

# Tigers Stripes

The Newsletter of the



Mayo Smith Society

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Tigers Fans Who Always Care

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## **MORRIS NUMBER RETIREMENT CEREMONY BRIGHTENS SEASON** -- By Todd Miller

On a sun-drenched Sunday afternoon at Comerica Park, Jack Morris became the seventh Tiger to have his uniform number retired. The pre-game ceremony, along with the Tigers' 4-2 victory over the Twins, was a respite from a season that has been expectedly frustrating.

Two weeks after being inducted to the Hall of Fame, "Mt. Morris" erupted with praise for the City of Detroit, Tigers fans and teammates, several of whom were seated on a podium between the pitcher's mound and second base, and others with the Morris Family behind home plate.

Joining Jack on the dais were fellow Hall of Fame inductee Alan Trammell and a pair of ex-teammates, Lance Parrish and Dan Petry. Also seated on the platform were Al Kaline, Willie Horton, Al Avila and Chris Iltch. Seated behind home plate were ex-teammates Kirk Gibson, Larry Herndon, Scott Lusader, Larry Pashnick, Dave Rozema and "Sweet Lou" Whitaker, who should soon receive his own plaque in Cooperstown if there is any justice in the baseball world. Ex-trainer Pio DiSalvo rounded out the homecoming of alumni who brought us so much joy from 1983 to 1988. Tigers radio voice Dan Dickerson served as master of ceremonies.

Jack's words to the Tigers faithful were heartfelt. Said Morris, "I never knew what Detroit was like, growing up in Minnesota, but it didn't take me long to figure it out. It was right in my wheelhouse. The hard-working people, the salt of the earth, and the great loyal sports fans that are in this town, it's something truly special for all of us athletes that play here in Detroit.

"There's an old saying that there's no 'I' in team. I'm a living example of why I'm being honored here today. Without the supporting cast of these fellas in front of me, and the guys here behind me, I would never be standing here today." And, displaying a sensitivity rarely seen from Jack during his playing career, he recalled that he got an opportunity to pitch for the big league club "because of a guy that got hurt, that I wish was here with us today, and that's Mark Fidrych."

The ceremony brought back memories of watching Jack earn his 20th victory of the 1983 season on a chilly late-September night in Baltimore, on a Society outing to Memorial Stadium, when he became the Tigers' first 20-game winner since Joe Coleman in 1973. It also made me think of a raw Saturday afternoon in Tiger Stadium in October 1984, when my brother, Eric, and I saw Jack pitch a complete-game victory over San Diego, with a pair of Trammell two-run homers plating Whitaker, accounting for all of the Tigers' scoring in a 4-2 win, giving our favorites a commanding 3 games to 1 lead in a World Series they would win the next day.

While recalling exploits from a bygone era, I also thought about when the Tigers will win their next World Series, and which players will form the nucleus of that team.

## **RIGHT FIELD: CLOSER THAN YOU THINK** -- By David Raglin

When we started this all-time Tigers series, we knew who the winners would be a certain positions. Alan Trammell would be the best shortstop and Ty Cobb would be the best center fielder. Yes, we found out the races for those positions were not close. We also thought that about right field, and yes, Al Kaline is the winner, but it is closer than anybody would have thought.

It's not because of Kaline, who is an all-time great player and has been the face of the franchise for over 60 years. It's because of two Hall-of-Famers in their own right, one of whom gave Kaline a run for his money.

That player was Harry Heilmann. Heilmann was the right fielder during the late 1910s and 1920s, about 100 years ago, and so he is not that well-known except by historians. I knew a lot about him, including what I learned in Dan D'Adonna's book, "In Cobb's Shadow: The Hall of Fame Careers of Sam Crawford, Harry Heilmann and Heinie Manush" (available at <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/in-cobbs-shadow-dan-daddona/1120828037?ean=9780786497164>) but I had no idea that he was this great of a hitter.

