

# BASEBALL HISTORY

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## Winning Isn't Everything

While researching another baseball topic, I noticed that fourteen pitchers active in 1901 had over 100+ career wins and *also had lost more games that they had won*. This number seemed a bit out of whack to me since I could only recall a handful of pitchers in this situation – Bob Friend, Pedro Ramos, and Chuck Stobbs came to mind immediately. So, out of curiosity, I began checking some other years. I was further amazed when every random year out of the five I chose had 10 or more hurlers in this same category. I quickly abandoned my original theme and plunged headlong into my new discovery.

In every season from 1880 through 2006, there has been at least one major league pitcher with the above distinction. In fact, of the approximately 560 men with 100 or more victories, 105 of them, despite their best efforts, finished up with less than a .500 winning percentage. Two of them – Steve Trachel and Javier Vazquez – were on major league rosters on Opening Day 2007.

Before I get too far along with this, I would like to clarify something. This is not “the worst pitchers of all-time” kind of listing, although a few of them might qualify. You don’t win over 100 games in the major leagues without a high level of skill, perseverance, and, in most instances, longevity. While just scratching the surface regarding the careers of these men, I would like to briefly illustrate the above qualities.

### Skill

- Twenty-four of these players were only 5 victories or less from even appearing on the list.
- Two had more than 200 wins.
- There were seventy 20+ wins in a season, including five 30+ seasons.
- 468 winning years took place.
- Sixty World Series teams are represented.
- Eighteen no-hitters were tossed.
- There were scores of Top Ten finishes in positive seasonal categories such as: Most K’s, ERA wins, Complete Games, WHIP, etc.
- Numerous All-Star selections came from this group.
- One member became a Hall of Famer.

## **Perseverance**

Some of these flingers started out poorly then improved only to fall short of a winning career record. A prime example of this was Red Donahue, who toiled for 13 years (1893 – 1906). Red had a woeful beginning to his career (1<sup>st</sup> five seasons – 33 – 77), then improved vastly (next 6 years – 112 – 72) before going 19 – 26 in his last two campaigns, to finish at 165 – 175.

Others like Alex Kellner (1948 – 1959) started quickly – 20 – 12 in his rookie year of 1949. Then the sophomore jinx struck in 1950 as he compiled a miserable 8 – 20 mark. For the rest of his 12-year career, he struggled mightily to climb back to .500 or better, falling 11 games short.

Talk about persistence – three of these slingers – Mike Morgan, Ron Kline, and George Blaeholder – didn't have a plus season until their 11<sup>th</sup> year in the bigs. In 1991, Morgan broke through with a 14 – 10 ledger with the Los Angeles Dodgers and played in his only All-Star contest. Kline was a losing pitcher for all of his nine years as a starter and didn't register his first plus campaign until his second year as a reliever. In Blaeholder's case, it wasn't until his final year that he entered the winner's circle.

## **Longevity**

Ninety-seven of these gentlemen had careers lasting 10 years or more. As a group they averaged 13.6 years of major league experience. Five of them – BoBo Newson, Danny Darwin, Mike Morgan, Terry Mulholland, and Rick Honeycutt – lasted 20 or more years with Morgan (1078 – 2002) showing the way with 22. The shortest career was that of Toad Ramsey (1885 – 1890).

As you can imagine, there is a wealth of material that I could elaborate on involving these players. But, for now, the following tables will have to suffice.

**TABLE ONE**  
Yearly Number of Pitchers with Negative Differential

YR	#	YR	#	YR	#	YR	#	YR	#	YR	#
1880	1	1902	10	1924	9	1946	10	1968	13	1990	18
1881	2	1903	9	1925	12	1947	10	1969	18	1991	17
1882	2	1904	9	1926	14	1948	13	1970	17	1992	16
1883	2	1905	9	1927	14	1949	9	1971	17	1993	15
1884	2	1906	9	1928	16	1950	10	1972	16	1994	16
1885	3	1907	7	1929	16	1951	11	1973	18	1995	16
1886	3	1908	7	1930	15	1952	11	1974	18	1996	15
1887	5	1909	9	1931	13	1953	11	1975	18	1997	13
1888	6	1910	7	1932	14	1954	10	1976	18	1998	10
1889	5	1911	8	1933	14	1955	10	1977	21	1999	9
1890	5	1912	7	1934	17	1956	10	1978	22	2000	8
1891	5	1913	5	1935	17	1957	11	1979	23	2001	7
1892	5	1914	4	1936	16	1958	13	1980	22	2002	6
1893	6	1915	5	1937	15	1959	13	1981	21	2003	5
1894	5	1916	7	1938	14	1960	11	1982	22	2004	5
1895	7	1917	8	1939	13	1961	11	1983	22	2005	5
1896	8	1918	7	1940	15	1962	9	1984	20	2006	4
1897	11	1919	7	1941	13	1963	9	1985	20		
1898	12	1920	7	1942	13	1964	10	1986	22		
1899	12	1921	7	1943	12	1965	11	1987	19		
1900	11	1922	8	1944	8	1966	13	1988	19		
1901	14	1923	9	1945	7	1967	11	1989	20		

**TABLE TWO**  
Shortest Careers

	Seasons	Years Active
Toad Ramsey	6	1885 – 1890
Mark Baldwin	7	1887 – 1893
Case Patten	8	1901 – 1908
Stump Wiedman	9	1880 – 1888
Win Mercer	9	1894 – 1902
Jim Scott	9	1909 – 1917
Bob Harmon	9	1909 – 1918
Jim Tobin	9	1937 – 1945

**TABLE THREE**  
Longest Careers

	Seasons	Years Active
Mike Morgan	22	1978 – 2002
Danny Darwin	21	1978 – 1998
Rick Honeycutt	21	1977 – 1997
Bobo Newson	20	1929 – 1953
Terry Mulholland	20	1986 – 2006
Tom Zachary	19	1918 – 1936
Syl Johnson	19	1922 – 1940

