led me to review the other *ironmen* who had posted significant consecutive game streaks, beginning with Lou Gehrig.

Gehrig's consecutive game streak began on June 1, 1925 as Gehrig replaced Yankee first baseman Wally Pipp in the lineup. It would end 2,130 games later on May 2, 1939. Oddly enough, Wally Pipp was in the stands, having traveled from his home in Grand Rapids to watch the Yankees and the Tigers play in Detroit. What he saw was Yankee captain Gehrig presenting the lineup card to the home plate umpire with his name removed for the first time in fifteen years.

Lou Gehrig played in a total of 2,164 games during his career, and 98.4% of which comprised his 2,130 consecutive game streak. Gehrig's streak ended not by choice, but due to deteriorating health. He would leave the Mayo Clinic on June 19, 1939 – his 36th birthday – with the diagnosis of *amyotrophic lateral sclerosis*, from which he finally succumbed on June 2, 1941. The disease now bears his name.

But whose consecutive game record had Gehrig broken? That would be former New York Yankee shortstop Everett Scott, whose 1,307 consecutive games ended on May 6, 1925 from failing knees. His streak began on June 20, 1916 when he was with the Boston Red Sox.

The following table lists the top ten consecutive game streaks through the 2003 season. I have also shown each player's total career games played and the percentage of his career represented by his consecutive game streak.



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Player	Consecutive Games	Total Games	CG As % of Career	Career
Cal Ripken, Jr.	2,632	3,001	87.7%	1981 - 2001
Lou Gehrig	2,130	2,164	98.4%	1923 - 1939
Everett Scott	1,307	1,654	79.0%	1914 - 1925
Steve Garvey	1,207	2,332	51.8%	1969 - 1987
Billy Williams	1,117	2,488	44.9%	1959 - 1976
Joe Sewell	1,103	1,903	57.9%	1920 - 1933
Stan Musial	895	3,026	29.6%	1941 - 1963
Eddie Yost	829	2,109	39.3%	1944 - 1962
Gus Suhr	822	1,435	57.3%	1930 - 1940
Nellie Fox	798	2,367	33.7%	1947 - 1965

Source: *Baseball Encyclopedia*

As of this writing, Oakland's All-Star shortstop Miguel Tejada leads all active major leaguers with 584 consecutive games. Through the 2003 season, he has played in a total of 936 games (62.4% of his career has been played during this consecutive game streak).

With only seven seasons under his belt it might appear that Tejada is well on his way. However, Tejada will have to play in every game for the 2004 and 2005 seasons to even make this list. As many other ball players have found out, staying healthy or avoiding injuries is not always an easy thing to do.

It may be a very long time before someone is able to break Ripken's consecutive game record.