The table below shows what I mean. It has runs created and runs created per game for Kaline and Heilmann by season. Runs created per game is really runs created per 27 outs made, so it gives how many runs a player created per a game's worth of outs, which then can compare to the league average runs per game and show the difference between that player and the league average. This adjustment is necessary because the runs scored per game has varied a lot over history, and Kaline played in one of the biggest offensive droughts in history. Even taking that into account, we can see what a great hitter Heilmann was:

**Harry Heilmann and Al Kaline Compared to the League Average**

Harry Heilmann					Al Kaline				
Year	RC	RC/G	AL R/G	Diff	Year	RC	RC/G	AL R/G	Diff
1914	16	2.7	3.7	-1.0	1953	3	3.7	4.5	-0.8
1916	63	5.0	3.7	1.3	1954	53	3.6	4.2	-0.6
1917	71	4.6	3.7	1.0	1955	135	8.7	4.4	4.3
1918	41	5.2	3.6	1.6	1956	129	7.9	4.7	3.2
1919	93	6.5	4.1	2.4	1957	92	5.7	4.2	1.5
1920	81	5.4	4.8	0.6	1958	96	6.4	4.2	2.2
1921	159	11.1	5.1	6.0	1959	114	8.3	4.4	3.9
1922	116	10.1	4.7	5.4	1960	84	5.3	4.4	0.9
1923	156	12.2	4.8	7.4	1961	121	7.7	4.5	3.2
1924	130	8.6	5.0	3.6	1962	85	7.6	4.4	3.2
1925	147	10.4	5.2	5.2	1963	105	7.1	4.1	3.0
1926	116	8.8	4.7	4.1	1964	97	6.7	4.1	2.6
1927	147	12.0	4.9	7.1	1965	77	6.9	3.9	3.0
1928	111	7.5	4.8	2.7	1966	105	7.9	3.9	4.0
1929	103	8.7	5.0	3.7	1967	104	8.2	3.7	4.5
15 Yrs	1550	8.1	4.6	3.5	1968	59	6.5	3.4	3.1
					1969	71	5.4	4.1	1.3
					1970	79	5.8	4.2	1.6
					1971	81	7.0	3.9	3.1
					1972	48	6.2	3.5	2.7
					1973	39	4.2	4.3	-0.1
					1974	75	4.7	4.1	0.6
					22 Yrs	1852	6.6	4.1	2.5

Heilmann is one of only nine Tigers to have ten or more runs created per game in a full season, and as you can see he did it five times (batting .400 one season and winning four batting titles will do that). The only other players to do that were Hank Greenberg, playing in a much better hitter's era (five times), and Ty Cobb (eight times). The league runs scored per game were higher in Heilmann's era, but not by much.

That fact does not mean that Heilmann outranks Kaline. First of all, as you can see, Kaline's career was much longer. Second, Heilmann was considered to be a poor fielder, which (for what it is worth) is confirmed by his defensive statistics. Kaline was legendary for his good defense and great arm. Heilmann's second most-played position was first base while Kaline's was center field. As you will see in the following table, Kaline had quite a few more runs created and a much higher career Wins Above Replacement (WAR) than Heilmann.

Kaline and Heilmann had something else in common, they were beloved Tiger broadcasters after their playing days. Heilmann became the first player to move to the booth when he joined Ty Tyson in 1933. He stayed in that role until he died of lung cancer in 1951, three days before the Tigers hosted the All-Star Game.

