

BASEBALL HISTORY

by
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The Georgia Peach



Nearly 40 years since his demise and more than 70 years after he last hung up his spikes, Ty Cobb is still considered by many as the greatest batsman ever to play the game. Fans of Cobb point to his 4,191 hits, surpassed only by Pete Rose, and more importantly, his .367 career batting average which is the best of all time.

Cobb broke in with the Detroit Tigers in August of 1905 as an 18-year old. He was an undersized outfielder (5'10" and 155 pounds when he broke in; he later filled out to 6'1" and 190 pounds) from rural Georgia. He appeared in the final 41 games of the season and hit a meager .240. In spite of his youth he displayed enough raw talent to be referred to as an "infant prodigy" by *Sporting Life Magazine*. The writer of those words was

more prophetic than he could ever imagine, because for the next 23 seasons Cobb would terrorize American League pitching.

He never averaged lower than .320 in any given season. Amazingly, in 16 seasons from 1907 to 1922 he won twelve batting titles – including nine in a row – and finished second in three other years. No one before or since comes close to matching that accomplishment. By the way, the one year (1920) that he did not contend for the batting title he hit a measly .334.

How Cobb faced Hall of Fame pitchers of his era is the subject of the accompanying table. Note that two pitchers on the list are better known for their hitting prowess – George Sisler and Babe Ruth. Another stat that jumps out on the table is Cobb's incredible total of 120 hits off the great Walter Johnson, contributing to a .366 average against the Big Train.

Few other hitters of Cobb's era can say that they owned Johnson. You will also notice that the Georgia Peach batted an astounding .341 against the very best pitchers of his time and .371 versus the rest.

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Ty Cobb's Batting Average Against Hall of Fame Pitchers

Opposing Pitcher	AB	H	Avg.
Chief Bender	82	30	.366
Jack Chesbro	54	23	.426
Stan Coveleski	163	59	.362
Red Faber	164	55	.335
Clark Griffith	4	1	.250
Lefty Grove	15	5	.333
Waite Hoyt	98	26	.265
Walter Johnson	328	120	.366
Addie Joss	94	25	.266
Ted Lyons	75	24	.320
Herb Pennock	142	52	.366
Eddie Plank	201	69	.343
Red Ruffing	26	6	.231
Babe Ruth	67	22	.328
George Sisler	6	0	.000
Rube Waddell	76	27	.355
Ed Walsh	123	42	.341
Cy Young	97	33	.340
Hall of Fame Total	1,815	619	.341
The Rest	9,614	3,572	.372

Source: *Ty Cobb – His Tumultuous Life and Times* by Richard Bak
(Taylor Publishing Company, Dallas, TX)

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