In case you were wondering, the other Hall-of-Fame Tiger right fielder was Sam Crawford. Here are the top ten lists for Tigers right fielders:

**Detroit Tigers Right Fielders Ranked in Games, Runs Created, Runs Created Per Game, and WAR**

Rk	Tiger RF	G	Rk	Tiger RF	RC	Rk	Tiger RF	RC/G	Rk	Tiger RF	WAR
1	Al Kaline	2834	1	Al Kaline	1852	1	Harry Heilmann	8.1	1	Al Kaline	92.8
2	Sam Crawford	2114	2	Harry Heilmann	1550	2	J.D. Martinez	7.1	2	Harry Heilmann	67.7
3	Harry Heilmann	1990	3	Sam Crawford	1298	3	Al Kaline	6.6	3	Sam Crawford	63.5
4	Jim Northrup	1279	4	Jim Northrup	621	4	Vic Wertz	6.5	4	Jim Northrup	21.4
5	Pete Fox	997	5	Pete Fox	585	5	Magglio Ordonez	6.3	5	Vic Wertz	16.0
6	Magglio Ordonez	847	6	Magglio Ordonez	552	6	Sam Crawford	6.0	6	Magglio Ordonez	13.5
7	Vic Wertz	836	7	Vic Wertz	498	7	Roy Johnson	5.5	7	J.D. Martinez	12.7
8	Roy Johnson	473	8	J.D. Martinez	331	8	Pete Fox	5.4	8	Pete Fox	10.6
9	J.D. Martinez	458	9	Roy Johnson	293	9	Jim Northrup	4.8	9	Roy Johnson	6.3
10	Brennan Boesch	380	10	Brennan Boesch	179	10	Brennan Boesch	4.6	10	Rob Deer	6.0

Sam Crawford was a great player who was a Tiger from 1903 to 1917. “Wahoo Sam,” from Wahoo, Nebraska, was the first star for the Detroit Tigers. He was on three pennant-winning teams in a row from 1907 to 1909, and his 312 triples is the most in major league history (talk about a record that won’t be broken). As you can see by his WAR and runs created numbers, he was an easy Hall-of-Famer.

Jim Northrup played over 300 games at each outfield position as the “jack of all trades” out there but played the most games in right field. He is beloved for his role in the ’68 World Series (on the 50th anniversary of the Year of the Tiger), including his Game-Seven-winning triple. Magglio Ordonez had his own memorable title-winning hit, the famous three-run walk-off pennant-winning homer in 2006 (“Swing and a fly ball. It’s deep! It’s way back! The Tigers are going to the World Series!” I’m tearing up as I type this.)

Pete Fox was the right fielder from 1933 to 1941, playing on three pennant-winning teams. His best season was 1935. He started the season slow but came on during the season to hit 15 homers with a .321/.382/.513 slash line. When you have three players who held down right field for so many years, it’s not surprising that the #10 right fielder in games played had less than two-and-a-half seasons worth of games, but Brennan Boesch was a decent player on the 2010 and 2011 teams before struggling in 2012, his last year as a Tiger.

**ERIE NOTES** -- By Mark Pattison

Some observations from the AA Erie SeaWolves’ Aug. 24-26 series in Bowie, Md., to play the Baysox:

Right fielder Danny Woodrow, who doesn’t have much power, leads Erie with a .317 batting average and a .773 OPS. If that seems low, consider that anyone with better numbers has already been promoted to Toledo. I chatted Aug. 26 with Woodrow’s sister at the game; her family had come in from Chicago to watch him play. ... Alex Faedo turned in a masterful outing Aug. 24 for only his second AA win: seven innings, one run, three hits, no walks and 10 strikeouts. Prior to then, his AA ERA was 5.44, and the right-hander’s left-right splits were inverted, and horrible; righties were hitting .301 off him with a 1.031 OPS. ... The shortstop shakeout continues. Willi Castro, Sergio Alcantara and Isaac Paredes each started one game at short in the series. The fact that Castro and Alcantara haven’t played at third base at all, and Paredes only twice at second, may give a clue as to where this is headed. On Aug. 24, Castro made two diving stops to his left to turn outfield singles into infield singles. On Aug. 24, Paredes didn’t hustle after a grounder that caromed off the third baseman’s glove, and the runner made a bid for second. Paredes threw wildly to the tarp behind first base, allowing the runner to reach third. Alcantara, playing second, didn’t need to move for a two-out pop-up, and hot-dogged by catching the ball at shin level -- then dropping it. In the meantime, SeaWolves second baseman Will Maddox has crept onto the Eastern League hitting leaderboard in limited action, batting .293, good for eighth. ... I wonder if the parent club’s desire to see newly acquired prospects do good is clouding their judgment over the players they’ve had for years. 3B-1B Josh Lester, while hitting .250, is pounding the ball, with a pair of homers Aug. 24 to give him a team-leading. But new catcher Jake Rogers is right behind with 17,

and is looking alive at the plate after a dreadful first half. And second-baseman-turned-outfielder Chad Sedio was demoted to high-A Lakeland to hone his craft, but is still mashing the spheroid. ... Sloppy defense bedevils Erie. Left fielder Cam Gibson flat-out muffed a fly ball in the Aug. 24 game, and in the Aug. 26 contest, Dominic Ficociello (a natural first baseman) misplayed a deep fly to left into a ground-rule double. ... With Mike Hessman at hitting coach, Erie leads the league in strikeouts -- but is last in home runs. . . .Erie's offense is second in the Eastern League, and Bowie's pitching is at the bottom. Erie took advantage in the opener a 10-2 wipeout, but could score just one run in each of the next two games, include a two-out bottom-of-the-ninth homer in the finale.

**TIGERS A/V SHELF: "Play Ball!"** -- Reviewed by Mark Pattison

If you go to the 1968 Tigers exhibit at the Detroit Historical Museum, you should stop and shop at the museum's gift store. There, I added two items to my collection of Tigerphernalia.

One of them, "Play Ball!" is a companion video to the "Detroit: City of Champions" book published about five years ago. The title feature is a half-hour instructional video billed as "the first motion picture about baseball -- with sound!" It hails from 1934, was produced by the Fisher Body division of General Motors and features several Tigers stars as well as other American League greats of that era. Tigers you'll see here include Hank Greenberg, Charlie Gehringer, Schoolboy Rowe, Tommy Bridges and Mickey Cochrane.

A second, shorter video, "Those Tigers," takes a closer look at the club that gave the Motor City its first AL championship in a generation, giving just about everyone on the '34 roster their due, including Goose Goslin, Billy Rogell, Marv Owen, Jo-Jo White, Pete Fox, backup catchers Rudy York (!) and Ray Hayworth, and pitchers Vic Sorrell, Elden Auker, Luke Hamlin and others. It also features broadcaster Ty Tyson and a substitute for Harry Heilmann, who must've been feeling under the weather that day. Both fellows behind the microphone plug Mobil gasoline and oil, so you may have a clue as to who bankrolled this newsreel. In keeping with the "City of Champions" theme, there is also footage of two Joe Louis boxing matches against Primo Carnera (where the camera was behind a turnbuckle for much of the action) and Max Baer Sr. at Yankee Stadium, both from 1935. This disc costs about \$16. But can't scare up these kind of clips just anywhere!

**SHORT STRIPE** -- By David Raglin

I noticed that on Aug. 25, the Tigers started four switch-hitters: Jeimer Candelario, Niko Goodrum, Victor Martinez and Victor Reyes. I thought, wow, isn't that rare. Well, I was a little bit late to the game. It was actually the 24th game this season those four had started together, and the Tigers have started four switch hitters 196 times since 1908, as far as records go back. For all you obscure trivia buffs, the Tigers have started five switch hitters twice, and neither time was it memorable. On July 30, 1994, they started Chad Kreuter, Tony Phillips, Junior Felix, Mickey Tettleton and Milt Cuyler, and on September 19, 1996, Tony Clark, Melvin Nieves, Kimera Bartee, Ruben Sierra and Raul Casanova were all on Buddy Bell's lineup card. For even more trivia, the major league record is seven switch hitting starters, all by the 1993 Mets, who did it five times. They had five switch-hitting regulars (including former Tiger Howard Johnson) and five bench switch hitters.

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